

Canada's Aid to Haiti: Commendable or Making Amends for a Discredited Anti-Aristide Strategy?

Thursday, March 30, 2006

COHA REPORT:

Since Aristide was ousted in a de facto coup in February 2004, Haiti's turn towards an unconstitutional, if widely recognized, government has presented the international community with a grave crisis. Among the handful of nations who are now involved in a high profile effort to help Haiti attain stability, Canada is perhaps the most frequently passed over. Yet this omission belies the fact that Ottawa has long played an active role on the island, and now may be Haiti's best hope for moving forward. Yet, this seemingly constructive role is marred by the disturbing recent history of Canadian-Haitian relations in which Ottawa played a shameful role. Under Liberal Party rule, Canada joined with co-conspirators, the U.S., France, and Kofi Annan of the UN, to approve Washington's extra-constitutional action against President Aristide, which sent him into exile.

Canada and Haiti began their formal diplomatic ties in 1954 with the establishment of a Canadian embassy in Port-au-Prince. Since then, Canada has been involved in Haiti through a wide variety of programs designed to promote economic and political stability in the country. In recent years, however, the links between the two nations have gained new significance. According to the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' web site, "since the departure of President Aristide in February 2004, Canada has played a leadership role in international efforts to re-establish security and stability in Haiti and to assist in longer-term reform and reconstruction efforts."

Canada's reconstruction policy for Haiti is mainly based on three major goals, which are security and disarmament, social and economic reconstruction, and the resumption of the democratic process. Unfortunately, what the website does not portray is Ottawa's disgraceful participation in the plot that led to Aristide's ouster in February 2004. It was the low water mark for the Liberals, when then Prime Minister Paul Martin and his Foreign Minister Pierre Pettigrew, intent on generating good will towards Washington, chose sacrificing Aristide as the vehicle to achieve this goal.

The Canadian leadership may have been partially influenced by the sinister role played by the French foreign minister at the time, Dominique De Villepin. De Villepin has since been elevated by President Chirac to the post of Prime Minister, and is presently under heavy siege from a majority of the French for his recalcitrant stand on the issue of labor rights for the young. De Villepin at first appeared to be taking a progressive stand on Haiti. He seemed to be calling for Aristide to be protected against the "gang of thugs" as they were described at the time by Secretary of State Powell, as well as for protecting the constitutional order of Haiti. But after using up Aristide's remaining hours of independence, as hostile forces entered Port-au-Prince, he revealed himself as an enthusiast behind the plot to oust Aristide.

While Canada's current reconstruction plan for Haiti appears to be both comprehensive and responsive to the struggling nation's needs, it must not be forgotten that Canada has a highly compromised recent history of interference in Haitian internal affairs during the Aristide era, but has barely uttered a word again the interim Latortue administration's ineptitude and caricaturing of good government. But, as the developing world has focused its attention elsewhere, and as Haiti eventually falls off the international

agenda, Canada's substantial aid commitment, coupled with the two countries' rich history of mutual exchange, may prove to be in Haiti's best interest this time around.

Canada and Haiti

Canada's current involvement on the island is multifaceted. In an attempt to promote stability, Ottawa has contributed 100 civilian police officers (75 of which come from Quebec) to the controversial mission of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) which came into being in June 2004.

Canada also has voiced its commitment to the stabilization of Haiti's democratic processes. In last month's elections, approximately CAN\$30 million was allocated to enrol foreign and national observer groups, as well as deploy Canadian security agents around the country to help promote fair election processes. Moreover, Canada contributed an additional CAN\$7.5 million to the International Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections (IMMHE), which was headed by Jean-Pierre Kingsey from the Canadian Election Commission and which included eight other officials from different Latin American countries, including Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, and the United States. It has yet to be established whether this operation achieved significant results since at the end it was not the UN or related electoral monitoring bodies that allowed for a Preval victory, but his own refusal to be robbed of his triumph by effort of the Interim Government of Haiti (IGH).

Social and economic reconstruction has always been a priority for the Canadian government, as such activities are critically linked to Haiti's prospects for future development, and these efforts traditionally have largely taken the form of Ottawa's extending financial backing to self-help projects. In 2004, CAN\$154 million was contributed to fund the goals of the Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF), making Ottawa a key contributor to the rebuilding project. In the framework details, laid out from May to June 2004, Haiti's principal goals were established by the Latortue government in cooperation with international experts from the World Bank, the United Nations, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the European Commission. After the framework was established, the International Donors Conference was held in Washington D.C. to raise funds for those objectives. Eventually, about US\$1.1 billion for the ICF goals was raised, and in June 2005, donor countries, international organizations, and financial institutions convened again in Montreal to assess the results of the initial implementation of the ICF's goals. Canada's commitment to the ICF process attests to its policy of favoring a multilateral approach in implementing a third world project. In line with this strategy, Ottawa has worked with the Organization of American States (OAS), the UN, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and the "Francophonie," among other international and area bodies, in its policymaking process.

While Ottawa has actively adopted a multilateral position, it has maintained an equally important bilateral aspect to its policies. In fact, Ottawa has positioned Haiti as the most important recipient of Canadian long-term development assistance in the Americas. As a result, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)-a well-respected agency which promotes international projects and earmarks Canadian foreign aid for various NGOs-has been playing an important role in Haiti since the agency's creation in 1968. Its initiatives in Haiti have included highly diversified projects such as the AIDS Project, the Integrated Education Project in Artibonite, Kore Famn Fund II (for women), the revitalization of Haiti's Savings and Credit Unions, and the Nippes Agroforestry Project.

Quebec and Haiti

As a province, Quebec does not maintain any official relations with Haiti, but as a function of its membership in the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), bilateral meetings between the Quebec's National Assembly and the Haitian Chamber of Deputies and Senate have been held. Also, owing to its autonomous capacity for engaging in some forms of policy initiatives, the Quebec government has the authority to make agreements with other countries on topics which fall under Quebec City's specific jurisdiction. In 1987, the governments of Haiti and Quebec signed an agreement on education that was renewed in 2003. The agreement enabled some Haitian students to study in Quebec universities for the same tuition fees as Quebec students.

More notably, Quebec has made Haiti its "number one beneficiary of the assistance provided by the Direction de l'aide internationale (DAI)," a sub-section of the province's Ministry of International Relations. Although DAI cannot come anywhere near matching the magnitude of CIDA's financial contributions, Quebec's assistance can have a powerful moral significance. The Quebec government's website references the CAN\$4 million in aid it has allocated for 60 projects. Quebec shares the rest of Canada's objectives relative to Haiti, and, according to Francine Lemieux, an official at DAI, Quebec has taken same approach as Canada. This is not entirely coincidental; the majority of NGOs working in Haiti come from the province of Quebec.

Because of their experience and long-term involvement in Haiti, DAI and CIDA often sponsor the same on-site organizations. Moreover, there is a high demand for French-speaking NGOs and even more so, for Creole-speaking staff (which is the language spoken by a majority of the island's poor—among whom help is most needed). Second, NGOs chosen by Quebec and Ottawa are often working on the same project—for example, the Paul-Guérin Lajoie foundation which works to improve the educational system, receives funding from both governments. Furthermore, the emergence of Haitian-Canadian NGOs like ROCAHD, Regroupement des organismes canado-haitiens pour le développement in Quebec is another important recent phenomenon, and marks the growing importance of the Haitian diaspora in shaping Canada's policies relative to the island.

The Diaspora's Impact

Ottawa's ties with Haiti are nourished by the presence of a major Haitian diaspora in Canada, 90 percent of who reside in Quebec. In fact, Quebec and Haiti have always shared a close relationship; with a common French colonial background laying the foundation for mutual exchanges and linkages, Haitians started immigrating to Quebec in the early 20th century, but came in significant numbers only when repression under the Duvalier dictatorship began to mount in the 1960s. At that time, Quebec was undergoing the so-called "Quiet Revolution," a period of economic, social and cultural openness to immigration. Consequently, Haitians were welcomed to Quebec, and frequently were able to obtain good jobs in their same professions, as well as the more traditional fate of obtaining menial jobs. Many immigration-related programs, such as family reunification, were crafted to foster the immigration experience once arriving from Haiti. Meanwhile, French-Canadian organizations began to increase their involvement in Haiti, a hemispheric country desperate for outside humanitarian help. Since then, Canadian NGOs have become increasingly concerned about Haiti's persisting plight.

According to the last national census, 74,500 Canadian citizens declared that they were of Haitian origin, and between 2000 and 2004, the number of Haitian immigrants has increased by approximately 7,000, according to the Quebec Immigration Office (Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles du Québec). In an article in the Haiti Tribune, Jean-Claude Icart, a sociologist at the

University of Quebec in Montreal, describes the Haitian community in Montreal as more organized, integrated and active, than ever before. In fact, money, merchandise, and educational material are frequently sent back to the island. In total, around US\$1.5 billion in remittances from the Haitian diaspora worldwide is sent every year back to the island. This represents the largest and most consistent single source of aid received by Haiti, and often surpasses the contributions of all international bodies combined. As such, remittances play a massive role in maintaining the country's most basic infrastructure. This aid, however minimal it adds up to be, was especially important in sustaining Haiti during the period of trade sanctions imposed during the early 1990s against the military junta. The diaspora's significance was so great that Aristide eventually created the Ministry of Haitians Living Abroad.

The Haitian diaspora's influence extends beyond their own country to their adopted lands, and nowhere has this been more evident than in Canada. In December 2004, the Conference of Montreal with the Haitian Diaspora hosted groups including representatives from the Canadian and Haitian governments, international organizations, and around 400 members of the diaspora, drawn mainly from Quebec's Haitian community, but also from the U.S. and France. While there had been many smaller conferences in the U.S. between members of the Haitian diaspora and USAID, the Montreal Conference was the first comprehensive meeting with the Canadian diaspora. The conference's goals were to help integrate Haitian-Canadians into Haiti's economic development and democratic processes, as well as foster interest among the diaspora in Ottawa's Haiti-related development policies. Notably, the Conference looked to the diaspora for advice on the implementation of the ICF's goals. The conference's final recommendations acknowledged that the diaspora has had an impact on Haiti and, at the same time, on Canada, and that the NGOs and other officials now hope for comparable gatherings to be called in the future.

The Emergence of Canadian Dissidents

The positive engagement between Canada and the island is not without controversy, however. In 2005, Yves Engler and Anthony Fenton published a book on the controversial role that Canada played in overthrowing Aristide on February 29, 2004. The work explains in detail the sequence of events from the initial destabilization of Aristide, to the coup, and finally its aftermath. It shows how some NGOs, including some based in Quebec, were involved in helping to stage or rationalize the coup. According to the authors, Canadian media outlets "are much less interested in criticizing their own state's adventures abroad." In fact, many analysts believe the Canadian armed forces may have been involved in the coup, yet the issue has failed to provoke outrage or arouse the amount of interest in Canada which it deserves.

Engler and Fenton are not the only ones who have protested Canada's policies toward Haiti. Many Canadian and Haitian-related websites such as Znet and Haiti.action.net, newspapers such as Haiti-Progres, and documentation such as the University of Miami Human Rights Report, have spared no energy in lamenting Canada's sometimes "colonialist role" in Haiti, claiming that it has been thinly veiled under the moniker of development aid. The Canada, Haiti Action Network (CHAN), on its widely followed webpage-Canada out of Haiti-claims that Canada, to a large extent, is responsible for some of the instability now to be found in Haiti.

A good example of the growing awareness about the subject can be found in a number of incidents that occurred in the 2006 elections, where some protesters asked Canadian voters to boycott the Liberals,

particularly then-Foreign Affairs Minister, Pierre Pettigrew who, according to those groups, as well as objective research, was the lead factor in concerting Ottawa's Haiti policy with that of the U.S., and whose knowledge of Haiti couldn't have been more meager.

The Future of the Canadian-Haitian Relationship

Canada, Quebec, and Haiti have intertwined histories with long roots. The Haitian diaspora is now more integrated than ever before in influencing Canadian policies toward Haiti, as well as affecting policies inside the country. Although it appears that the possibility for a positive relationship between the two countries exists, a growing group of Canadian dissidents have voiced their disapproval of Canada's continuing misadventure in Haitian affairs, usually on the side of the United States. Taking all these factors into account, how Canada shapes its future policies towards that troubled island remains an ongoing question.

In an interview with COHA, Carlo Dade, senior advisor for the think-tank, Canadian Foundation for the Americas, has observed that: "Canada has a comparative advantage to lead in Haiti." The historical and cultural links between Canada, Haiti, and Quebec are strong, and the fact remains that the U.S. is too preoccupied with the Middle East to commit to any long-term involvement on the island. Given that a high degree of commitment is the only solution for achieving sustainable development in Haiti, and that Canada is the most logical nation that at the present time that appears willing to step up to the plate, Ottawa is presently at a crucial juncture. Will newly installed P.M. Stephen Harper accept the responsibility of extending to Haiti a helping hand that is devoid of suspicious motives, and will Ottawa be prepared to challenge Washington if it concludes that U.S. policies and Haiti's best interests cannot be reconciled?

This analysis was prepared by the COHA Staff

Press Conference in Haiti - Josette S. Shiner
Thursday, 30 March 2006
Press Release: US State Department

Press Conference in Haiti
Josette S. Shiner, Under Secretary for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs
Port-Au-Prince Airport VIP Lounge
Port-Au-Prince, Haiti
March 25, 2006

Press Attachée: (in French): Good morning. Thank you for coming today. I would like to introduce the United States Undersecretary for Economic, Business and Agricultural Affairs, Mme. Josette Shiner. She will make a statement first, and then take your questions. Madame Shiner?

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: Well, I want to thank you for coming today. I've had an excellent visit to Haiti. I've come to underscore our government's message to the Haitian people, which is -

Translator: (interrupts, translation in Creole) I'm sorry, ma'am

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: Thank you at this very important moment in Haiti's history, with a new, democratically-elected president, President-elect Préval, and elections coming up second round in April, and we look forward to local elections also that this is a moment when the international community the United States in particular really want to join with Haiti in partnership.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: I was able, here in Port-au-Prince, to meet with President-elect Préval, some of his key advisors, the business community, the NGO community, to hear their views, and listen and learn about what this moment is in Haiti and the future.

TRANSLATOR: (starts to translate in Creole) I'm sorry, ma'am. That was too long for me can you please pick up the last part with

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: Business community?

Translator: Yes, I did say that, and NGOs

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: NGOs. President-elect and key advisors.

Translator: OK(resumes translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: But my first step in coming to Haiti was to go up north to Capotille to speak with the people of Haiti about how they view this moment.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: And I was able to see some small business there, some work by women there, to visit a school and I found the people of Haiti hopeful about their future and really wanting the international community to understand the hopes of Haitian people.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: Thank you, and I'll take your questions.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Question 1 [Lionel LaFortune, Haiti Progrès] (translated): During your meetings with the President-elect and the finance minister, did you speak about the issue of petroleum, because Haiti imports a great deal of it from the United States? And what is your opinion of PetroCaribe the program initiated by President Chavez?

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: We did discuss Haiti's very significant energy needs.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: We know that Haiti is a very beautiful country, and we need to find solutions for the energy needs of the Haitian people that get beyond the use of charcoal so that we do not have continued deforestation.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: In addition, we know that in order for Haiti to provide jobs, it needs to have businesses, and those businesses need energy, and it is why the United States has put as a top priority in its aid, making sure that we address the gaps in fuel in Port-au-Prince and other areas, and it's been a priority on our part to really work with Haiti to solve not only short-term but long-term energy needs.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: So our focus was on U.S. programs and how we can ensure that we're helping solve some of those problems.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: Thank you

Translator: (translation in Creole)

Question 2 [Rotchild-Jean François, Radio Métropole and stringer for VOA] (translated): I know that the agricultural sector is very dear to the heart of President-elect Préval. I would like to know if, in your discussions, the United States proposed plans to help the agricultural sector, such as passing HOPE or other types of beneficial projects?

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: Thank you very much. I also found agriculture very much on President-elect Préval's mind.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: We had a very good discussion. I think Haiti, for example, must have the best mangoes in the world they're so delicious and we talked about how to help provide more jobs and more production and more exports to help the Haitian people.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: And we look forward to working in partnership with the new government and the Haitian people to really develop programs that can help diversify and look at exports, and help bring more market conditions to the agriculture sector in Haiti. I think that's a very important challenge for the new government.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: This is important not only to fighting malnutrition in Haiti itself, but also in providing jobs and exports.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: We talked about some practical ideas, such as bringing experts from the U.S. private sector to come and look once Haiti sets its national vision of what it wants to do in agriculture.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: I also inspected UN programs in the north to look at how they can be more effective, including a cassava plant that produces cassava bread and employs 20 people in Capotille.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: So we very much know that this is an important sector with great potential, but we need to do a lot of work together and within Haiti, and then bilaterally, and with multilateral donors to really get this on track.

Press Attachée (in French): I'm sorry, this will be the last question.

Question 3: I'm Jean-Pierre LeRois, also a stringer for VOA. First I would like to congratulate you for your impressive career, and you mentioned earlier, but you were not specific about, a mission a trade mission or commercial mission coming to Port-au-Prince after Préval's taking office. Do you have any specific time for that, or has the U.S. administration already planned that?

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: I love your question, because I find in Haiti people ready to do business.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: Step one is really hearing from the new government what its vision is for Haiti's development.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: And I know President-elect Préval has, as number-one on his list, to come up with a unified vision, across the sectors, on the priorities for development.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: But it is our feeling, that when we understand Haiti's own vision for which sectors in agriculture to develop, and which have the most potential, then we can look at trying to connect that vision with the private sector, and the United States, and also with the investments that we are making through our aid and elsewhere, so that will be a very important process.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: We know that Haiti needs practical solutions to real problems.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: And I found that very much to be President-elect Préval's mind is practical solutions to real problems

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: So the next round of elections are key, local elections, and then we really are ready to stand in partnership with Haiti to find those practical solutions.

Translator: (translation in Creole)

UNDER SECRETARY SHINER: Thank you very much.

Less poverty, more hope
Editorial
Miami Herald
BY RENE GARCIA PREVAL
March 29, 2006

Ten years ago, when I became the 55th president of Haiti through democratic elections, little did I realize that 196 years of strife, foreign interventions and poor governance would be so difficult to overcome. Yet even against the odds, our government worked to redress two centuries of inequality. We tried to tackle, with extremely limited means, some of the most daunting problems that have afflicted our country. We built schools, roads and irrigation systems. We initiated a much needed agrarian reform. We confronted the evil of corruption and addressed the dire shortcomings of an ailing judicial system.

Today, I believe, we could have done better.

So when a delegation of peasants urged me in the summer of 2005 to become a candidate for the upcoming elections, my immediate reaction was to decline. But the insistence of my neighbors, whose determination deserved respect, gradually weakened my resistance. I also had become increasingly involved in local projects and aware that successful local programs had to be extended to other distressed localities in Haiti via structured national policies.

Thus, on Feb. 7, nearly two million Haitians braved doomsday scenarios and organizational lapses to send a message to the world: We, too, want to live in peace and dignity and build a better life. They queued in the hot Caribbean sun for hours to demonstrate to the world that violence is not, as it had been too often written and uttered, a "Haitian trait."

Now I have become the 57th president of my troubled nation. Here is a thumbnail sketch of our predicament:

- An astonishing 50 percent of our population lives under poverty line.
- The infant mortality rate is 61 per thousand.
- The unemployment rate affects more than one fifth of our labor force.
- After years of willful neglect, our infrastructures are quasi nonexistent.

The challenges are great. I know that we are a resilient and proud people nurtured by a glorious past, but we have failed to take advantage of many opportunities to turn the tide. Now, we must reconcile and reunite to avoid getting deeper into this abyss in which we find ourselves.

The first thing that the government that emerges from parliamentary elections and I must do is to reach out to all our compatriots across the political and class divides that have paralyzed our country for two centuries. To that end, I have already begun consultations with many leaders of other political parties

as well as those from society at large. Their positive response has, thus far, encouraged me to continue that dialogue and work on a positive agenda:

- Develop an environment to attract investments from local entrepreneurs, from Haitian living abroad and from international investors. That environment constitutes a prerequisite for job creation in the private sector. Providing security and building our basic infrastructures are key to that end.
- Create a truly independent justice system and a national police force that serves community interests.
- Restore our environment while affording farmers means to feed our children.

We cannot accomplish much of our goals alone.

While the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti has performed admirably, we believe its composition should be modified so as to focus more on the training and strengthening of our police force and on reinforcing our institutions. We hope that the international community will continue to help us lay the groundwork for a better Haiti.

We are further encouraged by recent reports suggesting that the Hemispheric Opportunity Through Partnership Encouragement Act, an offspring of an earlier version called Haitian Economic Recovery Opportunity Act, is being once again seriously considered. Introduced by Sen. Mike DeWine, R-Ohio, the bill will allow up to 3.5 percent of total U.S. imports to arrive from Haiti duty free, a quite needed boost to Haiti's failing economy.

This will not be a panacea. But it is estimated that the passing of this bill could generate around 80,000 jobs. Jobs need to be created here. And we must do it fast to bring a lasting solution to the endemic violence that has plagued some of our cities.

We also strongly believe that the rich human resources of the Haitian diaspora can be an invaluable asset in rebuilding Haiti. We are appealing to the many Haitians living abroad and working in technology, the environment, health and education to provide our ailing country the resources it needs to recover and flourish.

A brighter future

We are aware that all the assistance in the world cannot make up for poor governance. And, as the state has grown to be the country's largest employer, corruption and lack of efficiency have permeated all levels of government. This must change.

Though ravaged, Haiti is not the wretched land as so often described in the media. It is a land of hope for more than eight million people. I cannot achieve miracles, nor have I been promising any. But I feel I have the responsibility to the Haitian people to open doorways on a brighter future: less poverty, less inequality, more wealth, more hope.

This is why I ran again for president.

René Garcia Préval is president-elect of Haiti.

Bush Congratulates Haiti's Preval
By VOA News
29 March 2006

A National Security Council spokesman, Frederick Jones, says Mr. Bush and Mr. Preval met for about five minutes at the White House Tuesday. Jones says the president reaffirmed U.S. interest in Haiti's democratic and economic development and the U.S. commitment to stay engaged in helping Haitians build their institutions and economy.

The brief meeting took place one day after President-elect Preval spoke to the U.N. Security Council, asking the international community for more long-term aid to boost his impoverished country's economy and promote democracy. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

Mr. Preval is scheduled to address the Organization of American States Wednesday, in Washington. Mr. Preval was elected last month and is due to take office in early May.

Preval talks trade, meets with Bush
BY LESLEY CLARK AND PABLO BACHELET
Miami Herald
March 29, 2006

WASHINGTON - Haitian President-elect Rene Preval, on a U.S. visit to rustle up more economic aid for his poor nation, met briefly with President Bush on Tuesday and expressed confidence that a crucial trade agreement would pass Congress soon.

Bush dropped by when Préval was meeting with National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, said National Security Council spokesman Frederick Jones. The White House provided no further details on the meeting.

Préval also made the rounds of Congress to lobby for HOPE, a bill that provides concessions to Haiti's textile exports to the United States.

Préval told The Miami Herald that it was the third time he had talked with Bush about the legislation.

"I believe that everybody understands that, with Haiti's situation in terms of poverty, we must create jobs," he said through an interpreter. "Democracy works with the economy."

Haitian officials say the bill, opposed by some U.S. textile interests, could generate 40,000 jobs in a country where nearly two out of three citizens live below the poverty line. So far, the Bush administration, largely sympathetic to Haiti's plight, has not taken a stand on the initiative.

After meeting with members of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, which oversees trade issues, Préval said lawmakers understood the urgency of HOPE and that he was confident the bill would pass soon.

U.S. Rep. Clay Shaw, a Fort Lauderdale Republican on the committee, said Préval wanted to extend the bill's benefits to 10 years, up from the three provided in the bill. "We'll go back and take a look at it and see what we can do on it," Shaw said.

Republican Rep. Mark Foley of Florida, who invited Préval to the event, said the administration is eager to work with the new Préval administration. "I think our administration wants to do what it can, within the confines of political reality," he said.

Préval won Feb. 7 elections by a big margin after multiple postponements of the voting. The Bush administration pushed the elections as a key step in the reconstruction of a nation wracked by violence and economic decay since the 2004 ouster of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Bush called Préval on Feb. 23 to congratulate him on his victory.

Préval was accompanied by a delegation of Haitian businessmen that included Dumarsais Simeus, a wealthy Texas businessman who was barred from running in the Feb. 7 elections because he isn't a

Haitian citizen. The group is also scheduled to visit the International Monetary Fund and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Préval is scheduled to address the Organization of American States today. The OAS helped organize the Feb. 7 elections.

Préval is to assume the presidency on May 14.

Act on those promises of help for Haiti now

Editorial

Jamaica Observer

Wednesday, March 29, 2006

We are a bit concerned that Mr Rene Preval, the Haitian president-elect, has found it necessary to go to the United Nations to appeal for urgent help from the international community for his country.

For, we had thought that after Mr Preval's election in February, the international community would have acknowledged Haiti's dire need for assistance and would have, without prompting, quickly offered the kind of aid that would set Haiti on course to economic recovery.

As Mr Preval so candidly put it in New York on Monday, his government needs to create conditions for investment and job creation. He also needs to improve social services, and to reform democratic institutions, including the Parliament, municipalities, the judicial system, and the national police. Indeed, the problems of our Caribbean sister country are many and widespread, and the needs are critical.

We believe that Caricom, despite its limited resources, should lead this process of assistance by not only providing whatever human and economic support it can to Haiti, but by mounting an aggressive lobby outside the region on Haiti's behalf.

The world, for too long, sat back and watched as Haiti slowly disintegrated under the despotic rule of the Duvaliers and other corrupt leaders. And even when the Haitians had started to show some appreciation for democratic institutions, during the tenure of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, we largely ignored their pleas for help when rebels challenged the authority of the democratically-elected president and, eventually, killed and maimed their way to Port-au-Prince.

That Mr Preval received such a convincing majority of the votes - just over 51 per cent - demonstrates a thirst among the Haitian people for the country to settle down and start rebuilding.

Since the February election, a lot of people have spoken, sending congratulations to Mr Preval and promising aid. But Mr Preval really needs those promises to be acted on immediately. Because, regardless of his immense popularity, it is unlikely that he will be able to continue enjoying the confidence of very poor Haitians, who now see him as their saviour, if he fails to meet their expectations.

We acknowledge that all that needs to be done to make Haiti better cannot be achieved overnight. But the process needs to begin, as poor and hungry people are unable to remain calm for very long.

Haiti's President-elect Préval visits the OAS

BY PABLO BACHELET

Miami Herald

March 29, 2006

Préval will meet with OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza and then speak before the OAS permanent council, the institution's top day-to-day 34-member governing body. He will then offer a rare press conference.

The Haitian leader, who won easily in the Feb. 7 presidential election that was organized with OAS assistance, has been busy lobbying for HOPE, a trade bill that would give Haitian textile manufacturers more preferences to export to the United States.

On Tuesday, he met briefly with President Bush and key members of Congress who deal with trade issues. On Monday he was in New York, where he addressed the U.N. Security Council.

Préval is leading a delegation that includes Haitian business leaders

The resurgence of Haiti
Anthony Gomes
The Jamaica Observer
Wednesday, March 29, 2006

Since the successful conclusion of the Haitian general election, widespread attention has been focused on Haiti's future in Caricom.

Haiti is one of the 46 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the world and the only such country in this hemisphere. LDCs are entitled to benefits under the Everything But Arms (EBA) agreement with the European Union (EU), that provides quota-free and duty-free market access for approximately 98 per cent of their exports to Europe. Other developed countries besides the EU have since granted similar terms to the world's LDCs.

In Phase III of the current negotiations for an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the EU and Cariforum, that is, Caricom plus the Dominican Republic that focuses exclusively on the Caribbean, it should soon be known if Haiti chooses the benefits associated with the EBA or alternatively the General System of Preferences (GSP) that offers special rates for market access to the EU.

President-designate Rene Preval, in his first 100 days, will be obligated to manage the instability caused by the ascendancy of violent gangs and insurgent leaders that filled the power vacuum following the controversial departure of ex-president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. In an earlier interview, Preval was quoted as saying that he would "terminate" the violent elements in the society and restore peace and order. It remains to be seen what ultimate remedy may be applied. Suffice it to say that he has a long, dangerous and arduous task ahead.

Meanwhile, certain Caricom heads, including PJ Patterson and Trinidad's Patrick Manning, as also the Bahamian foreign minister Fred Mitchell, have been calling for Haiti now to join Caricom. As stated by Mr Mitchell during the March meeting of ministers in the Bahamas with US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice: "It was decided at our last heads of government meeting once there were democratically elected and accepted elections to the international community, that Haiti would immediately be asked to retake its seat at the tables of Caricom. We expect President-elect Preval will be taking his seat in July when the heads meet at that time."

The original invitation for Caricom membership to the Aristide Administration was not conclusively processed.

Consequently, the conditions and obligations that apply to Caricom membership were not formally or legally accepted. This left the matter of Haiti's membership in abeyance. Then came the unexpected departure of President Aristide followed by a period of anarchy, on a scale that eventually required the intervention of UN peacekeepers to restore a semblance of law and order. Considering Haiti's anarchistic past, it is likely to be some time before political, social and economic stability returns to the territory. According to US secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice: "Political turmoil in Haiti has had a long history of having an effect on the region and an effect on the US."

The present situation strongly suggests, and prudence dictates, that a phased approach to Haiti's renewed membership of Caricom should be adopted. As the original invitation appears to have been issued in the absence of consultations with Caricom civil society, it must be interpreted in the absence of transparency that political rather than economic reasons motivated the heads' decision.

At the ministerial meeting in the Bahamas with Condoleezza Rice, Mr Mitchell indicated the areas of Caricom assistance given to Haiti that included support for the electoral process, observing the elections, the Trinidad and Tobago energy initiative to assist the energy needs of Haiti, and the interface between the university system of Haiti and the Caribbean, to strengthen and develop tertiary level education - which no doubt will continue.

The initial invitation for Caricom membership can reasonably be reviewed, based on the principle of force majeure resulting from President Aristide's sudden departure and ensuing events that include a regime change. The first phase of the new engagement process could be an offer of associate membership of Caricom that is akin to partial scope membership, for modification in accordance to Article 5 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas to full membership, when the violence subsides and stability returns to Haiti, and the integrity and governance of the new administration has been validated. There are already five associate Caricom members in compliance with Article 231 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas.

Should this or some other similar type of phased engagement not be considered appropriate, how then will the movement of those categories of people allowed to travel freely within Caricom be managed? Furthermore, given the status of Haiti's national health that is a matter of record, how are border health controls to be implemented? It would also be imperative for the Preval Administration to accept the CCJ's original jurisdiction to regulate trade in accordance with the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. These measures are all in the best national interests of Caricom countries.

A cautious approach tempered by time for re-engaging Haiti is strongly recommended, also convening Caricom civil society consultations, bearing in mind the obvious complications that may follow should the three issues mentioned above, among others, be overlooked.

As the time-honoured adage states: "Marry in haste and repent at leisure!"

PRESIDENT-ELECT OF HAITI TO SPEAK AT OAS

OAS.org

March 27, 2006

The President-Elect of Haiti, René Prével, will speak at the Organization of American States OAS on Wednesday, March 29. OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza will also participate in the protocolary session of the Permanent Council, which will be chaired by Ambassador Sonia Johnny of Saint Lucia.

Following the Permanent Council session, President-Elect Prével will hold a press conference with French/English/Spanish interpretation available.

The OAS Permanent Council meeting will be Webcast live (www.oas.org).

WHAT: Protocolary meeting of OAS Permanent Council to receive President-Elect René Prével of Haiti – Wednesday, March 29, 2:30 p.m. (Hall of the Americas)

Press conference – 4 p.m. (Guerrero Room)

WHERE: OAS Headquarters

17th Street & Constitution Ave., NW

Washington, DC 20006

Institution-building and infrastructure crucial to Haiti's progress, says OAS
Caribbean Net News
Wednesday, March 29, 2006

WASHINGTON, USA: Calling for immediate actions to ease suffering and build hope in Haiti, the Organization of American States (OAS) Assistant Secretary General, Albert R. Ramdin, said Monday that long-term institution-building and investment in infrastructure and economic activity are indispensable to a viable future for Haiti.

He announced OAS plans to coordinate and mobilize resources and efforts from other inter-American institutions, to boost long-term institution-building and social and economic reconstruction in Haiti.

Ambassador Ramdin told a United Nations Security Council "open debate" on Haiti that a strong, independent judiciary is needed, as is a legal framework to "protect human rights and make all equal in the eyes of the law."

This would provide a framework for critically needed economic investment, he argued, calling on Haiti's President-Elect René Prével -- who participated in the forum -- to continue reaching out to multiple political and social sectors, and to build an open, inclusive government as a necessary basis for Haiti's social and economic recovery and overall stability.

Ramdin stressed that an expanded and professionalized police force is key to public security and to economic growth that benefits citizens.

Argentina's Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana chaired the forum, which brought together at UN headquarters in New York a wide cross-section of participants, including foreign ministers, ambassadors and Juan Gabriel Valdés, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative in Haiti.

Ramdin hailed Prével's victory at the polls, and called Haiti's presidential and legislative elections of last month "a decisive victory of the Haitian people" that marks a return to Constitution rule and an opportunity for "a fresh start for a long-anticipated and necessarily long-term process of democratic consolidation, social and economic progress, and advances in security and stability."

Ramdin said the upcoming legislative elections, scheduled for April 21, will pave the way for Haiti's return to more balanced powers and a truly representative democracy.

"We would urge the new government and the political forces which will shape the new parliament to seek ways in which to collaborate meaningfully, for the good of the Haitian people," declared Ramdin, urging Prével to ensure that the scheduled June 18 municipal and local elections stay on course.

"We are encouraged by Mr Prével's emphasis on attending to the population's basic needs in terms of health, education, jobs and clean water, among others," said Ramdin, who argued, "It will be up to the international community to also step up to the plate to assist the new Haitian government in quickly attending to some of the most urgent humanitarian and socioeconomic needs of Haiti's poor, a large segment of the population of Haiti which has traditionally been overlooked and dispossessed."

**Canada out of Haiti?
Former minister in Aristide's government elaborates
Tessa Vanderhart Staff
The Manitoban Online
March 28, 2006**

Patrick Elie is concerned about the integrity of Canadian democracy. Elie is a former minister in the first democratically-elected government of Haiti, under president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. In a March 27 speech in University Centre, Elie connected Canada's involvement in the coup that ousted Aristide to Canada's involvement with the U.S..

Elie began by describing the present political climate of his former country, focusing on the involvement of his new country, Canada.

"I think democracy is going the way of the dinosaurs," Elie said. "You're not going to be consulted, but you're secure in the belief that you live in a democratic country."

When it comes to Haitian democracy, he said: "instability is a sign of life." He denounced the fact that relatively few Canadians are aware that Haiti held highly contested elections February 7. The Haitian government found that René Préval received 48.8 per cent of the popular vote, but on Feb. 16, 2006, it was decided that rather than continue in the runoff election to a second ballot, Préval would be declared president.

Elie accused Canadians of sleepwalking through politics and becoming a wealthy nation by "plundering," comparing Canada's role in Haiti to U.S. foreign interventions.

"What does it say about the nature of the regime that exists here? I wish it weren't true, but frankly, 10 years from now, I wouldn't be surprised to find a 51st star on the American flag," he said.

"It's not that far-fetched: already, for example, your government has gone and engineered what it calls a 'regime change' in Haiti."

He then moved on to describe the recent political history of Haiti, beginning with the American occupation of the country in 1915, until the first democratic elections in 1990. Aristide was elected, and deposed almost as quickly by a coup d'état. Elie was a cabinet minister again from 1994-96, along with current president-elect Préval, and was involved in dismantling the Haitian army.

"The Haitian people wanted the real thing: a democracy where people would draw up the political agenda," Elie said. "Still, the enemies of democracy would not stop, and attempted to destabilize Aristide."

He went on to compare this to criticize Prime Minister Stephen Harper for meeting with "de facto" prime minister of the interim government, Gerard Latortue, when Préval has been elected president but cannot be sworn in until there is a second election to choose the Parliament.

"Power should be decided not by coup d'états or the barrel of a gun, but by the ballot," said Elie.

He continued to say that Haiti was subjected to a “barrage of disinformation” used to defame Aristide for political interests — according to Elie, the cheap labour and gold available in the Caribbean nation.

Elie described America as more of a failed and rogue state than Haiti: “they break international laws every second day; and a nation that has a \$9 billion deficit is a failed state.”

“If this is a model for the rest of the world, well, thank you, it won’t work,” Elie said.

The New Reality in Haiti
Patrick Elie interviewed by
Roger Annis
ZNet Magazine
March 28, 2006

Roger Annis: On February 7, the Haitian people elected René Préval as president. He promised deep-going reforms in favor of the poor majority of Haiti. How do you view the election and its outcome?

Patrick Elie: The election is a very positive sign for Haiti's future. For despite the fact that it was rigged, held under a regime of foreign occupation, the people managed to take hold of it and use it to advance their struggle for social justice.

There were many obstacles that blocked the peoples' participation. They had to obtain a computerized registration card. There were only 800 polling stations, compared to 12,000 in the 2000 election that elected President Aristide. And, of course, the counting of the ballots was in the hands of those who wanted to use the election to choose a candidate of Haiti's elite.

But the people intervened at two decisive moments. First of all, they mobilized massively to get out and vote on February 7. They voted for the one candidate, René Préval, who represented their historic struggle for a just society. Then, six days later, they mobilized again in massive numbers to block the theft of the vote. It was this action that forced the election authorities to accept the reality — that Mr. Préval had won an overwhelming victory.

These actions by the Haitian people are a testament to their courage, their ingenuity, and their deep understanding and commitment to democracy.

RA: What are the prospects, then, for a return to the constitutional rule that was overthrown in 2004?

PE: Well, the future is very uncertain, fraught with danger. The occupation power is still in place and shows no sign of leaving. Legislative elections, supposed to be held in March, have been postponed. Mr. Préval needs a elected legislature before he can assume the presidency, and the legislature must be composed of candidates that support his program if he is to be able to carry it out. The last time he was president, from 1996 to 2000, opponents in the legislature blocked many of the policies that he wished to implement.

RA: What about the occupying powers? Some friends of Haiti are asking why President-elect Préval made statements recently in Brazil and Chile asking for the UN armed forces to remain in Haiti for the foreseeable future. What is your view?

PE: I liken the situation to one where you are sitting in a boat and an uninvited guest jumps in and almost capsizes the boat. You want him out; he is not welcome. But he can't simply jump out and risk, once again, capsizing the boat. It has to be an orderly exit.

If the UN were to pull out overnight, it would leave a power vacuum that the rightist forces are better placed to fill than us at this point. This would create an extreme danger of a whole new round of violence and killing directed at the people. We demand that the UN forces cease their repressive

operations and rein in the Haitian National Police. A withdrawal must be done such that the security of the people is assured.

I and other militants have the responsibility to demand that the UN withdraw its occupation of Haiti and return the country to sovereign rule. Mr. Préval and his government has the responsibility to carry this out in a timely and responsible way. The two roles are not identical.

RA: Would you join a government headed by Mr. Préval?

PE: No, I will not. Not because I would not agree with the government that Mr. Préval will create, but because we must work to strengthen the grassroots movements. We must develop and strengthen organizations to ensure that democracy is not only representative, but also participatory. Otherwise, we stand no chance of winning this struggle.

I will stay out and keep pushing from the outside, if you will. It is our responsibility to defend Mr. Préval's government from threats of coups and from foreign interference, so that he and his colleagues may govern freely. It will be his responsibility to give us the space to organize and strengthen the popular movements.

RA: We are approaching the 20th anniversary of the popular uprising that overthrew the Duvalier dynasty in Haiti. Since then, it has been a lengthy and difficult struggle for democracy and social improvements. How would you describe these years?

PE: The past 20 years have been a time of constant clash between a people, the majority of whom are poor, and a tiny, wealthy elite. The people are stating very strongly their will to have a democratic system, a system where the terrible gap between rich and poor will be reduced and where social justice will prevail.

The Haitian people have shown their resolve and a peaceful character of their quest. The violence and instability in the country comes from the stubbornness of the rich minority and the constant interference of foreign powers. The first time (1991 coup), it was the U.S. that interfered. But the last time — and I am speaking of 2003 until the present time — a triumvirate composed of the U.S., France, and Canada carried out another coup.

What we have learned over these years is that the resolve of the Haitian people in their quest for democracy cannot be stopped. Depending on how the elite and the foreign powers react to the latest victory of the people, we will move forward or not. They can continue to make us suffer, but they cannot stop the movement.

RA: What are some of the lessons you draw from this experience?

PE: We have fought against incredible odds. We have faced so much violence against the people, and suffered so many killed. The foreign powers and international financial institutions reduced the financial capacities of our governments to zero. There was no miracle solution to our problems.

Where we have perhaps come up short is in the building and strengthening of the popular organizations — trade unions, women's rights committees, neighbourhood committees working on the social services, and so on. In 1991, for example, we saw the coup against our government coming months ahead of time. We were receiving all kinds of information. But what could we do? We did not control the army, and the popular movements were still quite weak. We did not have the relationship of forces required to stop the coup-makers, as we saw the people in Venezuela do so successfully in 2002.

RA: Is there a role for a political party in this? Lavalas seems to be more of a social movement or electoral coalition than a political party.

PE: I think that the exact form that the people will give to their political organization remains to be seen. Obviously, in Haiti we will not develop the kinds of political parties that are seen in countries like France or Canada. But definitely, we must move a step forward — to go from being a movement, largely unstructured, to forming a new political leadership out of the grassroots movements.

We must develop something that is attuned to our history and our culture, and that opens the door very wide to the participation of the masses. This is the challenge for the coming five years. It is a tall order, but it is indispensable and I think we can succeed.

RA: What sort of program would you advocate for a Lavalas party?

PE: First of all, it must be a program where every child must be able to go to school and every citizen has access to education and health care. There must be laws adopted for a better distribution of national wealth. It is intolerable that 5% of the population should control 60% of the collective wealth, and the top 1% controls 50% — while 80% of Haitians live on less than two dollars per day. These are numbers that no society can live with. We've reached the breaking point.

We do have a number of assets, the most important of which is the extraordinary resolve of the Haitian people, their creativity, their very high level of political consciousness. We must also add to this the vital contribution that the Haitian diaspora can make. It numbers two million.

We are developing a people-to-people diplomacy which will allow us to draw support from friendly governments and peoples in the region and from countries like Canada and the U.S. Until now, Haiti has been very isolated from the other Caribbean and Latin American countries. We must work to break down this isolation and create unity among the peoples.

RA: Throughout Latin America, popular movements are gaining strength and bringing new governments to power. Does this have an impact in Haiti?

PE: I believe so, if only indirectly at the moment. It's good that you should point out the changes in the region. What we must do in Haiti is establish stronger links to these countries in the region and start learning from each other.

You will note that in countries like Venezuela and Bolivia, the changes did not come about through traditional political parties, but from vast and profound social movements. It resembles a lot what has

been going on in Haiti since 1986. So, we have experience that we can share with these brothers and sisters, and they can teach us a few things that we haven't yet experienced.

RA: What is the attitude of young Haitians to the foreign occupation and repression they have endured?

PE: Their reaction is one of anger. They've been frustrated so much, even though they respected the rules of the democratic game. Anger, but also resolve. These people that you saw in the streets on February 7, voting at the ballot places, then one week later protesting the attempt to steal their votes, voting again with their feet — they are young people. Less than 25 years old. Truly, the young masses have an extraordinary courage and determination.

We have a very serious situation on our hands today with the threat of continued repression in the poor neighbourhoods in Port au Prince, such as Cité Soleil and Belair. The young people there have fought back. Many are armed. It is vital that we find a way to avoid further bloodshed and deescalate the armed conflict.

These young people are called all kinds of slanderous names — "bandits," "gangsters," etc. But these descriptions are false. They have been forced to defend themselves over the past two years as any self-respecting people would do. They are the future of our country, and we must act to protect them. The new government and the occupying powers must offer an avenue for social reinsertion that is real and meaningful.

RA: What is your message to the Canadian government? Recently, after the February 7 election, it hosted an official visit by the unelected prime minister Gerard Latortue. He went on to visit Quebec Premier Jean Charest. Meanwhile, you faced interrogation and harassment from CSIS, Canada's spy agency, when you arrived in Canada for your speaking tour.

PE: My travel problem is an annoyance, a nuisance, but it pales in comparison to the harm that the latest policy initiative toward Haiti has caused for Canada. The Canadian government's support to the coup has really damaged its image, both in Haiti and in the region.

It could have welcomed a visit from the newly elected president, as even the U.S. seems prepared to do. Instead, it hosted a visit from Mr. Latortue, the representative of an unelected and illegitimate government. This is a very bad sign.

We call on the Canadian government to stop imposing a regime on the Haitian people. It's obvious that this will not work. Our message to the Canadian government is the same as to the Haitian elite. There is a new reality in Haiti as of February 7, and it would be best for you to adapt to it and seek to work with the Haitian people and its elected leadership, rather than try, once again, to disrupt the country's progress. If the elite and their foreign backers persist in obstructing democracy, the result can only be disastrous for the country as a whole.

We are calling on the Canadian government to use its influence to pressure for the release of the hundreds of political prisoners. There has been no motion on this since February 7, and this is scandalous.

It is also crucial that the upcoming legislative election be free and fair.

RA: How is your speaking tour across Canada going?

PE: The tour has been excellent. All across Canada, I am finding a great interest and support for the aspirations of the Haitian people. Attendance at my meetings is high, we have met with members of parliament in many cities, and we are getting some media attention.

This tour is creating new bonds of solidarity that must grow and strengthen in the coming months. With our colleagues in the Canada Haiti Action Network and its local affiliates, we are discussing specific projects to take our work forward. We would like to see more people going to Haiti from Canada to see for themselves what is going on. And we hope to see more speaking tours that would bring Haitian grassroots leaders to Canada.

During the tour, I am introducing a key project for SOS in the coming period, the launching of a "Jean Dominique Popular University."* a project for educational broadcasts over the radio on matters of social and political importance. Fifty percent of the Haitian population is illiterate, so the airwaves and audio cassette tapes will be the means for us to broadcast the project's educational programs. We are looking for financial support for this project from our friends around the world.

Preval Appeals For Long-Term Aid Program For Haiti

Noticias.info

March 28, 2006

Haiti president-elect Rene Preval on Monday pressed for more international long-term aid to boost economic recovery and prop up democratic institutions in his impoverished country, reports Agence France Presse.

Addressing an open debate on Haiti in the UN Security Council, he said the assistance was to fund the main tasks facing his incoming government: economic recovery and reconstruction. After the debate, Foreign Ministers Jorge Taiana of Argentina read a statement urging donor countries and aid organizations "to work with the new (Haitian) government through the Interim Cooperation framework in order to reassess assistance priorities in a targeted way."

Some \$780 million of the 1.1 billion in support pledged under the framework agreement had been disbursed as of the end of last year. Taiana later told reporters that a donors' conference would be held in Brazil in May to marshal additional resources for Haiti.

The Associated Press further reports Preval said increased international assistance is "indispensable" to Haiti's economic recovery, to create conditions for private investment and job creation, to improve social services, and to reform democratic institutions including parliament, municipalities, the judicial system, and the national police. "People are in a desperate situation in terms of food, Preval told a news conference afterwards. "Above all, they have to be given emergency aid. We have to create jobs immediately to calm the situation."

US Ambassador John Bolton said the US government "is committed to helping the Haitian people move down that road to democracy." Between July 2004 and the end of 2006, the United States will commit nearly \$500 million to Haiti's reconstruction and return to democracy, he said.

Xinhua adds that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged the international community to help the development of broad political reconciliation in Haiti, noting that it is necessary a multidimensional peacekeeping operation continued. Yet the efforts of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti could tackle only the most urgent needs, he said, adding that generous and coordinated bilateral assistance was needed to supplement and build on those efforts.

EFE finally writes that Rene Preval has postponed his inauguration until May 14, the nation's interim government announced. This is the second time that Preval, who was declared winner with an absolute majority in the presidential elections of Feb. 7, has put off his swearing-in ceremony. The date for the legislative runoff elections - the first round took place together with the presidential balloting - was also changed and is now scheduled for April 21. Before Preval can take power, winners of the runoff election must be determined, since under Haitian law the president must be sworn in before a fully constituted sitting Congress.

In the UN, the DR asks nations to condone Haiti's debt
The Dominican Today
March 28, 2006

DR's Foreign Minister also warned on the need for that nation's political forces to unite

UNITED NATIONS.- The Dominican Government requested yesterday Monday before the Security Council that the international community condone Haiti's foreign debt and pleaded to keep the UN Peace Mission in that Caribbean nation.

Carlos Morales Troncoso also advised Haiti's elected authorities on the need to integrate all political currents in the effort to stabilize and promote democracy in that nation.

Morales presented the Dominican government's position when taking part in the Open Debate on Haiti summoned by the UN Security Council, in New York.

The official affirmed that it is necessary to be united "in the reclamation to request from the creditor nations of Haiti to take the decisive step to reduce its debts, to remove the enormous weight which these represent for their impoverished public finances."

He said that one of the crucial aspects to bolster democracy in Haiti is "to incorporate all the political currents in the effort to stabilize the country and to reduce the process of extreme poverty and to look for the civic consensuses that guarantee agreements and solidarity.

The official also raised the need for the UN to keep in Haiti its Stabilization Mission troops for the time that is necessary.

U.N. seeks continued help for Haiti
UPI
March 27, 2006

UNITED NATIONS, -- The United Nations is calling for sustained international support to the efforts of Haitian President-elect Rene Preval to fight instability and poverty.

"We must all reinforce President-elect Preval's efforts to encourage broad political reconciliation," U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan Monday told the Security Council. "Haiti's institutions of governance require generous support. So do the people of Haiti, who everyday endure a level of hardship and insecurity that is unacceptable, and also incompatible with the stability of the country."

A statement read out by Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana of Argentina, March president of the panel of 15, encouraged all countries that have contributed police and troop contingents to remain engaged in the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti, known as MINUSTAH.

The statement also called for Haiti to carry out a thorough and comprehensive reform of its national police and justice system.

Towards reducing extreme poverty and instability, the council called for quick implementation of highly-visible and labor-intensive projects that deliver social services and for donors to reassess their priorities in a targeted way, working closely with the Port-au-Prince government and MINUSTAH.

The council urged the transitional government in Haiti, with support from the international community, to ensure the continued credibility of the electoral process in a second round of parliamentary elections April 21, which will allow the prompt inauguration of Preval.

Preval said it was most important, during the relative calm after the elections, that, with the help of the international community, disarmament and reintegration take place and constitutionally-required institutions are created along with a climate conducive to attracting private investment and other partnership.

Aid vital to Haitian democracy, Preval tells UN

By Irwin Arieff

Reuters

27 Mar 2006

Rene Preval, the newly elected president of Haiti, speaks during a meeting of the U.N. Security Council at United Nations headquarters in New York, March 27, 2006.

UNITED NATIONS, March 27 (Reuters) - Haiti's newly elected leader appealed to world governments on Monday to step up long-term development aid to his impoverished Caribbean nation or risk undermining democracy.

"There is a strong correlation between democracy and economic development," President-Elect Rene Preval told the U.N. Security Council. "The reinforcement of democracy that the international community has for some time now resolved to help Haiti achieve cannot take place without additional funds."

Preval also reached out to Haitian politicians and civic groups, urging them to work with his new government to create "an enabling climate for good government, democracy and participation."

Preval is a one-time ally of ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and, like him, a champion of Haiti's impoverished masses.

Aristide fled the country in February 2004 in the face of an armed revolt and under international pressure to quit. Haiti has since been run by a transitional administration with the support of a U.N. peacekeeping mission.

Preval was initially due to take office on April 29 but his inauguration now is expected to be put off until May because of delays in the second round of a legislative election.

Preval said the U.N. peacekeeping force of about 7,500 troops and 1,700 international police officers now in Haiti should keep its focus on the fragile security situation.

Reform of the Haitian police force and legal system were also vital to "establish an enabling environment where law prevails over violence," he said.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, echoing Preval's remarks, said Haiti was "only beginning its long journey towards a stable and democratic future."

"It needs and deserves our assistance to reach that destination," he told the council. "That means a vigorous partnership between the leadership and the people of Haiti on one hand, and the international community on the other."

Preval was initially awarded just under 50 percent of the votes cast in a Feb. 7 election. But, fearing angry protests by his supporters and growing allegations of vote fraud seemingly aimed at denying

Preval a first-round win, the electoral authorities changed the way they counted unmarked ballots and declared him the winner.

Préval asks U.N. for support
BY EDITH M. LEDERER
Associated Press
Miami Herald
March 28, 2006

NEW YORK - Haiti's president-elect appealed for urgent international help Monday to spur development in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country and called on all Haitians to join in a national dialogue to promote peace, democracy and stability.

In a speech to a high-level meeting of the U.N. Security Council, René Préval told ministers and ambassadors from many countries that the massive voter turnout in the Feb. 7 election he won was "an eloquent demonstration" of the Haitian people's commitment to live in peace and take part in national reconstruction.

"Today, Haiti is a country waiting to be built," Préval said. "The problems are enormous and there is widespread urgency."

"Poverty, widespread unemployment, the state of dilapidation of basic infrastructures that are necessary for development, chronic insecurity -- these are all the major challenges to be faced by the next government," he said.

Haiti's interim government announced Monday that Préval will be sworn in on May 14, almost two months later than planned because of a legislative runoff now set for April 21.

The Security Council said in a statement that completing the electoral process and installing a new government "will give Haiti a unique opportunity to break with the violence and political instability of the past."

Préval said he had come to the United Nations to call on the international community "to renew its commitment to a long-term assistance program for Haiti."

Increased international assistance is "indispensable" to Haiti's economic recovery, to create conditions for private investment and job creation, to improve social services, and to reform democratic institutions including parliament, municipalities, the judicial system, and the national police, he said.

"People are in a desperate situation in terms of food," Préval said at a news conference afterwards.

"Above all, they have to be given emergency aid. We have to create jobs immediately to calm the situation."

Argentina's Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana, the council president, announced after the meeting that a new donors' conference would be held in Brazil in May, a move strongly supported by Préval. U.S. Ambassador John Bolton said the U.S. government "is committed to helping the Haitian people move down that road to democracy."

Haiti's past, present analyzed at Blauvelt forum

By SUZAN CLARKE

THE JOURNAL NEWS

Rockland, NY

March 28, 2006

BLAUVELT — More than 150 people representing 30 agencies gathered at Dominican College's Hennessy Center yesterday to discuss Haiti's history and hear how the nation's stormy past had led it to its current crisis.

The forum, titled "Towards a Deeper Understanding of the Haitian Experience," was developed to help non-Haitians better understand Haitian immigrants' backgrounds and needs so they could better serve them.

Presented by the social work program of Dominican College, in collaboration with the Rockland Immigration Coalition, the Haitian-American Cultural and Social Organization and Konbit Neg Lakay, yesterday's half-day forum aimed to teach people — primarily service providers, educators, community leaders and some of the college's social-work students — why Haiti was in its current dilemma.

Ignorance of Haiti's society, politics and economy — and especially of the United States' role in that nation's state of affairs — has contributed to a narrow view of Haitian immigrants who live in this country, advocates have said.

From seven presenters, the audience learned about Haitian tradition and the typical kinds of cultural clashes that tended to arise when Haitians migrate to America and become exposed to new lifestyles, values and social structure.

Rose Leandre, executive director of Haitian-American Cultural and Social Organization, spoke about certain Haitian immigrants' struggles. Pierre Rancy, ESL supervisor in the East Ramapo Central School District, discussed the challenges facing Haitian students and parents in the school system, and talked about the touchy issue of corporal punishment.

Mirlene Sylvain, Medicaid outreach supervisor with the county's Department of Social Services, and Teresa Lamb, DSS director of temporary assistance, talked about what their agency could provide, among them Creole-speaking aid workers.

Ron Figueroa, co-chairman of the Rockland Immigration Coalition and coordinator of the county's Office for Community Resources, detailed Haiti's history from the 15th century and the decimation of its indigenous peoples through the 1800s, during which a slave revolt led to the creation in 1804 of the second-oldest republic in the Western Hemisphere.

Nadine Leonty, a clinical social worker with the county's Department of Mental Health, said service and other providers had to understand an immigrant's experiences in this country before they could provide effective counsel. Jocelyne Mayas, coordinator of Caribbean affairs for Gov. George Pataki, spoke about Haiti's current political situation.

Some of the speakers drew applause when their comments touched on how Haiti's people and wealth had been exploited for Western powers' gain.

The poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, Haiti and its struggling economy have been devastated by the effects of natural disasters, rampant crime and political strife. Of the 8 million people who live in the country, more than half are illiterate, and unemployment is widespread.

Despite the struggles, Haitians are a proud, industrious people whose search for a better life has led many to American shores, where they have made great sacrifices, the speakers said.

Bonni Raab, a professor and director of the college's social-work program, said she was pleased with the event.

"I think it was remarkable," Raab said. "We're very excited about this dialogue that was very much needed."

Raymonde Lindor, a real estate agent from New City, was so touched by some of the speakers that she shouted her encouragement and agreement, and applauded at several points during the proceedings.

"I heard more than I expected, and I'm very happy," the native of Haiti said, "because it was an open forum, and I wish we could have more."

Nicole Bryant, senior coordinator of outreach for satellite offices of Rockland Family Shelter, said she found the program "very educational and enlightening."

"It brought clarity and a better understanding of perceived Haitian culture," she said. "What you perceive isn't always what is."

Haitian president-elect takes power May 14

AP

The Jamaica Observer

Tuesday, March 28, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - Rene Preval will be sworn in as Haiti's next president on May 14, almost two months later than planned, the interim government said yesterday.

Preval's inauguration had been scheduled for March 2, but was postponed due to delays in holding a legislative run-off now set for April 21. Preval technically cannot take power without a sitting parliament.

Jean Junior Joseph, communications director for interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, said Preval will take the oath of office before Haiti's 129-seat parliament as outlined in the constitution.

Joseph said the new inauguration date was agreed upon by interim officials and a commission appointed by Preval, an agronomist and former president.

Preval, who is on an official visit to the United States, won the February 7 elections with nearly four times as many votes as his nearest rival. The elections were called to replace a power vacuum left after a February 2004 revolt toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a former Preval ally.

Results from the legislative run-off are expected April 28. Preval's party, Lespwa, which means "hope" in Creole, is considered a front-runner in the race, although observers say he will likely need to forge a coalition government because of the large number of political parties contesting the run-off.

Preval, who led Haiti from 1996 to 2001, has pledged to restore security, create jobs and attract foreign investment to Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

United States Committed To Helping Haitian People, Says Bolton
By end of 2006, U.S. aid to Haiti will amount to almost \$500 million
US State Dept Press Release
March 27, 2006

Haiti has made great strides in the past year and the United States will continue to support the Haitian people on the road to democracy, in part by committing nearly a half-billion dollars to this process by the end of 2006, says U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations John Bolton.

During a March 27 U.N. Security Council meeting on the situation in Haiti, Bolton lauded the February 7 elections there as "a great day for Haiti" and added that Haitian President-elect Rene Preval has an opportunity to "lead the Haitian people into a brighter future."

To support this process, Bolton said, the United States will have committed nearly a half a billion dollars -- dating from July 2004 to the end of 2006 -- to Haiti's reconstruction and return to democracy.

Bolton expressed confidence that other countries also will continue to support Haiti generously as it addresses its many challenges, and he suggested that the global community as well as the Haitian people have high hopes for the new president.

As Haiti moves forward, Bolton said, the international community expects that the government will be "inclusive" and "broad-based" and will "work to respond to the aspirations of all Haiti's citizens," as Preval has pledged. With regard to Haitian priorities, Bolton encouraged the new government to hold timely local and municipal elections.

The U.S. envoy urged the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Haiti -- known as MINUSTAH -- to redouble its efforts to provide a secure environment for Haitians, and he called on the Preval government to work with MINUSTAH to develop and reform the Haitian National Police.

Even though the United States will continue to support these and other efforts, Haiti's success ultimately will depend on Haitians, said Bolton.

"The United States remains fully committed to ensuring the necessary work is accomplished to eliminate obstacles along Haiti's path," he said. "We also understand that it is ultimately the responsibility of the government and people of Haiti to consolidate real and lasting democratic reform."

Following is the text of Bolton's statement, as prepared for delivery:

(begin text)

U.S. MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS
PRESS RELEASE #062 (06)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 27, 2006

Statement by Ambassador John R. Bolton, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, on the Situation in Haiti, in the Security Council, March 27, 2006

Mr. Secretary-General, Ambassador Valdes, distinguished colleagues, Mr. Chairman:

Let me first associate myself with the comments made by a number of my colleagues. Haiti has made great strides forward over the last year. On February 7th, millions of Haitians went to the polls. Over sixty percent of registered voters cast their ballots, and voted for new, democratic leadership. This was a great day for Haiti and for the many nations that have supported Haiti's return to democracy.

President-elect Preval now has a clear opportunity to lead the Haitian people into a brighter future. We have heard his call for continued support from the international community, and my government is committed to helping the Haitian people move down that road to democracy. By the end of 2006, the United States will have committed nearly a half billion dollars to Haiti's reconstruction and return to democracy since the Interim Cooperation Framework began in July 2004.

Many other donors have been generous as well, but Haiti will still need robust assistance for the next decade to address its many challenges in achieving a stable democracy and creating sustainable economic growth. My government looks forward to the next pledging conference this summer, and I am confident that that conference will show the international community's continued generosity.

The Haitian people have great expectations of their new leader, as does the international community. We take Mr. Preval's assurances to heart that his government will be inclusive, broad-based, and work to respond to the aspirations of all Haiti's citizens.

With the presidential election completed, and run-off legislative elections scheduled for April 21, Haitian authorities, with support from MINUSTAH and the OAS, should redouble their efforts to hold timely local and municipal elections, which are critical to the democratization process. Essential government services at the local level are a foundation of governance in Haiti and the starting point for the selection of the Supreme Court and the Permanent Electoral Council. The logistical and financial issues that affected the first round of elections should not hinder local elections. The United States is prepared to do its part, and we call on the international community to contribute as well.

The United States salutes the contributions made by MINUSTAH by a variety of partners in this hemisphere and around the world, and pays particular tribute to the leadership of Brazil and Canada. While the security situation has improved significantly in recent months, MINUSTAH should redouble its efforts to maintain a secure environment, particularly in conflictive neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince such as Cite Soleil.

Beyond immediate stabilization, however, this Council is right to focus on the vital task of preparing the Haitian government to face security challenges on its own. The United States reiterates its support for the development and reform of the Haitian National Police. We call upon President-elect Preval's government to cooperate fully with MINUSTAH to vet and train both new recruits and current

officers. The professionalization of the police force alone is not enough -- the justice system must also be strengthened. All the challenges cannot be addressed overnight, but we are already seeing promising signs, and in particular I would like to commend the leadership of Haitian National Police Director-General Mario Andresol.

While addressing lawlessness in the slums, we should also address the lack of basic services and insecurity in those areas. The Bel-Air model of stabilization -- a civilian-military effort between the Brazilian MINUSTAH contingent and the U.S. Agency for International Development to provide jobs, training and public works projects that improve the lives of Bel-Air's residents -- can serve as a model for bringing security and development to Haiti's most conflictive areas.

The United States remains fully committed to ensuring the necessary work is accomplished to eliminate obstacles along Haiti's path. We also understand that it is ultimately the responsibility of the government and people of Haiti to consolidate real and lasting democratic reform.

Thank you, Mr. President.

INSTITUTION-BUILDING AND INFRASTRUCTURE CRUCIAL TO HAITI'S PROGRESS, SAYS OAS

Press Release - Organization of American States

March 28, 2006

Calling for immediate actions to ease suffering and build hope in Haiti, the Organization of American States (OAS) Assistant Secretary General, Albert R. Ramdin, said today that long-term institution-building and investment in infrastructure and economic activity are indispensable to a viable future for Haiti. He announced OAS plans to coordinate and mobilize resources and efforts from other inter-American institutions, to boost long-term institution-building and social and economic reconstruction in Haiti.

Ambassador Ramdin told a United Nations Security Council "open debate" on Haiti that a strong, independent judiciary is needed, as is a legal framework to "protect human rights and make all equal in the eyes of the law." This would provide a framework for critically needed economic investment, he argued, calling on Haiti's President-Elect René Préval—who participated in the forum—to continue reaching out to multiple political and social sectors, and to build an open, inclusive government as a necessary basis for Haiti's social and economic recovery and overall stability. Ramdin stressed that an expanded and professionalized police force is key to public security and to economic growth that benefits citizens.

Argentina's Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana chaired the forum, which brought together at UN headquarters in New York a wide cross-section of participants, including foreign ministers, ambassadors and Juan Gabriel Valdés, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative in Haiti.

Ramdin hailed Préval's victory at the polls, and called Haiti's presidential and legislative elections of last month "a decisive victory of the Haitian people" that marks a return to Constitution rule and an opportunity for "a fresh start for a long-anticipated and necessarily long-term process of democratic consolidation, social and economic progress, and advances in security and stability." Ramdin said the upcoming legislative elections, scheduled for April 21, will pave the way for Haiti's return to more balanced powers and a truly representative democracy. "We would urge the new government and the political forces which will shape the new parliament to seek ways in which to collaborate meaningfully, for the good of the Haitian people," declared Ramdin, urging Préval to ensure that the scheduled June 18 municipal and local elections stay on course.

"We are encouraged by Mr. Préval's emphasis on attending to the population's basic needs in terms of health, education, jobs and clean water, among others," said Ramdin, who argued, "It will be up to the international community to also step up to the plate to assist the new Haitian government in quickly attending to some of the most urgent humanitarian and socioeconomic needs of Haiti's poor, a large segment of the population of Haiti which has traditionally been overlooked and dispossessed."

Appeals for urgent international help to spur development

AP

Jamaica Observer

Tuesday, March 28, 2006

UNITED NATIONS (AP) - Haiti's president-elect yesterday appealed for urgent international help to spur development in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country and called on all Haitians to join in a national dialogue to promote peace, democracy and stability.

In a speech to a high-level meeting of the UN Security Council, Rene Preval told ministers and ambassadors from many countries that the massive voter turnout in the February 7 election which he won was "an eloquent demonstration" of the Haitian people's commitment to live in peace and take part in national reconstruction.

"Today, Haiti is a country waiting to be built," Preval said. "The problems are enormous and there is widespread urgency."

"Poverty, widespread unemployment, the state of dilapidation of basic infrastructures that are necessary for development, chronic insecurity - these are all the major challenges to be faced by the next government," he said.

Preval said he had come to the United Nations to call on the international community "to renew its commitment to a long-term assistance program for Haiti".

Increased international assistance is "indispensable" to Haiti's economic recovery, to create conditions for investment and job creation, to improve social services, and to reform democratic institutions including parliament, municipalities, the judicial system, and the national police, he said.

Preval said he was currently negotiating with political parties and other groups in Haitian society "so that we can at long last bring about, by working together, the goal of laying a basis for a peaceful, democratic, social-political system".

"I issue an appeal to the political class in Haiti, and to other components of civil society, to meet with the new government within frank and sincere dialogue in order to define a pact of governance that will create an enabling climate for good governance, democracy and participation," he said.

His appeals were echoed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan and by the top UN envoy in Haiti, Juan Gabriel Valdes.

Annan said the Security Council was right to extend the mandate of the UN peacekeeping mission for six months, but he said "generous and coordinated bilateral assistance" was essential to supplement its efforts.

"The men and women of Haiti have demonstrated their faith in a better future," the secretary-general said. "Let us work with the president-elect and his team, and with the people of Haiti, to ensure that they do succeed."

Valdes said the judicial and police reforms must take place at the same time as sustained efforts to combat the "inhuman" conditions in which many Haitians live.

"During this new stage, it will be important as well to promote reconciliation and dialogue at the national level in order to ensure stability and good governance," he said.

Mitchell Meets With Preval

By Erica Wells

The Bahama Journal

March 28, 2006

Improved relations between The Bahamas and Haiti was at the centre of discussions held yesterday in New York between Foreign Affairs Minister Fred Mitchell and Haiti's president-elect Rene Preval.

Although Minister Mitchell was unable to go into the details of the meeting as they related to bi-lateral matters, he said the discussions, which lasted about 45 minutes and also involved CARICOM officials and The Bahamas United Nations Ambassador Dr. Paulette Bethel, went "very good."

"I think (President-elect Preval) is looking forward to working with The Bahamas on resolving whatever issues [need to be addressed]," Mr. Mitchell told The Bahama Journal yesterday in an interview from New York.

However, Mr. Mitchell was "optimistically cautious" as to how much Haiti's new government, and the stability that it might bring, would impact The Bahamas.

"Generally speaking, if the situation is stable in Haiti then it will lend itself toward a better relationship and better things for The Bahamas. I think that's as forward thinking as I want to be in predicting what's going to happen," he said. "I simply remain cautiously optimistic on the point."

Regarding matters related to CARICOM and Haiti's readmission to the Caribbean Community, Mr. Mitchell said those discussion were focused on setting up an early meeting between leaders of CARICOM and Mr. Preval, to go over matters on the way forward.

"[Mr. Preval] has asked for a detailed technical briefing on what the state of relations is with CARICOM. That's been agreed, that a technical person will be appointed from his side and an ambassador on the CARICOM side will work on our behalf," said Mr. Mitchell.

"It's a question of the way forward."

Haiti, admitted to CARICOM in July of 2002, was suspended from the Council in 2004, following the collapse of the elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Mr. Aristide maintains that he did not willingly leave Haiti, and spent several months in Jamaica before going into exile in South Africa.

But Haiti could take its place at the table with other regional leaders when CARICOM heads meet in July, Mr. Mitchell said yesterday.

CARICOM is on record as saying that once the elections are certified "free and fair" Haiti would be re-admitted to the Council.

And with Mr. Preval's inauguration scheduled for May 14, that certification, which was held up by a delay in the second round of parliamentary elections, is expected in the near future.

Both Minister Mitchell and President-elect Preval were among officials in New York yesterday for the open debate on Haiti with the United Nations' Security Council.

In his address to the Security Council, Mr. Preval appealed to world governments to step up long-term development aid to his impoverished Caribbean nation or risk undermining democracy.

"There is a strong correlation between democracy and economic development," Mr. Preval told the UN Security Council. "The reinforcement of democracy that the international community has for some time now resolved to help Haiti achieve cannot take place without additional funds."

This was Mr. Preval's first visit to the U.S. since winning the February 7 election.

Mr. Preval also reached out to Haitian politicians and civic groups, urging them to work with his new government to create "an enabling climate for good government, democracy and participation."

Speaking on behalf of CARICOM, Mr. Mitchell, told the Security Council that the Caribbean Community stood ready to assist the Haitian government and people as they confronted their many challenges, adding that helping Haiti overcome obstacles to becoming an integral part of CARICOM would be a "priority."

Mr. Mitchell also noted that stability and security were imperative to socio-economic progress and the revitalisation of fundamental governance bodies, particularly the judiciary and the police.

"As Haiti moves towards the post-electoral phase and the establishment of a new constitutional government, it will be necessary for the United Nations to reaffirm its commitment to Haiti and to review the role of the peacekeeping mission, MINUSTAH [United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti], with greater emphasis being placed on its peace building aspects," he said.

"In this context, the government of Haiti, under President-elect Rene Preval, will no doubt wish to consider whether the newly-established Peacebuilding Commission can make a useful contribution to Haiti's recovery."

Mr. Mitchell said an important aspect of Haiti's return to CARICOM will involve facilitating the smooth integration of Haiti into CARICOM's Single Market and into various programmes and institutions that coordinate and underpin the functioning of the Community.

On Tuesday, Mr. Preval will travel to Washington D.C., to meet with U.S. President George W. Bush and members of Congress. He will also hold talks with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in a bid to secure foreign aid to help rebuild Haiti.

The Bahamas is perhaps the most interested country in the region when it comes seeing stability in Haiti. Each year, thousands of Haitians seeking a better life risk their lives to get to The Bahamas.

The last count of Haitian migrants living in The Bahamas was at 30,000 to 60,000 and some say the large numbers are straining the country's resources.

The latest data from the Department of Immigration shows that the government spent \$720,573 on repatriation exercises in 2005, compared to \$521,111.40 the year before.

The Deputy Director of Immigration William Pratt said 4,504 Haitians were sent home last year. In 2004, 2,500 Haitians were repatriated.

Mr. Mitchell noted that The Bahamas Embassy in Haiti, where CARICOM has its office, was still available when CARICOM is able to supply representatives.

"[They are looking] to get that settled as quickly as possible," said the minister.

Haiti May Yet, Phoenix-Like, Arise
Editorial
The Bahama Journal
March 28, 2006

We have counseled our people time and time again that they must learn how to take the bitter with the sweet. In our region, no one knows this better than our neighbor, the poor Haitian. In recent times he has become the object of scorn for some, and a source of reliable labor for others.

He has also become an object of racist disdain for some in official circles in the United States of America. Indeed, as we compare and contrast the way he is treated if he arrives in Miami on a raft to the way his Cuban counterpart on another raft who arrives in Miami, the difference is startling and clear. The Cuban is welcomed and the Haitian is turned back to face whatever fate he must face if he returns to his country.

In other places, he and his cohorts are derisively and obnoxiously characterized as comprising a continuing 'influx'. And for sure, these ways of looking at and dealing with the Haitian is reinforced when truly catastrophic news cascades from that hurting land.

With this bleak catalog of woe as background, the reader might expect more woe from us concerning the challenges facing the Republic of Haiti.

Today, this is not so. We do have some good news to share. This new information concerns Rene Garcia Preval.

First this response from U.S. Secretary of State, Dr. Condoleezza Rice who says of the recent elections in Haiti, "We clearly welcome the steps that CARICOM is taking in regards to Haiti and in particular the work that will be done, has been done and will be done, in technical assistance, electoral assistance, police training assistance and many other kinds of technical assistance that I am sure will be rendered to Haiti.

"As you know, I met with President-elect Preval when I was in Santiago. We had a very good discussion of what is required for a stable Haiti. And I think we will want - in the Core Group as well as with our friends and colleagues here in CARICOM - to design, in a sense, for Haiti an international technical and other assistance package going forward that accords with what the new Haitian Government wants to do.

She concludes with these promising words, "We have to remember now that we do have a freely elected President of Haiti. We will soon have a parliament. And I would think that we will want to talk with them about how to knit our plans and our assets to support this new democratic Government of Haiti."

And now, we are getting some more good news about Haiti which is to the effect that "President-elect Rene Preval left Sunday for the United States in a trip aimed at drumming up support for Haiti's mammoth development needs. He plans to visit New York City."

We are understanding that "Preval, making his first trip to the U.S. since winning the Feb. 7 election, will visit the United Nations headquarters on Monday for talks with Secretary General Kofi Annan and the Security Council."

And of extreme importance to today's Haiti is that there are 7,300 U.N. peacekeepers and 1,750 international police in Haiti to help maintain order after a February 2004 revolt toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

We note also that Preval said he wants troops to stay until stability returns to the Western Hemisphere's poorest country.

We are also told that on Tuesday, Preval will travel to Washington, D.C., to meet with President Bush and members of Congress. He also will hold talks with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

And most interestingly, we are learning that a delegation of Haitian and US business leaders, including a former rival for the presidency, Dumarsais Simeus, will be making the trip with the incoming Haitian leader, sources close to Preval said.

And also please bear in mind that on recent trips to Brazil, China and Argentina, Preval said the outlook is good for Haiti after the February presidential election and it is time to try to profit from international goodwill toward the Americas' poorest country.

It is today quite clear that while this will be Preval's first US trip as president-elect; it probably will not be his last. He is turning out to be quite a Caribbean political phenomenon, beloved by those on the left and respected by those on the right.

Haiti may yet -phoenix-like- rise from its mire of poverty and distress.

Rene Preval Praises Work of Cuban Doctors to UN
Cuban News Agency
March 28, 2006

Havana, Haiti's President-elect, Rene Preval, underscored Cuba's medical cooperation in Haiti as he addressed a special session of the UN Security Council.

Preval said that along with the Cuban medical aid in his country, 120 young Haitians have just graduated from Cuban medical schools, and that the new doctors are back in Haiti ready to offer their services in the country's rural areas, PL reports.

In statements to reporters at the UN building in New York, Haiti's President-elect said that at present 750 young Haitians are currently taking medical courses in Cuba.

After thanking Argentina –current Security Council Chair— for having invited him to speak during the session on Haiti, Preval said that his people are living in a desperate food situation and need emergency assistance.

Responding to questions on Haiti's high infant mortality rate, Rene Preval said that this was directly linked to the country's situation in general and in particular to education and infrastructure problems.

The Haitian President-elect said that the priorities of his new government include facing problems such as providing the population with drinking water and developing an environmental program aimed at fighting insects, which are two aspects desperately needed to improve sanitation and wipe out disease.

Secretary-General's opening remarks at Security Council's open debate on Haiti
UN News Centre
New York, 27 March 2006 -

Mr. President-elect,

Excellencies,

It is good to see so many ministers here for this important session, Mr. President, and I am pleased to join you for today's discussion on Haiti. Let me start by extending a warm welcome and congratulations to President-elect Préval.

The first round of national elections that took place last month was a vivid illustration of the faith of the Haitian people in the democratic process, and their determination to make a fresh start. That was clear from the high turnout of voters who waited patiently to cast their ballots, and from the peaceful and pluralistic nature of the electoral process.

Let me also recognize the important contribution that MINUSTAH made in helping to ensure the political space and security needed for successful elections. I am sure the Council will join me in expressing gratitude to my Special Representative, Juan Gabriel Valdés, for his distinguished leadership.

These developments should encourage us to even greater efforts in Haiti, which is only beginning its long journey towards a stable and democratic future. It needs and deserves our assistance to reach that destination. That means a vigorous partnership between the leadership and the people of Haiti on one hand, and the international community on the other.

We must all reinforce President-elect Préval's efforts to encourage broad political reconciliation. Haiti's institutions of governance require generous support. So do the people of Haiti, who every day endure a level of hardship and insecurity that is unacceptable, and also incompatible with the stability of the country.

Days after the elections, the Security Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations operation in Haiti for a further six months. At the same time, it expressed its intention to authorize further extensions. It is right and indeed necessary that a multidimensional peacekeeping operation continue. Yet the efforts of MINUSTAH can tackle only the most urgent needs. We need generous and coordinated bilateral assistance to supplement and build on those efforts.

Excellencies,

The men and women of Haiti have demonstrated their faith in a better future. Let us work with the President-elect and his team, and with the people of Haiti, to ensure that they do succeed.

Thank you very much.

**Aristide Corruption Discussed with French Government
webmaster, Haiti Democracy Project web page
March 27, 2006**

The Union des Jeunes Progressistes is a Haitian youth organization originally based in Hinche, but now with branches in Port-au-Prince and the United States, seeking to remake Haiti into a dynamic, modernizing country. They arranged two meetings with the first secretary of the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations Arnaud Barthelemy on March 22 and 25 to present information about Aristide's embezzlement of hundreds of millions of dollars from the Haitian treasury and the progressive sector's effort to recover this money for Haiti. The case has become a strategic breakpoint in Haiti as the existence of pending charges may prevent Aristide's return with the considerable destabilization this could entail.

Security Council presidential statement commends Haiti on elections, says opportunity exists to break with violence, instability of past

Source: United Nations Security Council

Relief Web

Date: 27 Mar 2006

SC/8673

Security Council

5397th Meeting (AM & PM)

The Security Council today commended the Haitian people on the successful completion of the first round of their electoral process and congratulated René García Préval on his election as President, saying the process would give the country “a unique opportunity to break with the violence and political instability of the past”.

In a statement read out by Jorge Taiana, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of Argentina, whose country holds the Presidency for March, the Council also welcomed the announcement by the Haitian authorities to hold the second round of parliamentary elections on 21 April, which would allow the prompt inauguration of the President-elect. The Council emphasized that the timely municipal and local elections were also fundamentally important to the completion of Haiti’s electoral process and to the strengthening of its domestic institutions. It also reiterated its call on all parties to respect the outcome of the elections, to remain engaged in the political process and to promote national reconciliation and inclusiveness in order to reach consensus on the basic policies that Haiti should pursue to bolster its democratic transition.

The Council also stressed the need to ensure a secure and stable environment in Haiti and its support for the continued efforts by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to assist the Haitian authorities in that respect. It encouraged all troop- and police-contributing countries to remain engaged in the Mission.

Council members reaffirmed that the establishment of the rule of law, including the protection of human rights, institutional capacity-building and rapid progress on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, would be crucial to Haiti’s future over the next few years. To that end, the sustained political will and common strategic vision of the Haitian authorities and the international community were essential in that context.

The Council underlined the urgent need to proceed with a thorough and comprehensive reform of the Haitian National Police in line with its resolution 1608 (2005), as well as concurrent justice reform. Aware that sustainable development in Haiti remained essential to the country’s stability, the Council reiterated the need for the quick implementation of highly visible and labour-intensive projects that would help create jobs and deliver basic social services.

Earlier, President-elect Préval described the massive turnout of Haitian voters as an eloquent manifestation of their wish to live in peace and to take part in national reconstruction. It bore witness to their legitimate aspirations to see an improvement of their material conditions of existence and a positive step towards stabilization. Haiti’s problems were enormous. Widespread poverty,

unemployment, dilapidated infrastructure and chronic insecurity represented all the major challenges that the next Government must face. International assistance was indispensable for the consolidation of the democratic process and for laying the socio-economic basis for Haiti's lasting development.

Turning to the role of MINUSTAH, he said the Mission was carrying out a very difficult task in working with the Haitian National Police to improve the security situation in the country. It must now strive to create an enabling environment where law prevailed over violence. Reform of the police and the judicial system was an imperative. It had become indispensable to reinforce the operational capacity of those sectors and to enable them to fulfil their mandated mission. Also important was the need for Haiti's political class and other sectors of civil society to meet for a frank social dialogue that would result in political and social reconciliation.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, emphasizing that Haiti was only just beginning its long journey towards a stable and democratic future, called on the international community to reinforce President-elect Préval's efforts to encourage broad political reconciliation. Haiti's institutions of governance required generous support, as did the Haitian people, who endured an unacceptable level of daily hardship and insecurity.

He said that days after the February elections, the Council had decided to extend MINUSTAH's mandate for a further six months, and expressed its intention to authorize further extensions. Yet, the Mission's efforts could tackle only the most urgent needs. Generous and coordinated bilateral assistance was needed to supplement and build on those efforts. The men and women of Haiti had demonstrated their faith in a better future. "Let us work with President-elect Préval and his team, and with the people of Haiti, to ensure that they succeed", he added.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Haiti also spoke today, as did the Foreign Ministers of Greece, Guyana (on behalf of the Rio Group), Bahamas (on behalf of the Caribbean Community), Dominican Republic and Guatemala. The Vice Minister and Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs of Peru, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Chile, and the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs of Brazil also addressed the Council.

Other speakers today included the representatives of China, Congo, United States, Russian Federation, Qatar, Japan, Slovakia, Ghana, United Republic of Tanzania, France, United Kingdom, Denmark, Argentina, Tunisia (in his capacity as President of the Economic and Social Council), Austria (on behalf of the European Union), El Salvador, Spain, Canada, South Africa, Cuba, Mexico and Venezuela.

The Council also heard speakers representing the Organization of American States and the United Nations Development Programme.

Today's meeting began at 10:05 a.m. and was suspended at 1:10 p.m. It resumed at 3:10 p.m. and ended at 4:15 p.m.

Presidential Statement

The full text of presidential statement S/PRST/2006/13 reads, as follows:

“The Security Council commends the Haitian people on the successful completion of the first round of their electoral process, congratulates Mr. René García Prével on his election as President, and looks forward to working with the new Government to help build a better future for Haiti. This process will give Haiti a unique opportunity to break with the violence and political instability of the past. The Council expresses its full support for the work of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Juan Gabriel Valdés.

“The Security Council welcomes the announcement by the Haitian authorities to hold the second round of parliamentary elections on 21 April 2006, which will allow the prompt inauguration of the President-elect. The Council emphasizes that timely municipal and local elections are also fundamentally important to complete Haiti’s electoral process and to strengthen its democratic institutions. The Council urges the Transitional Government of Haiti and the Provisional Electoral Council, with the support of the international community, to continue to ensure that the electoral process is conducted in a transparent and credible manner. The Council reiterates its call on all parties to respect the outcome of the elections, to remain engaged in the political process, and to promote national reconciliation and inclusiveness in order to reach consensus on the basic policies that Haiti should pursue to bolster its democratic transition.

“The Security Council stresses the need to ensure a secure and stable environment in Haiti and it expresses its support for MINUSTAH’s continued efforts to assist the Haitian authorities in that respect. The Council, in that regard, encourages all troop- and police-contributing countries to remain engaged in MINUSTAH. The Council reaffirms that the establishment of the rule of law, including the protection of human rights, institutional capacity-building, and rapid progress on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, will be crucial to Haiti’s future over the next few years. To this end, the sustained political will and the common strategic vision of the Haitian authorities and the international community are essential. In this context, the Council underlines the urgent need to proceed with a thorough and comprehensive reform of the Haitian National Police in line with its resolution 1608 (2005), as well as concurrent justice reform.

“The Security Council is aware that sustainable development in Haiti remains essential to the stability of the country. In that regard, the Council reiterates the need for the quick implementation of highly visible and labour-intensive projects that help to create jobs and deliver basic social services. Recognizing progress already made in donor efforts, the Council calls on donors and relevant stakeholders to work with the new Government through the Interim Cooperation Framework in order to reassess assistance priorities in a targeted way and to work in close coordination, as appropriate, with MINUSTAH. The Council reiterates its willingness to cooperate with the newly elected authorities in order to address the long-term challenges facing Haiti.”

Background

The Security Council met today to hold an open debate on Haiti.

Statements

KOFI ANNAN, Secretary-General of the United Nations, said the first round of national elections that took place last month was a vivid illustration of the faith of the Haitian people in the democratic process, and their determination to make a fresh start. That was clear from the high turnout of voters who waited patiently to cast their ballots, and from the peaceful and pluralistic nature of the electoral process. “Those developments should encourage us to even greater efforts in Haiti, which is only beginning its long journey towards a stable and democratic future. It needs and deserves our assistance to reach that destination.” That meant a vigorous partnership between the leadership and the people of Haiti, on the one hand, and the international community, on the other.

“We must all reinforce President-elect Préval’s efforts to encourage broad political reconciliation”, he stated. Haiti’s institutions of governance required generous support. So did the people of Haiti, who every day endured a level of hardship and insecurity that was unacceptable, and also incompatible with the stability of the country.

Days after the elections, he said, the Security Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations operation in Haiti for a further six months. At the same time, it expressed its intention to authorize further extensions. It was right, and indeed necessary, that a multidimensional peacekeeping operation continued. Yet, the efforts of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) could tackle only the most urgent needs. Generous and coordinated bilateral assistance was needed to supplement and build on those efforts. The men and women of Haiti had demonstrated their faith in a better future. “Let us work with President-elect Préval and his team, and with the people of Haiti, to ensure that they succeed.”

RENÉ PRÉVAL, President-elect of Haiti, said that the massive turnout of the Haitian people in the elections of 7 February had been an eloquent manifestation of their wish to live in peace and to take part in national reconstruction. It bore witness to their legitimate aspirations to see an improvement of their material conditions of existence and a positive step forward towards stabilization.

He said that Haiti was today a country waiting to be built. Its problems were enormous and urgent needs were everywhere. Widespread poverty, unemployment, the dilapidated state of the infrastructure that was indispensable for national development, as well as chronic insecurity, represented all the major challenges that the next Government must face. Assistance from the international community was indispensable for the process of consolidating the democratic process and for laying the socio-economic basis for Haiti’s lasting development. International assistance must also be concentrated on reform of democratic institutions such as Parliament, municipalities, local community institutions, the judicial system and the professionalization of the police.

Calling upon the international community to renew its commitment to long-term assistance to Haiti, he cited Security Council resolution 1212 (1998) and stressed that economic revitalization and reconstruction were the principal tasks facing the Haitian Government and people. The resolution also called on United Nations organs and agencies, particularly the Economic and Social Council, to contribute to the development of a post-election programme based on the creation of jobs, improved basic social services, the strengthening of institutions, and the creation of conditions that would be conducive to massive private investment.

Turning to the role of MINUSTAH, he said the Mission was carrying out a very difficult task in working with the Haitian National Police to improve the security situation in the country. It must now strive to create an enabling environment where law prevailed over violence. Reform of the police and the judicial system was an imperative. It had become indispensable to reinforce their operational capacity and to enable them to fulfil their mandated mission. It was important to negotiate, in mutual respect, an agreement in that regard and in accordance with constitutional provisions on the role of police.

Similarly, Haiti needed technical and financial support from the international community for its disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, he said. It was also important for Haiti's political class, as well as other sectors of civil society, to meet for a frank social dialogue that would result in political and social reconciliation. The aim was to lay the foundations of a peaceful socio-political system that would be peaceful and democratic, elements that were indispensable for stability, security, economic recovery and the creation of an inclusive society. The international community should support the Haitian people in the quest for democracy and development.

JUAN GABRIEL VALDES, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), said major challenges remained to ensure that the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law became permanent in Haiti. For the past two years, the Mission's mandate had been to restore stability and to support free and fair elections. He stressed the inclusive character of the elections, which had seen a massive turnout in the country from all segments of society. Saying the Mission had only begun, he cited the need to begin a new cycle of cooperation with the newly elected Government, with a focus on strengthening State institutions and launching the socio-economic development process. It was important to continue reform of the Haitian National Police, as well as reform and strengthen the judiciary system. Members of the Haitian National Police and the judicial system must receive decent salaries and have decent working conditions. He had been struck by the precarious nature of the facilities and the means at the disposal of the police and judges. As long as that continued, any reform would be difficult.

He stressed the need to promote reconciliation and dialogue at the national level. The dialogue process should allow Haitians to achieve a common vision of their future. The Haitian diaspora must also be called on to play a role. As the President-elect had stated, national reconciliation must find its roots in the future of Haiti and not in its past. National reconciliation would be decisive for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of armed groups. Social and economic development would lead to improvement of living conditions and contribute to all other processes in the country. The population must be able to count on the continued assistance of the international community. He hoped that cooperation and coordination mechanisms would be established to optimize cooperation between Haiti, the lending institutions and the entire international community. The Government of Haiti and the international community must show the country's population that they had the desire and the ability to fight poverty and establish conditions for sustainable development.

DORA BAKOYANNIS, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, said the road that lay ahead for Haiti was full of challenges. First, it was imperative that the second round of legislative elections, as well as the municipal and local elections, be conducted smoothly and that they take place on time. The next few weeks were extremely crucial, and neither MINUSTAH nor the Haitian national authorities should relax their vigilance. The transition of power at all levels, the swearing-in of the new President, and the

formation of a new government must move on swiftly and unhindered. She urged all parties to remain engaged in the political process and to respect the outcome of the elections.

Continuing, she said Haiti's newly elected authorities would have the opportunity to focus their attention on the most immediate and important challenge facing the country: the creation of institutions that uphold the rule of law and protect human rights. Most notable in that field would be the reform of the Haitian National Police and of the judicial system. The Haitian National Police must not resort to extreme methods and must fully comply with internationally recognized standards of respect for human rights and due process. Impunity must also be addressed. National dialogue and political reconciliation must continue to be promoted. True, new institutions were in the making, but remnants of the old ways continued to abound. To that end, the disarmament of armed bands that roamed the country must definitely be completed. A secure and stable environment would be conducive to fostering economic development and getting children off the streets and back to school.

The Haitian people were the owners of their own future, she said. However, Haiti could not go it alone, and would need considerable help from the international community to implement projects for economic development. Therefore, she called on donors to do everything they could to help Haiti at such a critical moment, and ensure not only a steady influx of financial aid, but also timely disbursements. The Haitian Government must, through the Interim Cooperation Framework, reassess assistance priorities and implement projects for long-term economic development that would sustain Haitians' faith in their new Government. The European Union, international financial institutions and other stakeholders must ensure that economic development was channelled to viable projects that would help create jobs and provide basic social services. On a bilateral basis, she committed today an additional €100,000 to the €100,000 Greece had contributed last year.

HAROLD FORSYTH MEJIA, Vice Minister and Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs of Peru, said the elections held in February had been the first step towards the consolidation of democracy and stability in Haiti. The second round of parliamentary elections and the upcoming local and municipal elections required the assistance of the international community and renewed political commitment of the Haitian authorities and citizens. It was fundamentally important to continue promoting political dialogue and national reconciliation, in order to avoid the return to polarization, violence and chaos. Peru, as an American country in solidarity with Haiti, shared the desire for peace, democracy and development of the Haitian people, and offered its own experience.

He said that the kind of crisis experienced by Haiti was evidence of the disintegration of the social fabric, where delinquency and the collapse of institutions were intertwined. That situation was the result of years of exclusion and extreme poverty, which had generated enormous environmental disasters. Unfortunately, today, Haiti was a country with high physical and social imbalances. It had one of the highest urban population growth rates on the planet and one of the lowest per capita rates of water, food and energy consumption. That imbalance, resulting from the enormous annual population growth rate of 3 per cent, one of the highest in Latin America, had destroyed the Haitian natural habitat, through implacable deforestation, producing enormous soil erosion, with loss of fertile soils and sedimentation. Consequently, there had been a shortage of water, which was needed to grow crops and to generate power. Recovering from the ecological damage would be extremely difficult, given that the current global climate change would worsen even more the country's social and physical imbalance.

Now was the time when the efforts of the international community must agree on long-term support for the Haitian Government and people, he emphasized. The country needed a compact, through which the international community should provide the resources needed for the implementation of the goals, defined together with the Haitian authorities, in such areas as democratic governability, social and economic development, environmental protection and security. The next evaluation of the assistance priorities agreed in the Interim Cooperation Framework, to be carried out by the new Haitian authorities, constituted a valuable occasion for that purpose. In that long-term commitment, the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Development Bank had a role to fulfil, as did the United Nations.

SAMUEL INSANALLY (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said it was important that the international community give serious thought to how it might best assist Haiti towards stability and security. Strong and effective institutions and machinery would be needed to guarantee democratic benefits to all Haitian citizens. The international community's cooperation with Haiti must be designed to yield, among others, an education system tailored to the needs of Haiti's largely Creole-speaking population, a strong police and judiciary to preserve law and order, and basic services such as health and housing. A determined effort was also needed to eliminate the climate of fear and insecurity. Internecine violence must be condemned. He supported extending MINUSTAH's mandate to preserve and consolidate democracy, and expanding its Mission beyond peacekeeping to include a stronger humanitarian and development component. That expansion would enhance MINUSTAH's credibility and prestige among Haitians.

Democracy must be nurtured through equitable socio-economic development, he continued. Adequate, reliable financial and technical assistance was necessary to empower the Haitian citizenry. Early implementation of some priority projects aimed at improving living standards for Haiti's poor could give new hope for economic recovery and growth. Several Rio Group members had already established bilateral cooperation programmes with Haiti in agriculture, sanitation, nutrition in schools and HIV/AIDS. Caribbean Community (CARICOM) members had already signalled their readiness to readmit Haiti into CARICOM's Councils and provide it with further material and technical support. He commended the United States, Canada, the European Union and other donor countries and international agencies that had contributed within the Interim Cooperation Framework to several development programmes and urged other States and agencies to follow suit.

WANG GUANGYA (China) said that the successful holding of elections and the completion of the political transition process represented only the first step in Haiti's endeavour for peace and reconstruction. Sticking to the track of peace and reconstruction was far more difficult, complicated and challenging, than preparing and holding elections. In order to realize that goal, genuine reconciliation was the precondition for the restoration of the country's stability and development. All parties concerned should sum up carefully the experience and lessons drawn from the first round of parliamentary elections, and ensure the fairness and transparency of the second round, as well as the municipal and local elections, so as to establish the trust and confidence of the population and all participating parties.

Economic and social development was the key to eradicating the root causes of the turmoil in Haiti, he stressed. Haiti had long suffered from a paucity of infrastructure and substandard living conditions.

The new Government should mobilize all forces and concentrate its limited resources on quick-impact projects, in order to improve the daily lives of the people and help generate employment opportunities. Only when the people enjoyed the real benefits could they build up confidence in the future of their country. With very limited resources and facing multitudinous tasks, whether Haiti successfully avoided relapse and proceeded towards lasting peace and sustainable development, depended on the hard work of the Haitian Government and people, as well as the sustained attention and assistance of the international community. Latin American support was extremely precious for Haiti's stability and development, as well as for its return to the international community. Further, the international community should continuously enhance Haiti's ownership of the reconstruction process

FREDERICK MITCHELL (Bahamas), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that, from the outset, CARICOM had indicated its willingness to welcome Haiti's return to CARICOM's Council for Foreign and Community Relations, once Haiti's constitutional rule had been restored. The CARICOM stood ready to assist the Haitian Government and people as they confronted their many challenges. The CARICOM proposed to meet soon with the President-elect to better determine how it could best contribute to assist Haiti. Stability and security were imperative to socio-economic progress and the revitalization of fundamental governance bodies, particularly the judiciary and police. Stability would also require renewed emphasis on disarmament, demobilization and social reinsertion. Collective efforts, based on the counsel of the Peacebuilding Commission, could provide Haiti with invaluable assistance for reconstruction and institution-building, by ensuring integrated strategies and predictable financing, among other things.

Helping Haiti overcome obstacles to becoming an integral part of CARICOM would be a priority, he continued. The CARICOM would work to facilitate Haiti's smooth integration into various programmes and institutions. The CARICOM would also seek to build on activities set in train during the transition period, including institutional development for creation of a permanent electoral council, completion of a study on Haiti's energy and fuel needs, an academic conference on transition to democracy, and French translation of key technical CARICOM documents.

PASCAL GAYAMA (Congo) said that, in recent years, the situation in Haiti had required special attention from the international community. The situation had been marked by a largely destroyed public administration, a weakened judicial system, great insecurity, and vast economic and social difficulties. Hence, there had been great distress and frustration for the people of Haiti, particularly its young. He was pleased that the Security Council had spared no effort to assist Haiti. He reaffirmed the importance of the upcoming legislative elections, as well as the municipal and local elections. While commending the efforts of the Government during the transition, he could not overlook the merits of the Haitian people themselves, who had demonstrated their commitment to change through peaceful means. Peace would not be lasting without genuine prospects for growth. In that connection, it was important for the new Government to restore its authority throughout the country. International assistance would also prove necessary.

It was necessary to ensure that the administration and security systems resumed their roles in all parts of the country, he said. It was, more than ever, important to provide assistance to develop the new democratic institutions, to support the reform of the judicial system and to reform the national police. As underscored by President Latortue when he had addressed the Council, Haiti would need less military people, and more men and women devoted to the social and economic development of the

country. He welcomed the fact that donors, during their meeting in Washington on 21 February, had agreed on the need to establish a programme to support democracy in Haiti beyond the holding of elections. He supported maintaining the presence of MINUSTAH and encouraged President-elect Préval to promote a climate of dialogue to bring together all Haitians. The Haitians faced a bright future, and that future was in their hands. The international community was called on to assist them, while respecting their uniqueness and sovereignty.

CARLOS MORALES TRONCOSO, Secretary of State for External Relations of the Dominican Republic, said that President-elect Préval had chosen the Dominican Republic as the destination of his first official visit, following his election. Haiti urgently needed the solidarity of the international community, which, led by the United Nations, had paid much attention to the strife that had plagued that country.

He said the international community had a long-term commitment to institutionalize democracy in Haiti and to lay the foundations for sustainable economic development. There were four crucial questions that must be addressed. First, it was necessary to incorporate all the political events, in order to stabilize the country and restore democracy and social consensus. Second, it was necessary to restore assistance to every sector of society, as well as to Haitian society as a whole. Third was the need to retain MINUSTAH for as long as it would take to establish Haitian security forces capable of taking on the duties of restoring security and stability.

Finally, there was a need to relieve the weight of impoverishment borne by the Haitian people, he said. Given Haiti's long nationhood, it would be possible for the country's people to overcome their problems and restore their country. The Dominican Republic stood ready to work with the new Haitian Government in joint matters related to environmental protection, immigration, port security and other important issues.

JOHN BOLTON (United States) said that Haiti had made great strides over the past year, including the successful holding of the recent elections. President-elect Préval now had a clear opportunity to lead the Haitian people to a brighter future. The United States Government was committed to help Haiti move down the road to democracy. By the end of 2006, it would have committed half a billion dollars to Haiti's reconstruction. Many other donors had been generous as well. Haiti would continue to require the assistance of the international community in the road ahead. The Haitian people had great expectations of its new leader, as did the international community.

With the election completed, he said, the Haitian authorities should redouble efforts to hold timely municipal and local elections. The logistical and financial issues that affected the first round of elections should not hinder the next round of elections. While the security situation had improved, MINUSTAH should redouble efforts to maintain a secure environment. The Council was right to focus on preparing the Government to face security challenges on its own. He called on President-elect Préval's Government to cooperate fully with MINUSTAH to reform the Haitian National Police. In addition, the justice system must be strengthened and the lack of basic social services addressed. The United States remained fully committed to helping eliminate the obstacles along Haiti's path. Ultimately, it was the responsibility of the Government and people of Haiti to consolidate real and democratic reforms.

ANDREY DENISOV (Russian Federation) said it was important that all political forces recognize the outcome of the recent elections, in the interest of the sustainable advancement of Haiti's electoral process, and so that all concerned could work more actively to strengthen state institutions, as well as for the long-term stabilization of the country. There was a need to increase the cooperation between MINUSTAH and the Haitian National Police.

However, without true desire on the part of the Haitian to change their lives for the better, long-term positive results would not be possible, he said. The newly-elected leadership had made itself responsible for working out better ways to strengthen Haiti's cooperation with the international community. The Russian Federation supported them, in that regard, and paid tribute to all peacekeepers who had given their lives in the cause of peace. The Russian Federation also gave its full support to the presidential statement to be adopted by the Council.

ALBERTO VAN KLAVEREN, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile, said that for the electoral process to conclude successfully, it was necessary to assure that the parliamentary runoff elections were carried out in equally democratic and timely conditions. That was, without a doubt, the primary objective in order for the President-elect to promptly assume his place as leader of Haiti. The people of Haiti today held the capacity to control their own destiny. That depended on two basic conditions. First, Haitian society must abstain from all forms of violence, while forums must be created for inclusive dialogue to promote understanding between the various political and social sectors. Initiating such institutional reform would create the foundations of good government and sustainable economic development.

Second, the international community must contribute with development programmes mainly directed at fighting extreme poverty, chronic disease, lack of infrastructure, and environmental degradation. For that to occur, it was imperative to disburse, in flexible and immediate terms, the totality of the funds committed to the Interim Cooperation Framework, while increasing local and foreign investment and generating new sources of employment, specifically for the younger population. The MINUSTAH should continue to support the Haitian authorities to maintain a safe and stable environment in the country. It would also be essential to continue supporting deeds that facilitated an integrated reconstruction process.

He highlighted Chile's contributions to development in Haiti, including efforts to improve and assist the national police. The reform, modernization and strengthening of the judicial and penal system was also an urgent task, and one that required technical and financial assistance to the institutions of the rule of law. That was essential to guarantee an absolute respect for human rights, an end to impunity, and compliance with the norms of due process. He urged the new Haitian authorities to implement an effective policy for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of all armed groups. Haiti was beginning a new phase, in which the United Nations would carry out a key role in the consolidation of the democratic regime and a durable peace.

NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL-NASSER (Qatar) said that providing the necessary support for peacebuilding activities would play a crucial role in guaranteeing the sustainable stability of Haiti and attaining the well-being of its people. The issues that must be addressed in the next juncture included disarmament of fighters, as well as their discharge and reintegration into society; the restoration and rehabilitation of the security sector and the rebuilding of the National Police Force to effectively

enforce the law; ensuring that justice was upheld by promoting the judiciary, and the promotion of human rights; the creation of jobs; and the rebuilding of an active national civil administration, which was able to provide basic public services like water, energy, health care, education and infrastructure.

He said that to succeed in all those areas it was necessary to mull over the past and benefit from the lessons learned in building a State of institutions that rested in national interests. It was reasonable for the elected Government to benefit from the support of the United Nations, since MINUSTAH and other agencies of the Organization had played a crucial role in the progress achieved in the areas of stability and basic services. MINUSTAH was generally considered an indispensable help to the new Government, and its presence had had a great effect on security and in monitoring the electoral process.

KENZO OSHIMA (Japan) said that, while the elections were a major gain in restoring democracy in Haiti, the country faced formidable challenges that President-elect Préval and the future Government would have to address, in order to recover from conflict and make strides towards nation-building. The most pressing and important challenge was finding a national reconciliation that was inclusive. To that end, he hoped the successful conduct of the February elections would pave the way for a peaceful electoral process in the second round of parliamentary elections in April.

Second, he said, national institution- and capacity-building, including reform of the National Police and of the judicial and correctional systems, continued to be a major challenge for Haiti. The security situation remained fragile and, unless addressed promptly and effectively, could lead to serious problems. The rehabilitation of national institutions and capacity-building should be high on MINUSTAH's agenda, and the review of the Mission's mandate should appropriately reflect that.

He said Haiti would be an important test case in peacebuilding. It was crucial for the people of the country to feel the tangible benefits of peace, through the economic and social development of their society. That required international support and assistance both in the long and short term. For its part, Japan had provided assistance to Haiti in the area of humanitarian aid and electoral assistance, and would continue to be a partner in humanitarian and development assistance, with full respect of the importance of the concept of ownership of the Haitian people in the development process.

PETER BURIAN (Slovakia), associating himself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union, said that Haiti would need further international support and assistance to cope with its many formidable challenges, including weak State and local institutions, insufficient administrative infrastructure, deep poverty, violent gangs and flourishing drug and money laundering trades. Slovakia fully supported MINUSTAH's continued role in ensuring security, reinforcing democracy, supporting implementation of civil service and public administrative reforms, security sector reform and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. At the same time, only the people of Haiti could solve their country's problems. Haitian ownership and leadership in rebuilding the country were indispensable for the success of the country's transition.

He said that long-term development challenges lay ahead, as did immediate humanitarian needs, which, if not urgently addressed, could well imperil the country's fragile stability. Special attention should be paid to the grave situation of the thousands of street children forced to fight in gangs or become part of a subculture of bonded servitude. Success in addressing those urgent problems was

contingent on immediate and durable donor support and close coordination among all stakeholders. Regional cooperation would also be important in a successful transition. Cooperation with the Dominican Republic in implementing measures to better manage security at the border would be a key factor in fighting effectively against arms and drug trafficking, as well as combating organized crime in general. Slovakia particularly welcomed the positive signs in relations between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, including the reactivation of the Joint Integrated Haitian-Dominican Commission.

NANA EFFAH-APENTENG (Ghana) said that, unless the cycle of violence and political instability was overcome, democracy and meaningful development would continue to elude Haiti. It was Ghana's hope that the Government that would finally emerge would reflect Haitians' collective determination to evolve a new political culture of inclusiveness, which would transcend the sharp social and economic divisions that had been the bane of Haiti's progress over the years. In that connection, Ghana looked forward to a peaceful second round of parliamentary elections.

He said that, by the end of April, the President and Parliament would have been inaugurated to begin the arduous task of transforming Haiti into a more united, stable and prosperous country. The momentum for turning away from the turbulent politics of the past, derived from a strong national consensus in favour of democratic governance. The huge turnout in the February elections had shown clearly that the consensus did indeed exist within Haitian society, but giving that practical meaning for the ordinary citizen was a major challenge. Hopefully, the outcome of the June local and municipal elections would bring government to the people's doorstep. No system of governance could retain its credibility before the people, unless it enabled them, at the very least, to meet their most basic needs.

He said that the newly-elected Government must, therefore, be assisted to build a credible democracy capable of delivering to the population increased security of life and property, as well as sustainable access to potable water, electricity, education, health services and, above all, jobs. Among the various pressing demands, the restructuring of the Haitian National Police must be accorded utmost priority, so as to enhance law and order and overall stability. Given Haiti's endemic poverty and its monumental economic and social problems, in the post-election period the international community should embark on a massive programme of national reconstruction.

AUGUSTINE MAHIGA (United Republic of Tanzania) urged calm in Haiti, while awaiting the second round of legislative elections and subsequent local elections to complete the transition period to democracy. In the interim, it was necessary to maintain voter's interest, hopes and aspirations in the electoral process. He also commended collective efforts to organize and supervise the first round of free, fair and credible elections, noting that the experience should auger well for the second round of elections this month. Democratic elections should be the starting point for comprehensive change, he said, calling for revamped political, judicial and governance institutions and solutions to Haiti's chronic social and economic poverty. That would require a long-term coordinated commitment by the international community.

It was important to avoid the selective, ad hoc and short term involvement of the past, he continued. The post-electoral mandate of MINUSTAH must be redefined to set the stage for coordinated peacebuilding in all sectors. The Parliament, Cabinet and the Prime Minister should work immediately on national reconciliation, respect for human rights, enforcement of the rule of law, socio-economic

regeneration and constructive engagement with international partners. Haiti's security situation was already showing signs of improvement. The kidnapping rate had dropped tremendously since Mr. Préval's election. The integration of former soldiers should continue to receive due attention, in order to address misguided discontent.

JEAN-MARC DE LA SABLIERE (France) said the broad turnout of Haitians during the elections, and the peaceful holding of the first round of elections, was a major step forward on the path towards democracy in Haiti. It was an opportunity for Haiti to put an end to the instability of the past. The Haitian authorities needed to work towards national reconciliation and an inclusive political process, in accordance with the will of the overall majority of the population. He commended the role played by Special Representative Valdes and MINUSTAH. With the end of the first phase, he cited the need for an unswerving commitment for the long-term by the international community, beginning with the United Nations. The MINUSTAH would need to play a role, and its mandate would need to be readjusted.

The challenge in the months to come, he said, was to complete the political transition. The second round of elections should be held as scheduled. The Haitian authorities and the Provisional Electoral Council needed to ensure a transparent process to bring out an unequivocal outcome. Also, a great deal needed to be done to restore security. The continued existence of lawless areas had a negative psychological impact on the people and posed a threat to consolidating the democratic process. Addressing that issue called for a dual response, both military and humanitarian. In the long term, security required the strengthening of the Haitian National Police.

However, he noted, reform of the police alone would not bring about the rule of law. The third priority was in the justice area. The State's capacity needed to be built in many areas, both at the national and local levels. No stabilization was possible without the launching of a process of sustainable economic and social development. The inauguration of the new Government would usher in a new phase, but it would not mark the end of the stabilization process. The international community must be mobilized to assist the President-elect and the new Government as they worked to bring about a new phase in their country. The Haitian people needed to rely on long-term commitment of the international community. He supported the draft presidential statement before the Council.

EMYR JONES PARRY (United Kingdom), aligning himself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union, said it was vital that the Council give its clear commitment to the Government of Haiti. Having adopted many resolutions regarding the situation in that country, the Council must now deliver a simple message of support: Haiti must consolidate the democratic process and build democratic institutions based on the rule of law. It must also ensure the holding of the second round of legislative elections, as well as the forthcoming local and municipal elections, while recognizing that elections were not an end in themselves.

The second task for the newly elected leadership was to tackle poverty in one of the poorest countries on earth, he said. That was difficult for any country to do, and for Haiti it was exceedingly difficult. The extension of the Interim Cooperation Framework agreement was welcome, but much more was needed. It was also important to deliver security. The role of MINISTAH was vital, but Haiti also needed help in training its national police force to take on a larger role in restoring security and in eliminating the "no go" areas in Port-au-Prince, the capital. Today's meeting was a signal by the

international community of its commitment to assist Haiti, as the country embarked on a new future. The United Kingdom supported the draft presidential statement to be adopted by the Council.

LARS FAABORG-ANDERSEN (Denmark) said the high voter turnout and relatively peaceful conduct of the Haitian presidential elections augured well for Haitian democracy, and he looked forward to the second round of elections on 21 April, which would benefit from lessons learned during the first round. The security situation appeared generally stable, and had improved significantly in the last few months, including in Cite Soleil, and kidnappings were down. Still, violent crime was widespread and remained a serious concern. He fully supported efforts of MINUSTAH to assist national authorities in further improving the security situation.

A broad-based government in Haiti would help promote national reconciliation, he continued, adding that reconciliation efforts should be institutionalized and reach all levels of Haitian society. Successful reconciliation would facilitate progress on other challenges facing Haiti, such as strengthening the rule of law, including human rights law. That would require effective police reform, as well as justice reform, to address the fact that more than 90 per cent of prison inmates remained in pre-trial or preventive custody. In that regard, he called for the speedy release of former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune and fully supported police reform efforts under Haiti's police chief Mario Andresol, which were supported by MINUSTAH.

JORGE BRIZ ABULARACH, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala, said he deemed the role of the United Nations in Haiti was of particular importance, especially against the background of the previous setbacks suffered by the international community in the country. It was important to learn from the past and agree that the international community's engagement in Haiti was a long-term commitment.

Regarding the challenges facing Haiti, he shared the concerns over the prevailing fragile security situation in the country, as well as the pernicious influence of the former army and, particularly, the challenge posed by armed gangs linked to organized crime. Another considerable obstacle that Haitians faced was the weakness of their judicial system. Technical assistance aimed at strengthening the institutions could not be delayed any longer, and the Haitian people must be assisted in consolidating democratic institutions. It was crucial for the international community, regional organizations, the international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations to continue to support the people of Haiti to allow them to achieve the full enjoyment of their rights and freedoms. He appealed to the new authorities to adopt concrete and urgent measures to prevent and punish criminal acts through effective investigations of crimes and prosecution of those responsible.

He underscored the importance of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. He shared the concerns of other countries, not only for delays in the implementation of the programmes proposed by MINUSTAH, but also for the financial constraints that such programmes faced, particularly those related to reintegration. Although a process of free elections constituted in itself a great achievement, it was also necessary to foster an inclusive process of national dialogue that allowed all the political and social actors to practice true self-determination.

The Council President and Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of Argentina, JORGE TAIANA, speaking in his national capacity, said the imminent handover of power to a

representative and democratic government would be a new chapter in Haiti's history and an opportunity that must not be squandered, so that the Haitian people and their authorities might finally leave behind them instability, paralysis and political violence. He believed MINUSTAH had been a decisive factor in successfully re-establishing an environment of security and stability that had helped make possible the development of the electoral process and to lay the basis for economic growth. The Mission had also served to demonstrate the commitment of Latin America to peacebuilding in the region.

The Security Council and the agencies in the field had a great responsibility ahead of them, namely to collaborate to ensure that the mistakes of the past would not be repeated. The ongoing electoral process must quickly come to a conclusion to permit the speedy handover of power and the formation of the Parliament and local and municipal governments. Noting that long-term stability required other elements in addition to elections, he stressed that social and economic development was crucial to guarantee security and democratic governance. The strategy for peacebuilding in Haiti must centre on four pillars: security, rule of law, economic revitalization and the provision of basic services. It would be crucial for the people to feel in a tangible way that democracy would bring changes for the better in their lives.

Among its pending challenges, he said, the new Government would have to continue to work for reconciliation of the Haitian people through constructive political dialogue. It would also need to reform the police and judicial and correctional systems. In the framework of development, the international community must continue to support Haiti in the elaboration of an integral strategy to reduce poverty. Argentina would continue to assist Haiti through its presence in MINUSTAH, through cooperation projects presented through the Interim Cooperation Framework, and through the coordination of humanitarian assistance through the "While Helmets" Initiative.

ALI HACHANI (Tunisia), President of the Economic and Social Council, said Haiti was at a turning point in its history. Following the transition of the last two years, the country had yet to put in place a stable institutional and administrative system capable of releasing national forces and reinforcing the State machinery in such a manner as to satisfy the Haitian people's basic needs. Eradicating poverty, a challenge in which the international community was united, could be undertaken only in a politically and socially peaceful climate which, in turn, required the reinforcement of public structures. It was crucial for the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council, working hand in hand, to find solutions to Haiti's problems.

Haiti had been on the agenda of the Economic and Social Council for many years, he said. That body's consultative Ad Hoc Group on Haiti, established in 1999 to formulate recommendations on the country's long-term development, had been reactivated in November 2004 and had become increasingly relevant as the situation in Haiti had begun to regain stability. In its report to the Economic and Social Council last year, the Group had underscored the seriousness not only of Haiti's economic crisis, but also of the social and environmental crises affecting the entire country. All were aware of the magnitude of the problems facing the new Haitian authorities and, in that context, only a long-term partnership between them and the international community could generate the long-awaited solutions. In recent months, the Ad Hoc Group had met with the authorities responsible for planning and coordinating external assistance, who were developing a poverty reduction strategy. The

international community must be responsive to the country's long-term needs, and thanks to combined national and international efforts, Haiti would be able to overcome its problems.

ANTONIO DE AGUIAR PATRIOTA, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs of Brazil, said the massive turnout in the recent elections relayed a message of hope and showed that a democratic Haiti was possible. He hoped the second round of elections could take place in a climate of transparency and stability. He encouraged an inclusive political dialogue among all Haitians, in order to ensure a proper environment for economic progress and reconciliation.

The future of Haiti was a vital challenge for the United Nations, he stated. The country's problems had deep roots in socio-economic matters that went beyond security issues. The international community must continue to support Haiti with the prompt disbursement of resources and a sustained interest in the economic, social and institutional reconstruction of the country. A new impetus of international assistance should be registered in order to strengthen such areas as the police and the judiciary, and to foster job creation. Haiti must be integrated into the agenda of the recently established Peacebuilding Commission.

He noted that the members of the Contact Group in the World Bank had felt the time had come for a new donors conference, which would be held in September 2006. In addition, his country would host a ministerial meeting between donor countries and the new Government of Haiti in May in Brasilia. There was a good opportunity now to create an action plan to support the first 100 days of the Préval Government.

He commended the role played by Special Representative Valdes. In light of the great political and material commitment of the countries of Latin America to the stabilization of Haiti, he felt Mr. Valdes' replacement should also come from a country in that region. He also stated that Brazilian troops would remain in Haiti for as long as necessary, and reaffirmed his country's determination to ensure that Haiti remained on the path to sustainable development and truly became the "pearl of the Antilles".

As the meeting resumed in the afternoon, ALBERT R. RAMDIN, Assistant Secretary-General of the Organization of American States (OAS), said that the recent presidential and legislative elections had been a decisive victory for the Haitian people, marking a return to constitutional rule in the country and providing a fresh start to a long-anticipated and necessarily long-term process of democratic consolidation, social and economic progress and advances in security and stability. The large turnout, enthusiasm and perseverance shown by the Haitian electorate had reconfirmed their solid commitment to the democratic process and boded well for the challenging months and years ahead, as the Government strove to meet the people's demands and temper expectations for a "quick fix" to the country's deep-rooted problems.

He said that, in the immediate term, it would be necessary to successfully conclude the legislative elections in April. That would permit the country to return to a situation of more balanced powers and a truly representative democracy. It would be equally critical to maintain the time frame for the holding of municipal and local elections slated for June. The President-elect was asked to be particularly vigilant in ensuring that those elections took place in order to ensure representative local governance, which would deepen democracy in Haiti and provide a key foundation for local development. The OAS noted with appreciation the President-elect's reaching out to various sectors, as

well as a mutual reaching out to him, which suggested an important basis for national consensus-building and reconciliation.

Warning that elections tended to exacerbate existing differences and divergences among sectors, and that in Haiti there had been general political polarization, he urged President-elect Préval to continue his outreach to multiple political and social sectors and to build an open, inclusive government as a necessary base from which Haiti could recover socially, economically and in terms of overall stability. The OAS had also noted the priority that the President-elect had assigned to his relations with other nations of his hemisphere, as several of his first visits had been to countries of the Americas. That interest was mutual, and, in the context of the inter-American system, the OAS looked forward to working with the new Haitian Government to tackle common challenges and difficulties in a collective, collaborative manner.

Haiti's environmental challenges were clearly enormous and no discussion of the country's future could ignore that stark reality, he said. Reforestation, soil depletion, water conservation and sanitation were some of the critical issues to be tackled. The international community must be at its strongest in terms of support for the way forward in Haiti. A lot of money and effort had been invested by foreign Governments and international institutions in support of holding free, fair and transparent elections which had been critical in getting the country to where it was today. However, the same level of financial and operational support must not only be met, but surpassed so as to build a new, viable Haiti.

He said the OAS was poised to harness its expertise and resources internally, and also to continue to coordinate and mobilize resources and efforts from other institutions of the inter-American system to contribute to the long-term institution-building and to social and economic reconstruction in Haiti. The organization had held several meetings among inter-American institutions on that very subject, and those bodies would be reconvened on the basis of the needs expressed by the incoming Haitian Government, in order to move to action in support of its future efforts, as well as those of local non-governmental organizations and other entities. In particular, the OAS secretariat was ready to continue its support to the Haitian registry and identification system as a crucial base for social and economic development, as well as for future electoral processes, and to help build a solid professional and permanent electoral institution. It was also set to support the strengthening of the Haitian human rights system and judiciary, and to strengthen the emerging political party system.

REBECA GRYNSPAN, Associate Administrator and Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), said a framework to guarantee sustained, effective support to Haiti must be built on the accomplishments and lessons of the Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF). Of the \$780 million already disbursed through ICF, \$80 million had been disbursed through the United Nations. While the HIV/AIDS transmission rate had since fallen, as had malnutrition, substantial challenges still remained. She stressed UNDP's commitment to work with the newly elected Haitian Government on the independent evaluation and review process of ICF's performance. That process would guide ICF's extension until December 2007.

She reiterated the Country Team's commitment to supporting the anti-poverty strategy that would serve as Haiti's cooperation framework as of 2008, stressing the need to identify and enact, together with donors, innovative solutions to tackle capacity-building, particularly of State institutions. She also

supported President-elect Préval's proposal to organize a forum on international private investments for Haiti. The Country Team and MINUSTAH had developed, within ICF's structure, a post electoral stabilization strategy. That would include developing a coherent, streamlined package of high-impact and high-visibility programmes, including rapid employment programmes; supporting key democratic institutions, specifically the Parliament, the creation of a Permanent Electoral Council and stronger local governments; greater political dialogue and social cohesion; and the necessary tools to implement a long-term poverty reduction strategy.

GERHARD PFANZELTER (Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union and associated States, said Haiti had made significant progress in laying the basis for an inclusive democratic transition at a pace that seemed unlikely a year ago. He welcomed the high turnout by, and the serious engagement of, the people of Haiti in exercising their democratic right to choose their future leaders, despite the major technical and logistical problems encountered during the organization of the vote.

By providing €18 million to the electoral process, as well as by sending a European Union Electoral Observation Mission to Haiti, the Union had demonstrated its strong commitment to the democratic transition process. The conduct of the second round of parliamentary elections in a peaceful and credible manner would contribute to enhancing the democratic process, cementing the rule of law and completing the establishment of strong, stable institutions.

Concerned by the security situation, he called on Haiti's leaders to demonstrate a strong commitment to improving the security of its citizens throughout the country, in partnership with MINUSTAH. Much needed progress in the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, as well as addressing underlying socio-economic conditions, would contribute to the stabilization of the security situation. Moreover, reform of the Haitian National Police must be reinforced by addressing the shortcomings in the judicial system. As Haiti entered a new chapter in its history, it was vital that the incoming leadership give special attention to reconciliation and an inclusive approach.

CARMEN MARÍA GALLARDO HERNÁNDEZ (El Salvador) said her country supported the Haitian people's efforts to preserve their national sovereignty and territorial integrity. El Salvador also welcomed the massive turnout of voters during the February elections and firmly supported the role of MINUSTAH.

Noting that her country's own experienced had shown the importance of having civic democratic representation, she said the international community must also maintain consistent support for Haiti's economic and social development. El Salvador's history of transition from conflict to democracy had provided it with valuable experience, and the country welcomed the recognition given to the role of women as a critical factor for change in Haiti.

Emphasizing that her country was encouraged by the steps taken within the framework of coordination between MINUSTAH and the Haitian National Police, El Salvador wished to reaffirm its willingness to continue its participation in the Mission through its contribution of a large number of police officers, especially women. The relationship between citizens and police must be based on trust and efficiency.

JUAN ANTONIO YÁÑEZ-BARNUEVO (Spain) said the upcoming weeks and months would be crucial for Haiti. The Haitian people, with their large participation in the electoral process, had shown their commitment to democratization in the country, which was crucial for the consolidation of peace and sustainable development. Spain had provided technical and financial assistance to MINUSTAH and had participated in the European Union Electoral Observation Mission. The new institutions had to be representative of the whole of Haitian society and promote national reconciliation. Spain would maintain its long-term commitment to Haiti. Although limitations on the deployment of troops abroad had prevented the renewal of the presence of the Spanish military contingent in Haiti, Spain would work to strengthen the work of the United Nations in Haiti, in line with the will expressed by the Ibero-American community.

Spain was studying ways to enhance its support to MINUSTAH's police contingent, which would become even more important in the period now beginning, he said. It was also studying the possibility of implementing training programmes in Spain for Haitian security forces. Haiti had become a priority country for Spanish cooperation. His Government had tripled the amount of its contribution to reconstruction in the country. Spanish cooperation in Haiti now covered such areas as food security, access to water, the health sector and budgetary support. Spain would cooperate with the new Haitian authorities in such areas as strengthening the rule of law and democratic institutions. Spain was ready to host an upcoming donors conference on Haiti. A new phase was beginning in Haiti, in which the country would be able to face the future with the support of the international community.

ALLAN ROCK (Canada), outlining some short-term challenges facing Haiti and the international community, said it was vital that the second round of elections be held on the scheduled date, 21 April, so the new Government could take office. It was also of the utmost importance that local and municipal elections then be held quickly. Furthermore, comprehensive reform of the Haitian National Police must be undertaken. To ensure success, all parties involved must have a common strategic vision and the political will to move forward on the policing file and properly begin the even more complex work of reforming the legal system.

He also felt that the strategic plan adopted in March 2005 by the Haitian National Police must serve as a basis for any discussion leading to the adoption of a comprehensive plan. The international community and its Haitian counterpart must have a clear and common vision of what must be done in the coming years. Those reforms and the re-establishment of a general state of law were in keeping with a vision of sustainable development. They were also vital if some major human rights problems in Haiti were to be resolved. He also stressed the importance of including an aspect of gender equality in the development and implementation of those reforms.

For Canada, he added, Haitian leadership and appropriation of the reforms were crucial ingredients. He hoped that a MINUSTAH that was properly coordinated with the national Haitian authorities and the donors was finally recognized for what it should be by the Haitian people -- the legitimate expression of the voice of solidarity of the international community in Haiti.

DUMISANI S. KUMALO (South Africa) said the successful democratic election now required that the Haitian people, in partnership with the international community, focus on the economic development of Haiti and help launch the nation on a path to sustainable and long-term development. There could be no security without development, and human rights were difficult to promote and

uphold in a situation where there was no political stability. Therefore, it was incumbent on the United Nations and its agencies, together with the Bretton Woods institutions, to work with the people of Haiti to achieve sustainable development, deepen democracy, and promote political dialogue and national reconciliation.

He believed the new leadership of Haiti was ready to seize the opportunity of working with all segments of Haitian society in building national unity, reconciliation, justice and peace. A long lasting political future for Haiti depended on the comprehensive resolution of its internal political dynamic. The time had come for all political parties in Haiti, including the Lavalas Party and its leadership, to join together to create political stability in Haiti. The international community must make a long-term commitment towards assisting all the Haitian parties to achieving a long-lasting political solution.

RODRIGO MALMIERCA DIAZ (Cuba), describing Haiti as the cradle of the liberation struggles against colonialism in America and the first independent black republic in Latin America and the Caribbean, said the country was currently ignored by the international community. Agonizing due to its poverty and structural underdevelopment, Haiti was a telling example of the terrible consequences of colonialism and neo-colonialism, the current unjust and exclusionary international order, and the continued interventionism that had characterized its turbulent republican history.

He said that when the United Nations addressed the Haitian situation, attention was focused almost exclusively on security issues, while its serious structural, economic and social problems were, in practice, ignored or diminished. Peace and security in Haiti required, first of all, the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment. There could not be peace without development or development without peace. The international community should take advantage of the successful 7 February elections with renewed hope. Foreign interests had conspired to make that process collapse, but the Haitian people had taken to the streets and thwarted the plot in a clear demonstration that they were ready to demand by any means respect for their legitimate right to self-determination. Cuba underscored the support and efforts of the Caribbean Community and the Association of Caribbean States to achieve sustainable peace and development in Haiti.

The international community must contribute massively, increase assistance and fulfil its financial and human commitments so that Haiti could achieve economic and social rehabilitation, as well as national reconciliation, he said. Cuba welcomed the recently announced initiative by President Hugo Chávez Frias to incorporate Haiti into the Petrocaribe Programme through which the country would be able to purchase oil and refined products under the preferential financial terms. For its own part, Cuba had provided 2,246 health-care specialists in more than six years of medical cooperation with Haiti, and their work had allowed more than 8 million consultations. They had applied 865,202 doses of vaccine, assisted in more than 70,000 childbirths and performed 109,000 surgical operations. Cuban cooperation also included the training of human resources that allowed short- and medium-term capacity-building. In addition, there were currently 900 Haitian students in Cuba, 613 of whom studied at the Latin America School of Medicine.

AMPARO ANGUIANO RODRIGUEZ (Mexico) said today's meeting was taking place at a time of great opportunity for Haiti. The elections of 7 February showed the commitment of the people of Haiti to democracy and to moving forward on the path of durable peace. She reiterated Mexico's willingness to support the new Government and to continue cooperating with it. It was crucial that the second

round of elections, and the municipal and local elections, took place in a climate of transparency and peace. Elections were part of a long process of consolidating peace and democracy. She hoped all parties would maintain a constructive dialogue in the months ahead. Democracy and peace could not be consolidated unless they were accompanied by policies for long-term social justice and economic development.

It was clear, she said, that Haiti would require the sustained support of the international community for a long time, in order to overcome the challenges it faced. She hoped the recently established Peacebuilding Commission would be used to keep international focus on Haiti for some time to come. Mexico had provided technical assistance in the run-up to the elections, and was currently coordinating other cooperation projects. In multilateral and regional forums, Mexico would continue to call for Haiti to continue to receive the support it needed. It was crucial for the United Nations to maintain its presence in Haiti, she added, and the OAS had a role to play in the post-electoral period.

IMERIA NÚÑEZ DE ODREMÁN (Venezuela) reiterated her wish that the will of the Haitian people would be fully respected, so that they and the Government would be able to consolidate a democratic system, whose ultimate objective should be ensuring the well-being of the country and its people. That would require the unwavering support of the international community. In that context, President Hugo Chavez made public his view, expressed to President Préval, that Haiti be incorporated in the energy cooperation processes under the Petrocaribe agreement. That would make it possible for Haiti to finance 50 per cent of its oil purchases for the next 25 years. She welcomed CARICOM's decision to readmit Haiti and to provide support to it. She added that, within the OAS, Venezuela had raised the possibility of reactivating the Group of Friends of Haiti, and had referred to the need to channel the financial support that was currently being held in multilateral banks.

Haitian President-elect visits UN, Annan and Council Members pledge support

UN News Centre

27 March 2006

– With many of its members represented by Government ministers, the United Nations Security Council, along with Secretary-General Kofi Annan, called for sustained international support to the efforts of Haitian President-elect René Préval to fight instability and poverty in his country, as they warmly welcomed him to their midst.

“We must all reinforce President-elect Préval’s efforts to encourage broad political reconciliation,” Mr. Annan said. “Haiti’s institutions of governance require generous support. So do the people of Haiti, who everyday endure a level of hardship and insecurity that is unacceptable, and also incompatible with the stability of the country.”

A statement read out by Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana of Argentina, its March President, the Council encouraged all countries that have contributed police and troop contingents to remain engaged in the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

It also underlined the need for Haiti to proceed with a thorough and comprehensive reform of its national police and its justice system.

Towards reducing extreme poverty and instability, the Council reiterated the need for quick implementation of highly-visible and labour-intensive projects that deliver social services and called for donors to reassess their priorities in a targeted way, working closely with the Government and MINUSTAH.

The Council urged the transitional Government in Haiti, with support from the international community, to ensure the continued credibility of the electoral process in second round of parliamentary elections on 21 April, which will allow the prompt inauguration of Mr. Préval.

For his part, Mr. Préval praised the work of MINUSTAH and the international community in the lead-up to the January elections, and pledged to work with them to create a climate for sane, democratic and participative governance.

“It’s an opportunity for me to see the interest that the international community has in Haiti,” he said of the Council meeting afterwards at a press conference. “Thirty-five people took the floor in the chamber.”

He said it was most important, during the relative calm that has ensued after the elections, that, with the help of the international community, disarmament and reintegration take place and constitutionally-required institutions are created along with a climate conducive to attracting private investment and other partnership

Haiti needs 'vigorous partnership' with international community, Secretary-General says in remarks to Security Council

Source: United Nations Security Council

Relief Web

Date: 27 Mar 2006

Following is the text of the remarks, as delivered today, by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the Security Council's open meeting on Haiti:

It is good to see so many ministers here for this important session, Mr. President, and I am pleased to join you for today's discussion on Haiti. Let me start by extending a warm welcome and congratulations to President-elect Préval.

The first round of national elections that took place last month was a vivid illustration of the faith of the Haitian people in the democratic process, and their determination to make a fresh start. That was clear from the high turnout of voters who waited patiently to cast their ballots, and from the peaceful and pluralistic nature of the electoral process.

Let me also recognize the important contribution that MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti) made in helping to ensure the political space and security needed for successful elections. I am sure the Council will join me in expressing gratitude to my Special Representative, Juan Gabriel Valdés, for his distinguished leadership.

These developments should encourage us to even greater efforts in Haiti, which is only beginning its long journey towards a stable and democratic future. It needs and deserves our assistance to reach that destination. That means a vigorous partnership between the leadership and the people of Haiti on one hand, and the international community on the other.

We must all reinforce President-elect Préval's efforts to encourage broad political reconciliation. Haiti's institutions of governance require generous support. So do the people of Haiti, who every day endure a level of hardship and insecurity that is unacceptable, and also incompatible with the stability of the country.

Days after the elections, the Security Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations operation in Haiti for a further six months. At the same time, it expressed its intention to authorize further extensions. It is right, and indeed necessary, that a multidimensional peacekeeping operation continue. Yet, the efforts of MINUSTAH can tackle only the most urgent needs. We need generous and coordinated bilateral assistance to supplement and build on those efforts.

The men and women of Haiti have demonstrated their faith in a better future. Let us work with the President-elect and his team, and with the people of Haiti, to ensure that they do succeed.

For information media • not an official record

Haiti postpones Preval inauguration

UPI

March 27, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- Haiti will postpone its inauguration of President-elect Rene Preval until early May, Haitian officials said Monday.

Preval's official ascension to Haiti's highest office -- rescheduled for May 7 -- has been postponed twice. No reason was given for the postponement.

The Haitian president-elect traveled to the United States Monday where he addressed a session of the U.N. Security Council and asked for continued U.N. assistance to battle chronic illness like AIDS and funding for development projects.

Haiti is the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation.

Preval is also scheduled to meet with President George Bush in Washington.

DR will request support for Haiti in the UN today
The Dominican Today
March 27, 2006

Foreign minister Morales will speak in the Security Council

SANTO DOMINGO. - Today Monday the Dominican Government will present before the Security Council and the Foreign ministers of the Western Hemisphere countries members of the United Nations (UN) an precise proposal on how the nations of the world might support Haiti in its aspirations for development and democracy.

Foreign minister Carlos Morales Troncoso, after making the announcement, stressed the importance of the debate opened in the UN, especially while Haiti has already elected a president and is prepared to elect the members of its Congress.

In this meeting Morales will present the Dominican Republic's position on the promotion of economic development and institutional strengthening in Haiti.

The official feels that it is very positive president elect René Preval's presence in the meeting.

He said that in the different international forums in which he has taken part as Foreign Minister, he has emphasized the need to reduce Haiti's external debt, which causes the payment of funds from the aid of donor countries, the implementation of binational projects and the international community's support for Haiti's democratic process.

Morales met yesterday in New York with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, to address topics related to bolstering democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially in Haiti.-----

Preval due in US for first visit as Haitian president-elect
Caribbean Net News
Monday, March 27, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AFP): Rene Preval on Sunday begins a three-day visit to the United States -- his first as Haiti's president-elect -- for talks with US President George W. Bush and officials from various international organizations.

A delegation of Haitian and US business leaders, including a former rival for the presidency, Dumarsais Simeus, will be making the trip with the incoming Haitian leader, sources close to Preval said.

On recent trips to Brazil, China and Argentina, Preval said the outlook is good for Haiti after the February presidential election and it is time to try to profit from international goodwill toward the Americas' poorest country.

It will be Preval's first US trip as president-elect. He was to have been sworn in on March 29, but his inauguration was pushed back by delays in organizing the second round of legislative voting, set for April 21.

As he is constitutionally required to be sworn in before the legislature, he is now expected to be at work as president in early May.

While in the United States, Preval will speak before the UN Security Council on Monday. He also is due to meet with UN chief Kofi Annan before having a working meeting with members of the UN Economic and Social Council.

Tuesday, he is to meet with US lawmakers from both major parties, before White House talks with Bush, officials here said.

While in Washington, Preval will also visit international organizations including the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

At a Caribbean Community meeting in Nassau this week, the United States and its Caribbean neighbors patched up their differences over Haiti and issued a joint call for more international help.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her counterparts from the Caribbean Community (Caricom) issued the appeal after a meeting marked by Caricom's move to reinstate Haiti's membership in the group, suspended after the 2004 ouster of president Jean Bertrand Aristide amid a popular uprising and controversial US involvement.

Preval, who was elected in the first round of February's presidential election, was a onetime protege of Aristide.

Preval, 63, enjoys strong support from the country's poor and is expected to restore order, reassure donor countries and bridge a deep divide between a wealthy elite and the vast majority of Haitians living in grinding poverty.

Haitian President-elect Preval to visit New York

By STEVENSON JACOBS

Associated Press Writer

NY Newsday

March 26, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- President-elect Rene Preval left Sunday for the United States in a trip aimed at drumming up support for Haiti's mammoth development needs. He plans to visit New York City.

Preval, making his first trip to the U.S. since winning the Feb. 7 election, will visit the United Nations headquarters on Monday for talks with Secretary General Kofi Annan and the Security Council.

There are 7,300 U.N. peacekeepers and 1,750 international police in Haiti to help maintain order after a February 2004 revolt toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Preval said he wants troops to stay until stability returns to the Western Hemisphere's poorest country.

On Tuesday, Preval will travel to Washington, D.C., to meet with President Bush and members of Congress. He also will hold talks with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Preval, who is scheduled to take office in May, is seeking to secure large amounts of foreign aid to help rebuild Haiti.

Foreign donors have paid out slightly more than half of the \$1 billion pledged for reconstruction following the revolt, but observers say the Caribbean nation will need much more to improve roads and ports, boost education and provide security and health care.

Preval will be accompanied by a delegation of Haitian and American business leaders, including Dumarsais Simeus, a millionaire businessman who was barred from running for Haiti's presidency because he holds U.S. citizenship.

Preval also will meet with members of the Haitian immigrant community in New York. He was scheduled to return to Haiti on Wednesday.

Voodoo Eyed in Find of Skulls in Haiti

By STEVENSON JACOBS

The Associated Press

The Washington Post

Monday, March 27, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Scavengers found 10 human skulls Monday in a trash heap _ the second such grisly find in as many days in Haiti's capital, where authorities speculated that the bones may have come from a Voodoo ritual.

The skulls were inside plastic buckets along a busy road in an eastern district of Port-au-Prince, bystanders said. Two U.N. civilian police could be seen trying to match the skulls with several sets of jaw bones also found in the dump, littered with tin cans, old shoes and a child's doll.

Authorities may have to call in experts from outside the country to determine the age of the skulls, which were to be turned over to Haiti's national police, U.N. civilian police spokesman Marc Jacquet said.

On Saturday, police found 17 skulls in a nearby wooded area in the Petionville suburb of the capital. Witnesses said those skulls were inside plastic buckets that were tossed from a passing car.

Haitian police spokesman Frantz Lerebours said a preliminary review of the 17 skulls ruled out bullets as the cause of death.

He said police were investigating whether the skulls were somehow related to Voodoo, a faith that mixes Christianity with West African religions. Human skulls are symbolically important in Voodoo and are believed by some to evoke or ward off evil spirits.

"It's possible they're related to Voodoo, but we can't say definitively right now," Lerebours said.

Last month, a Haitian woman was arrested at an airport in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., for smuggling a human skull in her luggage. The woman, a legal U.S. resident, said she brought the skull from Haiti to use in her Voodoo beliefs.

Haiti: Inquiry into Mass Murder
Prensa Latina
March 26, 2006

Port au Prince, Mar 26 (Prensa Latina) Haiti's authorities have opened an investigation, with UN support, after 17 human skulls were found in a wooded area in a suburb of the capital Port-au-Prince.

The grim discovery was made on Saturday, in a rubbish-strewn area of woodland in Petionville suburb, not far from several upmarket restaurants.

The UN serious crimes unit is helping local police to investigate the find, UN spokesman David Wimhurst indicated. According to witnesses, some of the skulls were thrown from a moving car in Petionville on Saturday morning.

Some of the skulls were found in small grey plastic buckets.

Haiti has been hit by a wave of violence and kidnappings since the rebellion that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

17 Skulls Found Near Haitian Capital

by UPI wire

The Post Chronicle

Mar 26, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - March 26, 2006 (UPI) -- Haitian and United Nations police are investigating 17 human skulls found littered around a wooded suburb of the country's capital, Port-au-Prince.

The first discovery was made Saturday morning in a garbage-strewn wooded area in the suburb not far from several upscale restaurants.

Haitian police spokesman Frantz Lerebours said forensic tests would be carried out on the skulls.

Since a rebellion toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004, the impoverished Caribbean island nation has undergone a wave of violence and kidnappings.

More Human Skulls Found in Haiti

Prensa Latina

March 26, 2006

Port au Prince, Eleven new human skulls were found Monday in a garbage dump in Canapé Vert neighborhood, Port au Prince, amounting to 28 skulls discovered in the last 72 hours in Haiti.

Saturday morning, the Haitian police lit upon 17 skulls in a garbage-strewn wooded area in Petionville suburb, not far from several upscale restaurants.

Immediately, Brazilian UN peacekeepers came to that place, giving their support to the national police.

Eyewitnesses said the bones were thrown by truckers.

This Caribbean nation has undergone` a string of violence and kidnappings since the rebellion that ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

Casting in place for Glover's Haiti film
By Marilyn Beck and Stacy Jenel Smith
LA Daily News
March 28, 2006

Don Cheadle, Mos Def and Angela Bassett are among the A-listers Danny Glover has attached to his upcoming feature on Haitian revolutionary Toussaint L'Ouverture.

"I've got a powerful cast," says Glover, who will direct the labor of love he's been trying to get done for some 20 years. "We also have Wesley Snipes, Roger Guenvere Smith, plus a number of other African and Haitian actors."

Glover, who's currently shooting the big-screen "Dreamgirls" opposite Beyonce Knowles, Jamie Foxx and Eddie Murphy, also has "The Adventures of Brer Rabbit" DVD just hitting stores from Universal Studios Home Entertainment. The actor says the classic children's tales are so timeless because "they're parables that impart human values and powerful social and political messages through animals." Nick Cannon, D.L. Hughley, Wayne Brady and Wanda Sykes are the voices of Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox, Brer Wolf and Sister Moon, respectively.

Haiti? Progress? Finally?
Palm Beach Post Editorial
Monday, March 27, 2006

If a bipartisan U.S. congressional delegation is correct, not only has Haiti survived last month's election; there is increased hope of progress. If that's the case, the best thing former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide can do for Haiti is let President-elect Rene Preval do what voters just chose him to do.

Just back from Haiti last week, U.S. Reps. Mark Foley, R-Fort Pierce, and Maxine Waters, D-Calif., will help host Mr. Preval's visit to Washington for three days starting today. According to Rep. Foley, Mr. Preval "absolutely wants to have the freedom to do what he needs to do for his country and to legitimize its democracy."

What a difference an election can make. Rep. Foley said things even looked better in Port-au-Prince, that there was a bounce in people's steps, vendors in the market, people dressed better, and more important, what he saw was a sense of purpose in their lives.

Violence and gangs still are major problems in Haiti. But it was encouraging that Rep. Foley said Mr. Preval was adamant that the only reason for Haitians to have an army was to fight themselves or fight invaders. Since he has no intention of doing either, he did not think having one was a practical use of resources when education and health care are critical to giving the outlying areas of the country a chance.

It is good that Reps. Foley and Waters are interested in Haiti's future, even if they disagree whether Mr. Aristide, in exile in South Africa, was rescued or ousted by the United States in 2004. There seems to be enough wisdom all around to recognize that a return to that discussion — or Mr. Aristide's return — is not the kind of drama that Mr. Preval or Haiti needs. Rather than part of Haiti's solution, Mr. Aristide was part of the cycle of reaction in which he became consumed, including his alleged undermining of Mr. Preval's previous presidency.

Looking forward to next month's legislative elections, Rep. Foley says the public appears to be comfortable with the mandate for the new presidency despite the improvised procedure that avoided a runoff. For all the numbing challenges Haiti still faces, the interim government led by Gerard Latortue deserves some credit before he returns to the Boca Raton home he left to help his native country.

President Bush and Congress now must give the fledgling government real support. So low were the depths to which Haiti had sunk that Rep. Foley said he told Rep. Waters as they were returning, "We may have finally seen a miracle." From Port-au-Prince to Washington to South Africa, the challenge will be to let that miracle blossom, not manipulate it.

Exports to Haiti grew by 88.2%
The Dominican Today
March 27, 2006

Santo Domingo.- During the past year, Haiti represented the second trade market for exports of national products. Haitians purchased from Dominicans at the rate of US\$122.1 million; that is, 88.3% more than in 2004, when Dominican Republic exported to that country a sober US\$64.8 million-worth.

In 2004, Haiti was the fifth destination of all national exports. Today, our neighbor is only surpassed by the United States.

Over twenty-nine percent (29.7%) of construction rods produced in the Dominican Republic were sold to Haiti. This product represented 11.8% of the total exports to that nation.

Other products demanded by Haiti are eggs, wheat flour, pastas, coconuts, and herring fish.

Last year, national exports reached the US\$1,080.6 million, 20.5% more than in 2004.

Uruguayan forces relieve Spanish Naval infantry in Haiti

By m.p.

Typically Spanish, Spain

Mon, 27 Mar 2006

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (right) receives Haiti's President-Elect, René Préval. Photo - EFE.

The first contingent of the 206 Spanish naval infantry who have been deployed in Haiti arrive back in Spain on Tuesday.

The first flight lands at La Parra Airport in Jerez de la Frontera, in Cádiz, at 12.50 on Tuesday. The second contingent returns on Thursday, accompanied by their Colonel, Andrés Gacio Paineira.

Their duties in the North Eastern part of Haiti, where Spanish forces have working together with forces from Morocco, will be taken over by military from Uruguay.

More than 800 members of the Spanish Navy have been deployed in Haiti since the United Nations mission began there in October 2004, to support the interim government after President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was overthrown.

Kidnappings down in Haiti, report finds

BY PABLO BACHELET

Miami Herald

March 25, 2006

WASHINGTON - The number of kidnappings in Haiti has plunged as political tensions subside, a top U.N. police official said Friday, further fueling suspicions that much of the preelectoral violence was politically motivated.

Only six kidnapping incidents were registered in the first 15 days of March in the capital city of Port-au-Prince, a sharp contrast to more than 160 kidnappings reported to authorities in December, according to new data presented by Mark Kroeker, senior police advisor for the U.N. Department of Peace Operations.

Kroeker, a 32-year veteran of the Los Angeles Police Department and a former police chief of Portland, Ore., displayed a line graph showing kidnappings spiking in December and then falling off sharply afterward. Through much of the second half of 2005, the kidnapping rate hovered at about 40 or 50 a month.

The election, won by former President René Préval, was held Feb. 7.

The numbers suggest "things may be getting a little better," he told a gathering at the United States Institute of Peace, a congressionally mandated body to promote peaceful resolutions of international conflicts.

"Do I mean things are getting better and we should relax? No," he said, adding that Haiti still faces daunting law-and-order issues. He described the Haitian National Police as "dysfunctional, demoralized, disorganized and dishonest."

But the data are a rare bit of good news for a country struggling to get back on its feet after decades of political strife and never-ending poverty.

Kidnappings, common in many parts of Latin America, were relatively rare in Haiti before last year. The rate picked up sharply in the months leading to the elections.

Préval overwhelmingly won the vote with the backing of many supporters of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who is especially popular among Port-au-Prince's poor. U.S. officials blamed much of the preelectoral chaos on gangs loyal to Aristide.

"It wasn't just to make money," Timothy Carney, who recently served as U.S. ambassador to Haiti, told the gathering Friday. The kidnapping spree was "a criminal enterprise with perhaps a political dimension."

Kroeker said he will work with the future Préval administration to overhaul the police force and triple its size to 15,000 officers.

A priority, he said, will be to bring a government presence into the vast Cité Soleil slum, whose residents are fiercely loyal to Aristide.

With police officers lacking everything from radios to patrol vehicles, most of the law enforcement duties are carried out by the 8,000-strong U.N. peacekeeping force in Haiti. The Brazilian-led force has had some success outside the capital and has brought about an uneasy peace in some slums in Port-au-Prince.

Local Community to Walk for Haiti

by : Jacques Fleury

March 24, 2006

The Bridge News, MA

Date: Palm Sunday, April 9, 2006 Start: St Paul's Roman Catholic Church, 29 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge performance 1:30 PM walk begins 2 pm Distance: 3 miles

Haiti is not too unfamiliar with being in the spotlight. And it's usually for something scandalous that is often infused with an undercurrent of negativity. With its political travails and social and economic unrest, the American news media just can't seem to get enough of Haiti's calamities. You must have heard the popular adage "No news is good news." Well it does not have to be true today, because, for a change, there's good news about Haiti!

Most people have either heard of or know the world-renowned Dr. Paul Farmer personally. But to those of you who don't know this miraculous and inspirational soul, you are in for a treat!

The ubiquitous Dr. Farmer wears many hats. He is a Harvard University professor, a practicing physician, author and founder of Partners in Health (PIH). PIH is a Boston-based organization that supports in part Dr. Farmer's hospital in Haiti, which is free to all patients. Among his many honors is a "genius" grant from the MacArthur Foundation.

"Dr. Farmer is known for his support of the preferential option for the poor, a central tenet of Liberation Theology," writes Walk for Haiti Publicity Coordinator Karen Fritsche. "His approach to practice in Haiti, Peru and Russia has its basis in ethnographic analysis and real world practicality." In her book *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Could Cure the World*, Tracy Kidder details Farmer's work in Haiti and abroad.

Ms. Fritsche is a French teacher at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School. Recently she offered her perspective on some of the positive actions currently taking place in Haiti, which the U.S. media fails to tell you about.

She spoke of an orphanage in Haiti called Cité De Soleil (City of the Sun), located in the worst slum of Port-au-Prince. In this orphanage, the children make cards that are sent to the U.S. and the proceeds from the sales boomerang back to them in Haiti. The cards are mainly sold to the kids at the Lincoln-Sudbury high school as well as to the teachers and local churches. According to Ms. Fritsche, the revenue from the card selling business mounted to as much as \$4000! And this has been going on for 18 years!

With bemused fondness, she related the story of how the Annual Walk for Haiti began with one of her former students. Gerald McElroy, then a tenth grader, told Ms. Fritsche that he was no longer satisfied with the card selling or collecting money in shoe boxes in the Lincoln-Sudbury area. He said he wanted to take the matter a step further.

He suggested that the French Club should launch a walk to raise money and help support the philanthropic initiatives of Dr. Farmer. She thought it was a good idea and wanted to give it some

thought, but Gerald said abruptly, “You have to do it! I’ve already charged \$400 on my father’s credit card for T-Shirts for the walkers, aren’t they lovely? I designed them myself.”

Her reaction was both exhilaration and trepidation of what young McElroy’s actions implied. So began the annual Urban Walk for Haiti, a community event aimed at raising money and awareness for the western hemisphere’s poorest country. McElroy, who today is 19 years old and a freshman at Yale University, remains actively involved with the walk on a variety of levels, including constructing and maintaining the website www.changeforhaiti.org.

Ms. Fritsche emphasized that absolutely 100 percent of the proceeds from the walk would go to the projects that are housed by Partners in Health. No administrative costs whatsoever, since all who participate in this function do so voluntarily. The walk has raised as much as \$55000 in the past. These funds have been used for anything from installing a lighting system and setting up new equipment in operating rooms, to more ambitious projects like building a new fully-equipped school in Haiti—based on the earnings of this year’s walk!

Finding a place to host the event was yet another matter that would prove impossible to put on the back burner. In searching for a place to host the event, Ms. Fritsche wanted to find the most cost effective way possible. Father Sheehan of St. Paul’s Roman Catholic Church in Cambridge agreed to let her use the gymnasium, courtyard, and sound system. Yet another “Alleluia! moment”!

This event has gone beyond the involvement of the French club to a broader spectrum of eager participants from a multitude of cities including Somerville, Cambridge and the Greater Boston area. Last year over 800 marched and this year “We’re expecting a thousand,” says Ms. Fritsche. Individuals are invited to bear witness to greatness in local communities. Come celebrate the music, dance lessons, poetic and musical performances, cuisine and crafts. Come and familiarize yourself with an unfamiliar country.

Stanley Porter, a local singer/songwriter and owner of 412 Records, will serenade the youthful crowd with his musical ingenuity! He will most likely perform some music from his latest and critically acclaimed album *Grace Amazing*. Mr. Porter states that his mission is to “promote Christian values through music.” He also provides learning opportunities for talented voices and artists of tomorrow through internships and so forth. And to top it all off, he even offers a small monetary compensation to what he calls his Street Team! He has also offered to sponsor me as a walker. For more information go to www.412records.unimstores.com.

Lynette Laveau Saxe, dramatist, theatre, costume and fashion consultant and CEO of International Express and the Laveau Look will also be present as a possible vendor and walker. She purports that her company supports “community activities that help to promote change and growth through personal expressions.” Their motto is “If you can envision it, we can actualize it.” The ideology fits very well with the mission of the walkers embodying a vision for a better Haiti. Ms. Saxe has also agreed to be one of my sponsors. For more information email her at: LSaxe15685@aol.com.

Bill Cunningham of The Bridge staff, who admits to having heard of Dr. Farmer and who eagerly stated upon me asking “I’ll sponsor you!” And “Alleluia yet again!”

And now, I am coming to you, the reader. I would be most grateful and so would the people in Haiti, if you would not mind taking them under your gentle wings by sponsoring me for this very important walk and this very important cause. If you ever felt the need to make a difference in the world but felt overwhelmed by such an ambitious prospect, well this is your chance to make it happen! Please make a tax-deductible check or money order from \$5 and up payable to: Partners in Health Walk for Haiti, 641 Huntington Ave. 1st Floor, and Boston, MA. 02115! Be sure to note that you are “sponsoring Jacques Fleury” on your checks or money orders.

I have also been invited to perform some of my poetry at this event, which I will write exclusively for the show!! At that time, I will have my newly published poetry book titled Sparks in the Dark for sale, which is meshed with colorful references of Haitian folklore.

God bless of you, the unsung heroes of everyday life, particularly during these times of strife! Hope to see most of you, if not all of you, at the FABULOUS yet thought provoking Urban Walk for Haiti party! You can also email me with questions or comments at: haitianfirefly@yahoo.com. Also, make your sponsor check or money order payable to:

Partners in Health walk for Haiti

and in the memo write:

sponsoring Jacques Fleury!

Thank you so much for your support! We can make arrangements for me to pick up the check somehow. peace, love = safe doves the fly Jacques thehaitianfirefly Fleury

Bachelet Decision Triggers Split
Prensa Latina
March 27, 2006

Santiago, Chile The continuance of Chilean troops in Haiti, which the government of President Michelle Bachelet is slated to ratify before the UN Security Council on Monday, is still uncertain, according to legislative media outlets.

The issue has run into strong opposition by ultraconservative members opposing the government, before the Senate looks into it in June, when the dateline to withdraw nearly 1,000 troops in Haiti will expire.

The administration of Bachelet sent Foreign Affairs Under Secretary Alberto Van Klaveren to the UN to confirm before the Security Council the Chilean stance to continue with its forces and collaboration in the process to guarantee democracy in Haiti.

Bachelet's decision was agreed with Haitian President-elect Rene Preval when he attended her inauguration ceremony on March 11 and with Argentina and Brazil in recent talks.

Opposition Senators Jorge Arancibia and Sergio Romero made it clear the Bachelet administration must respond to all questions triggering the issue.

Both officials have demanded to elaborate "a very detailed report" on the cost that decision represents for Chile, as the initial agreement for the UN full financing of the mission fell short.

UN peacekeepers in Haiti include more than 6,000 troops, 1,400 police and 350 civilians, together with 800 local workers. Chileans account for 700 of the military presence.

DR and Haiti to sponsor ecological and tourist exhibit
The Dominican Today
March 25, 2006

Santo Domingo.– The Dominican Republic and Haiti will celebrate the second edition of the ecological and tourist exhibition "Let us protect our frontier rivers."

The cultural exhibit will be displayed from March 25 to April 9 in the Dominican border city of Dajabon.

According to the Haitian Environment Minister, Yves Andre Wainright, this is a very significant event for north and northeast parts of Haiti, for it means promotion of local products among the Dominican people.

An agreement between Haiti and the Dominican Republic provides the opportunity for Haitian tradesmen based in 'Ouanaminthe' to market their products to Dajabon without paying customs duties during the exhibit.

"This event is designed as a space for dialogue for the harmonization of relations between the two people," said Jose Serulle Ramía, the Dominican ambassador in Haiti.

The organizers predict at least 500,000 visitors between the two countries. To accommodate the crowds, more than 100 detached shelters will be set up on a space of 55,000 square meters.

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Gov. Bush's plan to aid Haiti fails to draw wide support

Bush's aid plan fails to draw wide support

By Alva James-Johnson

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

March 26 2006

Gov. Jeb Bush's vision for a Florida plan to aid Haiti included efforts to improve security, host political reconciliation talks, prepare for disasters and develop the impoverished nation's economy.

But a year after the governor's Haiti Advisory Group recommended assistance to Florida's Caribbean neighbor, the state has made little progress toward those goals, some Haitian Americans say.

The advisory group, set up in July 2004, called for a state-funded entity to manage an ongoing Florida-Haiti initiative. Despite the Republican Bush's status as a strong governor whose party controls both houses of the Legislature, the governor could not win \$1 million in recommended funding.

Florida also delayed work on an ambitious goal: to "sponsor and host" National Dialogue and Reconciliation talks between Haitian political forces and parties. At the suggestion of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Bush postponed the conference pending the Haitian elections. Haiti held a presidential election in February and scheduled a legislative runoff for April 21.

State officials and members of volunteer groups have made some technical training and information gathering trips to Haiti, but the advisory group's 25 proposals largely remain a wish list.

"They have to put the money where their mouth is," said Dr. Aldy Castor, a Weston gynecologist and Republican who served on the task force. "If not, this will turn out like many initiatives in Haiti -- 1 million projects without a mission."

Still, Castor commended Bush for setting up the taskforce. He also blamed the lack of progress on Haiti's interim government and political upheaval in the country.

But another task force member, state Rep. Phillip Brutus, D-Miami, said the recommendations have "sat on the shelf gathering dust," because neither Tallahassee nor Washington has the will to foster real change in Haiti.

The largest expatriate Haitian community lives in Florida. They're among those living abroad who send more than \$1 billion in remittances annually to their homeland.

When the advisory group submitted its report a year ago, some Haitian Americans greeted it with enthusiasm because Haiti's interim prime minister, Gerard Latortue, a former Boca Raton retiree, was in power. They hoped his connection to South Florida would allow Haitian-Americans to play a greater role in stabilizing the country.

A U.S.-backed group of "eminent Haitians" appointed Latortue prime minister in 2004 after former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide left during a bloody rebellion.

Last month, the Haitian Electoral Council declared a former Aristide protege, René Préval, president amid controversial results.

Bush spokesman Russell Schweiss said the governor included the \$1 million for the Haiti initiative in his recommended state budget last year, but could not convince state legislators to fund it. Bush will try again, Schweiss said.

The governor's office helped send volunteers to Haiti to conduct disaster preparedness and economic development workshops, and to develop plans to address the HIV virus and AIDS, according to a staff report. The state Legislature also gave the Florida Association for Volunteer Action in the Caribbean and the Americas \$650,000 for missions to the Caribbean with special emphasis on Haiti. That was \$150,000 more than Florida gave the organization in 2004.

"The governor's office will continue to work to implement the recommendations of the advisory group," Schweiss said.

Dan Erikson, an analyst with the Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington think tank, said the governor's plan could succeed if it extends beyond his term to the next Florida administration and is continued by his successor. Any effort to help rebuild the impoverished nation should be judged on a long-term basis, Erikson said.

States can do little to change a foreign country, but Florida is in a unique position because of its proximity to Haiti and the governor's relationship to the president, Erikson said

"It's only an hour-and-a-half plane ride away, and there's no state in the union better positioned be useful than Florida," he said. "But obviously there are going to be limitations."

Still, some think the Republican governor and his task force did not go far enough.

"The governor has the good fortune to have the House and the Senate controlled by his party," said Jean-Robert Lafortune, president of Haitian American Grassroots Coalition in Miami. "If he says he has failed to get funding for those initiatives being proposed by the advisory board, I think this is an indication of his leadership or his commitment regarding Haiti."

Lafortune said many Haitian Americans wanted temporary protected status for Haitian refugees trying to escape political turmoil in their homeland.

Temporary protected status allows foreign nationals who might have slipped into the United States illegally, overstayed their visas, or who are seeking asylum, to live and work in the United States without being deported.

"The fact that the advisory board didn't make TPS a priority sent a bad vibe to the Haitian community here," Lafortune said. "It seems the advisory board had a political aim to it, instead of a humanitarian aim that people think it should have. It was just a way for the governor to appease the Haitian community by showing that he's doing something good."

Marie Florence Bell, a Republican who was chairwoman of the now dissolved advisory group, said it chose to focus on security, disaster preparedness, economic development and the environment.

"Immigration is not one of our key areas because there are other people on the forefront of immigration," she said.

Bell said the state delayed a student exchange program and other initiatives because of political upheaval in Haiti, but the governor's office is working on them. She expects Bush to obtain funding this year.

"He's committed to completing all his obligations before the end of his term," she said. "That's what he said and I believe him."

Alva James-Johnson can be reached at ajjohnson@sun-sentinel.com or 954-356-4523.

Haiti: 1 in 8 die before age 5
The Daily Journal, Venezuela
March 26, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE (AP) – One in eight children will likely die before age 5 in Haiti, the highest child mortality rate in the Western Hemisphere, UNICEF said in a report Wednesday.

Preventable disease, malnutrition, environmental decay and violence are among the main reasons why 117 children out every 1,000 will die before their fifth birthday in this impoverished Caribbean nation, according to the report.

“There are few more challenging places to have a healthy childhood than Haiti,” said Adriano Gonzalez-Regueral, a representative for the United Nations Children Fund in Haiti, in a statement. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Haiti accounts for 2 percent of all births but nearly 20 percent of deaths for children under 5, the report said.

The report blamed many deaths on low immunization for infectious diseases. Only slightly more than half of children are vaccinated for measles in Haiti, a rate lower than sub-Saharan Africa. The report also said Haiti’s massive deforestation had contributed to more deaths among children during the Atlantic hurricane season. Storms killed some 3,000 people in Haiti in 2004, including hundreds of children living in low-lying communities of flimsy tin-and-wood shacks.

In addition, many children fall victim to gang violence, which exploded in the slums of the capital of Port-au-Prince after a bloody revolt ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004. President-elect Rene Preval, expected to take power in May, has pledged to place homeless children in school.

UNICEF also said it was sponsoring programs to boost immunization, improve nutrition and purify water in Haiti, the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.

Chile to continue support of UN mission in Haiti
China View News
March 27, 2006

SANTIAGO, -- Chile's government would confirm its official commitment to keep troops in Haiti as part of the UN peace keeping mission on Monday, the country's deputy foreign minister Alberto Van Klaveren said on Sunday.

Van Klaveren told the Chilean press that Chile's president Michelle Bachelet, and its ambassador to the United Nations, Heraldo Munoz, would travel to the UN on Monday for a meeting on Haiti, as proposed by Argentina, this year's Security Council president.

Bachelet had already discussed the matter with the Argentine president, Nestor Kirchner, during a visit to Buenos Aires earlier this month. She had published a statement only a few days after taking office, to illustrate her intention of continuing to work with the UN mission to rebuild Haiti.

"We are going to restate our commitment to the Haitian process and the international community's responsibility to maintain its support now that we are entering a more positive phase," Van Klaveren said.

UNICEF: Haiti's Child Mortality Rate Highest in Hemisphere

By VOA News

23 March 2006

The U.N. Children's Fund says children born in Haiti are more likely to die in early childhood than in any other country in the Western Hemisphere.

Orphans at Life is Wealth Orphanage, in Savane Pistache neighborhood of Port au Prince
A report issued by UNICEF says Haiti has the highest death rates for children under five, with 117 children dying for every 1,000 births, despite accounting for only two percent of births in Latin America and the Caribbean,

The report says a major factor contributing to the high mortality rates is a lack of basic healthcare. UNICEF says just over half of all children are vaccinated against measles - a rate lower than sub-Saharan Africa.

Other factors cited by the report include environmental decay and violence.

UNICEF says about 3,000 people were killed during the Atlantic hurricane season in 2004, due to a lack of forest cover. It also says many children in Haiti's cities fall victim to homelessness and gang violence.

The Perversion Of Democracy And The Role Of Reaction Haiti's Flawed Elections - Election Deal Seeks To Deligitimize Preval
Analysis By Michael D. Roberts
Carib World Radio, NY
Mar 23, 2006

Amidst serious tensions, accusations of voter fraud, partisan violence and a miffed international community Haitians against confounded the pundits and elected a president of their choice in general elections on February 7. It was the fourth time that the suffering masses of this Caribbean nation went to the polls since 1990 to do the democratic thing and satisfy the United States, Canada, CARICOM and the international community that they were mature enough to use the ballot and not the bullet to pun in office a president.

From the onset the elections were riddled with official disorganization, partisan sniping, gross incompetence, discrimination and the official and unofficial meddling of Haiti's elite, with the tactic backing of Washington and the international community, wanted to determine the outcome by their own efforts and not those of the Haitian people. And for the fourth time Haitians went to the polls in large numbers and elected to office a president that all these disparate groups did not want.

There is an old adage that you must be careful what you wish for and President Bush and his allies who have consistently berated Haiti over its lack of internal democracy could not predict – until it was way too late – that a Jean Bertrand-Aristide “clone” in the person of Rene Preval would win the Haitian elections. So they switched to “plan B” and began almost immediately to undermine and undercut Preval's victory through Haiti's reactionary ruling and business class that sent the outcome of the elections to the negotiation table.

In the end after massive unrest in the streets and a spiraling out of control violence threatened to further sully the outcome of this exercise in democracy an agreement was reached by Haiti's interim government and electoral council early last Thursday to declare front-runner Rene Preval the winner of the presidential election and thus staving off a potential crisis in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country.

With 90 percent of ballots counted, Preval had been just shy of the 50 percent margin needed to win the Feb. 7 election outright and avoid a runoff next month. Under the agreement, some of the 85,000 blank votes that had been cast in the election were added to each candidate's total in proportion to the votes they had received. That gave Preval a majority, said Michel Brunache, chief of Cabinet for interim President Boniface Alexandre.

This deal thus ends the rife charges that the Interim Government in Haiti had manipulated vote tabulations and discarded ballots in a waning, last-ditch attempt to thwart a Preval victory and deny Aristide's protégé and Lavalas member the government. The agreement also allows the Bush Administration and the International Community to claim that all things considered democratic governance has returned to Haiti after two years of repression and brutality of the U.S.-installed Interim Government.

But herein lies the problem. Elections by their very nature are supposed to apportion political power based on a majority of votes won. In the case of the Haitian elections this paradigm has shifted in this precedent-setting election where Mr. Preval was given an electoral victory based on a negotiated agreement and not simply on the majority of votes won although the deal achieves the same purpose. It is crystal clear that Mr. Preval, based on exit polls and unofficial tabulations of votes cast, had won the elections before the sore losers cried foul and plunged it into chaos.

So in essence the same result – Mr. Preval’s victory at the polls – was reached not by the democratically acknowledged and sanctioned methodology but by changing the rules, instead of correcting the violations of these rules. But that is by design since the deal now gives those reactionary Haitian elements and their international sponsors enough leverage to deligitimize Mr. Preval’s presidency and thus meddle and impede any of his social and economic programs not to their liking.

It also opens the possibility for Washington to remain “engaged” in Haiti since it can argue that Mr. Preval’s victory was disputed by unclear results at the polls and that he won by acclaim of a negotiated settlement and not solely by the ballot booth. Washington and the Bush Administration should know – President Bush “won” the 2000 elections by a decision of the US Supreme Court after he lost the popular ballot. And, taking their cue from Washington, sore losers in Haiti are already fuming and grumbling about the legitimacy of Haiti’s contested elections of 2006.

As a harbinger of things to come and the scurrilous route that Haiti’s elite are now prepped to go, second place finisher, Leslie Manigat, also wins with the deal. Against Mr. Preval he obtained less than 12% of all votes and therefore had absolutely no chance of winning. Statistically there were about 17,000 vote mistakes (unmarked or improperly marked ballots) and that number of spoiled votes was more than Mr. Manigat got. And even if you took all the votes of the 30 losing candidates and give them to Mr. Manigat he would have been way short of victory and unable to beat Mr. Preval.

So if the Haitian election authorities had even decided to do a second round run-off the odds are that Mr. Manigat would have received a good and proper licking at the polls. You would think that he therefore would shut up and lick his wounds. No, he was out there claiming that he was cheated out of his democratic right to a second crack at Mr. Preval and that the Haitian constitution and electoral laws had been subverted.

But not only that was subverted. The entire conduct of the elections itself was an object lesson on how to rig elections and influence the outcome, even though all that backfired and Mr. Preval prevailed over Washington and the International Community’s favored candidate the former World Bank official Leslie Manigat. To start with in the months and weeks leading up to the February 7 poll, the registration process put in place by the Interim Government deliberately discouraged poor rural and urban voters from signing up since they were strong supporters of Aristide’s Lavalas Movement and Mr. Preval.

The Interim Government arrested and detained many leading progressive political leaders and looked the other way as some of Aristide’s top lieutenants were murdered by thugs while it brought judicial proceedings against others. This was designed to “clear the field” for a Manigat victory by systematically cowing Mr. Preval’s voting base by violence, kidnappings and other provocations.

But all that only helped to strengthen Lavalas and Mr. Preval and so the Interim Government embarked on yet another piece of electoral trickery by installing less than 500 voter registration centers as compared to the 10,000 provided by the Aristide government in 2000.

The Interim Government was banking on the fact that by scattering these official registration sites so far and in between that Haitians would have become frustrated and so not register to vote. On the other hand these registration centers were easily reachable by likely voters sympathetic to candidates other than Mr. Preval.

The same was true for election day polling sites that were inadequate in terms of numbers. Thousands of Haitians lined up to vote at just over 800 polling sites that helped to compound election day chaos and confusion.

As a comparison Brooklyn with about 900,000 democratic voters have over 2,000 polling sites that are easily reachable by private and public transportation. And just as all this impacted the ability of all Haitians to cast their vote the results from initial counting were stunning to say the least.

By the second day after the elections the Haitian election authorities were saying that Mr. Preval had won 54% of the vote and thus was the winner.

But by the next day the organization had reversed itself and said that he was now down “about 10 points” to put him in the 40s.

Mr. Preval by this time was publicly stating that the Interim Government and others were trying to steal his electoral victory and he supplied the proof.

Shortly after his announcement, Haitian television broadcast thousands of ballots, some burnt, most of them Preval votes, found in a dump near Cite Soleil, and not far from the Haitian electoral authorities tabulation center.

US, Caricom mend fences over Haiti

Caribbean Net News

Thursday, March 23, 2006

by Peter Mackler

NASSAU, Bahamas (AFP): The United States and its Caribbean neighbors on Wednesday patched up their differences over Haiti and issued a joint call for more international help for the politically turbulent, impoverished nation.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her counterparts from the Caribbean Community (Caricom) issued the appeal after a meeting marked by Caricom's move to reinstate Haiti's membership in the group, suspended after the 2004 ouster of president Jean Bertrand Aristide amid a popular uprising and controversial US involvement.

The US-Caricom ministerial meeting was the first to be held since 2001.

Fred Mitchell, foreign minister of host Bahamas, said Rice welcomed Caricom's decision to reengage Haiti and to provide assistance for its institutional development.

"Both parties agreed on the importance of the international community remaining engaged in Haiti over the long term in order to promote stability and socioeconomic progress," Mitchell added.

No concrete measures were announced but Rice told a news conference "the next step would be to provide support for the development of democratic institutions in Haiti following the presidential election in February won by (president-elect) Rene Preval." She did not elaborate.

"We all have a tremendous stake in the development of a democratic Haiti that can be self-supporting ultimately," Rice told reporters.

US officials confirmed that the meeting capped efforts to restore ties between the United States and Caricom, which Tom Shannon, the top US diplomat for Latin America and the Caribbean, acknowledged had become "a little ragged" over the US role in Aristide's departure.

Preval, who was elected in the first round of February's presidential election, was a one-time protege of Aristide.

Preval, 63, enjoys strong support from the country's poor and is expected to restore order, reassure donor countries and bridge a deep divide between a wealthy elite and the vast majority of Haitians living in grinding poverty.

Aristide, now in exile in South Africa, has said he wants to return home, saying it was his right as a citizen of the Caribbean nation.

A leftist-populist and former priest, Aristide has maintained that he was forced to step down under pressure from the United States and France, and has urged the African Union to take up his claims of a coup.

While Washington has not opposed Aristide's return to Haiti, it has moved quickly to shore up Preval while dismissing Aristide as a man of the past.

Aristide swept to power in Haiti in 1990, only to be overthrown in a coup eight months later.

With backing from the United States, he returned to power in 1994 but fell out of favor with Washington amid claims of vote-rigging in the 2000 elections and political violence.

**Caribbean hesitant to embrace Haiti
Rice urges leaders to help ensure stability
By Joel Brinkley
The New York Times
March 23 2006**

NASSAU, the Bahamas · After two days of meetings with Caribbean leaders, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice appeared to have cooled some of their anger toward the United States but failed to persuade them to embrace the new government in Haiti, U.S. officials said Wednesday.

One goal of her visit here was to persuade the other Caribbean nations to take forceful steps to help the new Haitian government stabilize the country and deal with its crushing problems. What she got was a commitment to readmit Haiti to the Caribbean Community of nations and a vague promise to help Haiti in the future.

"Where do we go in the future?" asked Fred Mitchell, the Bahamian foreign minister and chairman of the Caribbean Community. "We remain engaged" with Haiti "and will continue to review the matter."

Relations between the United States and the Caribbean Community, known as Caricom, have been strained and embittered for two years, in part because of opposition here to the war in Iraq but also because of the role of the United States in Haiti. Many Caribbean leaders contend that the United States forced President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from power in 2004.

Before this visit, Rice met twice with groups of Caribbean foreign ministers, but she and her aides said they realized that she had to come here to begin turning the situation around.

"We intend not just to continue our relationship but to deepen and broaden" it, she said Wednesday at a news conference with Mitchell.

A joint statement said Rice "agreed to strengthen cooperation with a view to enhancing Caricom-U.S. relations."

While language like that is common in such statements, U.S. officials said they were encouraged by the reception the Caribbean leaders gave Rice.

One said, "We are now on the same page." There was no indication, however, that the Caribbean leaders had softened their position on the war in Iraq.

The U.S. officials were less pleased with commitments by Caricom countries to help Haiti.

"I didn't hear them," a senior administration official said.

At the news conference, Rice reminded the Caribbean leaders that "we all have a tremendous stake in the development of a democratic Haiti that can be self-supporting."

If Haiti falls into chaos once again, she added, "that can have an effect on this region and, in fact, an effect on the United States."

Rice encourages regional involvement in Haiti

AP

The Jamaica Observer

Thursday, March 23, 2006

NASSAU, Bahamas (AP) - United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice yesterday encouraged Caricom countries to fully restore its relationship with Haiti and help strengthen the troubled country.

The top US diplomat's brief Caribbean trip was also aimed at soothing bitterness toward the United States in the region over the ouster of former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Rice met here with 14 foreign ministers and the secretary general of the Caribbean Community (Caricom).

Caribbean leaders have accused the United States of being an accomplice in Aristide's 2004 ouster.

To repair the strained relationship, Rice met with the Caribbean foreign ministers twice last year - in Ft Lauderdale, Florida and at the United Nations. A trip to the region was the next step.

"This is part of her effort to get this relationship back where it should be," said Tom Shannon, assistant secretary of state for the Western Hemisphere. "I think we're just about there."

Caricom suspended Haiti's membership after Aristide's ouster. Last month, the group said Haiti will be allowed to rejoin if recent presidential and parliamentary elections are deemed free and fair.

Shannon said Rice hoped to identify ways in which the United States and Caricom can work together in Haiti to restore peace and rebuild democratic institutions.

IACHR Reports On Justice In Haiti
By caribbean World Radio
Mar 23, 2006

WASHINGTON, CMC - The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) says the justice system in Haiti is "gravely deficient" and fails to protect the fundamental Human Rights of citizens.

In a report released, recently the IACHR said efforts to address Haiti's present and serious political, economic and social problems would not succeed without urgent reforms to strengthen the administration of justice and the rule of law.

The report entitled "Haiti: Failed Justice or the Rule of Law Challenges Ahead for Haiti and the International Community", said the reform would require ongoing, coordinated and sustained support from Organization of American States (OAS) and other members of the international community.

The report evaluates the current status of the administration of justice in Haiti in light of its obligations under the American Convention on Human Rights and other relevant Human Rights instruments (and) concludes that the justice system in Haiti is gravely deficient in almost all respects and systematically fails to protect the fundamental Human Rights of the Haitian people.

It analyzes three main areas of the administration of justice in Haiti including law enforcement, the court system, and the system of detention facilities and prisons.

The report also finds that the national police force suffers from grave shortages of officers and resources, lacks a clear and enforced hierarchy of command and control, and is tainted by corruption and Human Rights abuses .

It said that the court system is plagued by inadequate resources and training as well as outdated laws, resulting in chronic and unacceptable delays in the judicial process and systemic impunity for serious human rights violations.

Further, the report finds that the conditions in Haiti's prisons and other detention facilities fall far short of minimum international standards, including special protections for minors.

"In light of these and other fundamental deficiencies, the report calls upon the international community to expedite the delivery of funds pledged to Haiti in 04 and to take the measures necessary to ensure that their justice initiatives in Haiti result in lasting change," an IACHR statement said.

The report calls on the international organizations and agencies "to develop coordinated and multidisciplinary approaches to providing assistance and support to Haiti in order to avoid duplication and maximize impact".

"In addition, the mandates given to institutions and agencies should acknowledge and reflect the interconnections between security, the right to political participation, the administration of justice, and the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, all of which must be addressed in order to achieve long term stability in Haiti," the report said.

IACHR said the release of the report is particularly timely in light of the recent election of Rene Preval as Haiti's new President "following a particularly violent and unstable period in the country's history"

"As President Preval takes office, the Commission urges his Government to make reform of the justice system a critical priority," the statement added.

Preval, who will be sworn in for a second term in April, was declared winner of the February 7 polls, the first to be held in Haiti since the controversial departure of President Jean Bertrand Aristide from office in February 04.

Aristide, who resides in exile in South Africa, has accused the United States and France of engineering his removal, a claim denied by the George Bush

Dispelling the AIDS Stigma in Haiti
Partnership for a Better Life
US State Dept.
March 23, 2006

With pieces of colorful fabric, thread, glue and with determination, Haitians with HIV/AIDS gather to create art works depicting their experiences of living with the virus and their hopes for the future.

The people coming together at creative workshops in cities around the country join to learn that speaking openly about HIV/AIDS can help reduce the stigma of the disease. During the workshops, many participants gave voice to their struggles:

"I will hold my head up and speak out against all kind of discrimination," said Malia.

"I want to live long enough to see my children growing," Marie Stephani added.

"The more you remain silent, the more you suffer," Marc concluded.

These stigma- and discrimination-reduction workshops have been held in several cities throughout Haiti in collaboration with the Haitian organization Promoteurs Objectif Zero SIDA (POZ) and Haitian artists affiliated with the cultural foundation AfricAmerica. The activity is financed by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for HIV/AIDS Relief and implemented by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Centers for Disease Control.

Several pieces produced in the workshops have been selected for display in the project's "Visages" calendar. The calendar contains information about HIV/AIDS, helping to combat discrimination against people infected with the virus. Sales of the calendar generated \$5,000, which was used to fortify POZ's care and support program.

Private Haitian organizations joined the United States in this calendar project. The Haitian company "Editions Areytos" funded part of the cost of printing the calendars and the musical group "Kompa Kreyol" gave money to cover costs of the calendar's launch event in Port-au-Prince.

Through activities like the calendar project and the stigma-elimination workshops, USAID and its partners also provide people living with HIV/AIDS opportunities to learn new skills in safe and dynamic environments. By working together on creative projects, workshop participants have developed new friendships and new trust. This trust, in turn, promotes open discussions about the impact HIV/AIDS has had on their own and on their families' lives.

Two congressional winners declared proclaimed
The Jamaica Gleaner
Wednesday | March 22, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (CMC):

HAITI'S ELECTORAL Council yesterday said two candidates had been victorious in the first round of balloting on February 7, even as several contenders accused electoral authorities of being bias.

President of the Electoral Council, Max Mathurin, said the final results for the first round of the legislative race had been released after the council had examined all the claims made by the protesting candidates.

The two winners were running for the lower Chamber of Parliament while no candidate for the Senate won in the first round. A run-off is set for April 21.

ACCUSATIONS

Several candidates have accused electoral officials of favouring candidates that share the same political ideology, a claim denied by the authorities.

Fritz Gerald Rosefort, a candidate for the "House" said he placed second in his constituency, which qualified him to take part in the run-off, according to figures released by the council earlier.

But he said he had now been told he placed third. Only the first two place candidates could compete in the run-off, according to electoral guidelines