

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: MAY 18 – 24, 2006

Agreements signed to assist Haiti

Roberta Lopes

Agência Brasil

May 24, 2006

Brasília - Yesterday (23), at the conclusion of the International High Level Meeting on Haiti, in Brasília, the Brazilian minister of Foreign Relations, Celso Amorim, signed cooperation agreements with Argentina, Canada, the Organization of American States (OAS), and the World Bank (IBRD). The agreements are intended to help Haiti in the areas of food security, agriculture, health, and sports.

16 countries and 11 international organizations participated in the meeting for the purpose of reviewing, broadening, and expanding the framework of cooperation, including financial aspects, with Haiti.

According to the minister, the Brazilian troops assigned to Haiti will remain there until president René Préval's government has been strengthened. Brazil was the first country to send troops to compose the United Nations (UN) peace mission in Haiti, the MINUSTAH.

Ambassador Rui Nogueira, one of the coordinators of the meeting, informed that more than US\$ 900 million of the US\$ 2 billion pledged by the international community to Haiti have already been donated. He also said that a new conference of donors will occur in the second half of July in Port-au-Prince, the Haitian capital.

Translation: David Silberstein

New Brazilian troop contingent leaves for Haiti
Márcia Wonghon
Agência Brasil
May 24, 2006

Recife - A force comprising 209 soldiers from various Army units in Northeast Brazil embarked for Haiti yesterday (23) from the Recife air base. They will be part of the fifth Brazilian contingent composing the United Nations (UN) peace force in that country.

The force will join another 58 Brazilian military officers who left for Haiti on Friday (19). The fifth contingent is composed of 850 troops.

Three more embarkations are scheduled to occur between now and June 4. The entire group, which will be engaged in the protection of the population and the security of government officials, underwent a rigorous training program that began this January.

Haiti faces problems of violence, mainly involving armed gangs. In February, two years after the departure of the ousted president, Jean Bertrand Aristide, the population elected the current president, René Préval, to govern the country. The UN peace mission, however, was maintained.

Translation: David Silberstein

Donors eye more aid for Haiti's new government

23 May 2006

Reuters

By Raymond Colitt

BRASILIA, Brazil - More aid is critical to help Haiti's new government consolidate democracy and foster growth and the international community needs to make that commitment to the poor Caribbean country, donors said on Tuesday.

Several donor countries at an international conference in Brazil's capital backed a proposal for a July donor conference in Haiti to raise new funds.

"I think donors in general are ready to help more, although it is not clear how much money they will put on the table," said Prot von Kunow, German delegate to the conference.

Rene Preval took office on May 14 as Haiti's first elected ruler since former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in an armed revolt in February 2004.

The international community needed to make long-term commitments to Haiti's fragile infrastructure and public security, said Jose Miguel Insulza, secretary-general of the Organization of American States.

"If President Rene Preval faces energy shortages and overdue salaries, he will have political difficulties," said Juan Gabriel Valdes, U.N. representative to Haiti.

The World Bank last week also called on donors, which include the United States, Japan, and France, to swiftly provide more financial aid to Haiti.

Ninety percent of the \$1.1 billion that was pledged by international donors in a July 2004 conference in Washington had already been spent, according to Brazil's foreign ministry.

A United Nations peacekeeping force, led by Brazil, has helped check rampant violence in Haiti following Aristide's fall and allowed presidential elections in February this year.

Brazil has pledged to keep its troops there until Haiti established its own, working police force, which could take several years, Brazilian diplomats say

UN envoy urges more aid for Haiti

By Simon Watts

BBC News

May 24, 2006

The new head of the United Nations peace mission in Haiti has said it is essential the international community keep helping the Caribbean nation.

Speaking from a donors' conference in Brazil, Edmond Mulet told the BBC that assistance was needed despite Haiti's new democratically elected government.

Top officials from the other countries leading the UN mission had the same message to give.

The conference comes only a week after Haiti's government finally took office.

Since the election of Rene Preval, the security situation in the capital, Port-au-Prince, has shown signs of improvement and the new president has reduced political tension by showing willingness to talk to all sides.

But as the main speakers in Brasilia stressed, Haiti is a desperately poor country and long-term stability is unlikely if foreign donors do not support programmes that make a real difference to the lives of ordinary Haitians.

Aid plan

The new head of the UN mission, Edmon Mulet, warned international donors against withdrawing.

"The international community must not slacken its pace now," he said.

"It must continue to be involved and donate money because the international community has been in Haiti five, six, seven, eight, nine times," he said.

"And as soon as there's a civilian government and things are going reasonably well, the international community withdraws and the government falls."

Mr Mulet mixed his warning with plenty of positive messages. He said Haiti was not only making political progress, internationally-funded reforms of the police and courts were starting to pay off too.

The delegates, who came from 16 countries and from international financial institutions, agreed to draw up a plan to extend aid to Haiti for another two years.

The plan will be discussed at a full-scale donors' conference in Haiti itself in July.

CIGI releases newest publication on crisis in Haiti
Waterloo Chronicle, Canada
May 24, 2006

The Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) is pleased to announce the release of its newest publication, *Haiti: Hope for a Fragile State*, edited by Yasmine Shamsie and Andrew S. Thompson.

The aim of the book is to shed light on the varied and complex roots of the current crisis that Haiti faces, dispels misperceptions, and suggest that the situation in Haiti, despite evidence to the contrary, is not completely desperate.

At present, Haiti is a fragile state, a country in the midst of a political, economic, ecological, and social crisis. Violence has sabotaged attempts to establish the rule of law, and state infrastructure is notably absent in much of the country, leading to an overall climate of insecurity.

This book offers a variety of perspectives on development, the military, history, NGOs and politics. The contributors to this volume suggest that donors, NGOs, and international agencies can indeed assist Haitians in the task of building a functioning state and society.

John English, CIGI's executive director commented, "What makes this book unique is that it brings together diverse perspectives, discusses the peace-building efforts of the past, and suggests ways for moving forward so that Haiti can one day become a stable state."

This book is the outcome of the substantive content from the "Canada in Haiti: Considering the 3-D Approach" conference that took place at CIGI in November 2005, co-hosted by the University of Waterloo's Centre for Foreign Policy, The Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS), the Laurier Centre for Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS) and CIGI.

The conference analyzed the possibilities and problems of Canada's effort to implement the defence, development and diplomacy approach in Haiti.

The conference and publication are part of a wider effort by CIGI to analyze what makes states fragile and what response international institutions and national governments should make to the challenge that fragility presents to international peace and stability.

For more information on the book and testimonials, visit the website http://www.cigionline.org/publications/book_publications.php?id=143. The book is published by WLU Press.

Former premier back in familiar role in Haiti

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Miami Herald

May 23, 2006

Haitian President René Prével Monday nominated Jacques Edouard Alexis, a trusted ally who served as prime minister during Prével's first term in the presidency, to help him govern the troubled country again as his new prime minister.

Prével ended weeks of speculation by sending letters to the presidents of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies nominating Alexis, 57, to run the day-to-day affairs of the government.

Alexis, who was one of the main architects of Prével's February election victory and has been coordinating his transition team -- the president was inaugurated May 14 -- said he expects his nomination will be approved by parliament.

"The president has been preparing the terrain," Alexis, who earlier served as chancellor of the private Quisqueya University in Port-au-Prince, told The Miami Herald in a telephone interview.

NO NEW FACE

Some Haitians, including supporters, had hoped Prével would bring in a fresh face as his prime minister. Alexis had been considered the front-runner all along.

"What it says is that, unfortunately, there has not been a lot of effort on the part of Prével to go wide and see who can be brought into the inner circle," said Jocelyn McCalla, head of the New York-based National Coalition for Haitian Rights.

Alexis told The Miami Herald that he shares Prével's hopes for rebuilding the economy, tackling government reforms and helping the poor.

"There is a majority in this country who feel they are excluded," Alexis said. "They don't feel they are citizens . . . The first order is that we have to work to diminish the feeling of exclusion."

Alexis' confirmation, expected as early as Wednesday, would officially end Boca Raton resident Gerard Latortue's two-year stint as interim prime minister following the 2004 ouster of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Alexis first served as prime minister at the end of Prével's first term, May 26, 1999, to Feb. 7, 2001. Haiti was then in the midst of a political crisis following Prével's decision to dismiss parliament, and Alexis was installed by presidential decree.

This time, political observers are predicting that parliament will approve Alexis. Prével's Lespwa Party has the single largest blocks of seats in both chambers of parliament, though not majorities.

CANADA INCIDENT

Earlier this month, Alexis was barred from entering Canada because his name appeared on a list of those accused of "crimes against humanity." He was eventually given a visa, but not an explanation.

"That is a very serious accusation," he said. "I am still waiting for an answer from the Canadian government."

Melanie Carkner, spokeswoman for Citizenship and Immigration in Canada, said she could not discuss an individual's case without their permission.

KATHERINE DUNHAM | 1909-2006

A trailblazing dancer, and an activist for HaitiPioneering dancer Katherine Dunham, who established the nation's first self-supporting all-black modern dance group in the late 1930s, died at age 96.

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES

Miami Herald

May 23, 2006

The last time famed dancer Katherine Dunham saw her beloved Haiti, she was sitting in a wheelchair on the deck of a 3,200-passenger cruise ship docked on Haiti's northern coast of Labadee.

It was 2004, the 200th anniversary of Haiti's independence from France, and Haiti was yet again in the throes of political crisis. Dunham, who had joined several prominent African Americans and Haitians on the "Cruising into History" voyage to celebrate the birth of the first black republic, was in deteriorating health but wanted one thing:

"She really wanted to touch the soil," recalled Ron Daniels of the Haiti Support Project, which invited Dunham to be a part of the pilgrimage because of her love affair with Haiti. "She was very moved. Her heart was very, very much part of Haiti."

Dunham died Sunday at an assisted living facility in New York. No immediate cause of death was disclosed. She was 96.

Dunham was the first African American to choreograph for the Metropolitan Opera, and her dance company toured in more than 50 countries. A recipient of the National Medal of the Arts, she was a Kennedy Center honoree in 1983 and had received honors from the governments of Brazil, Haiti and France.

Among choreographers influenced by Dunham were Alvin Ailey, Ron Brown and Bill T. Jones. "Before Katherine Dunham, the only kind of black dance was tap," Ailey said in a 1988 interview with The Boston Globe. Her breakthrough came with her appearance in the Broadway musical Cabin in the Sky. Her legs were once insured for \$250,000 and she had 13 knee surgeries. Still, she danced professionally for more than 30 years.

Dunham formed America's first black modern dance company and choreographed more than 90 works.

Dunham's life wasn't just about dancing, and she translated this to her dancers. Southland, one of her most famous dances, was about a lynching in the South. She also refused to let her dance company perform before segregated audiences.

As word spread in South Florida about the death of the woman affectionately known as the "matriarch of black dance," those who knew her -- and of her trailblazing contributions in Haiti, the Caribbean and elsewhere -- recalled not only how she influenced dance, but also how she inspired people.

"Not only was she an international dancer, she contributed her talent to Haiti," said Farah Juste, a Haitian singer who helped organize a packed 1992 concert at Miami's Bobby Maduro Stadium for Dunham.

At the time 82, Dunham had just ended a 47-day hunger strike to protest U.S. policy of repatriating Haitians who were fleeing the military regime that had ousted Haiti's democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Carl Fombrun, a fixture on Miami's Haitian socialite scene, said Dunham didn't just visit Haiti, she invested in it.

She maintained a home there for years, Habitation LeClerc, a one-time luxury resort.

"She was baptized a mambo, a priestess of the Vodou religion," Fombrun said. ``Her fascination with Haiti was a fascination with Africa. She felt that Haiti was the Africa in the Caribbean."

Dunham first arrived in Haiti in the 1930s as a graduate student in anthropology. She also visited Trinidad, Jamaica and Martinique where she filmed indigenous dances.

But it was in Haiti, while listening to its African-inspired rhythms, that she immersed herself in its dance, culture and history.

Later, she would use the drum-inspired movements to fashion her own choreography techniques -- the Dunham Technique -- putting Caribbean dance on the world stage.

"When I got to Haiti," she said in the Globe interview, ``I saw that some of the body movements in their dances resembled the body movements I had seen in the black storefront churches of Chicago."

She was born Katherine Mary Dunham on June 22, 1909, in Chicago.

Dunham's introduction to dance came in high school and she studied ballet in 1928.

She earned a bachelor's degree in anthropology from the University of Chicago and did graduate work in anthropology there before making her New York debut in 1937.

In 1967, she founded the Performing Arts Training Center in a depressed neighborhood of East St. Louis, Ill., moving there from New York.

She wrote several books, including her autobiography, *A Touch of Innocence*.

Dunham's husband, John Pratt, died in 1986.

Congressman urging more help for Haiti
The Nation, Barbados
by Tony Best
May 22, 2006

WITH HAITI'S NEW PRESIDENT, Rene Preval, officially installed, the United States Congress is getting ready to take decisive steps to boost trade and investment in the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation.

It is doing so at the urging of Congressman Charles Rangel, top Democrat on the House of Representatives' powerful Ways and Means Committee, who has called on his colleagues in the chamber to send a "powerful message" to the rest of the world that more must be done to help the Haitian chief of state and his people move forward after years of turmoil.

With the Ways and Means Committee expected to send the Hemispheric Opportunity Through Partnership and Encouragement Bill to the floor of the chamber for a vote in a matter of weeks, Rangel is upbeat about its chances of passage.

"This bill contains important provisions that, if approved by the House and Senate and signed into law by the President of the United States, would encourage economic development in Haiti," Rangel explained.

"Just as important, it would give the new government a real shot in the arm and would send a message to other governments that America believes Haiti can and should make it, and that the international community should fulfill the obligations and commitments it made and then withheld during the Aristide Administration."

The bill would provide, among other things, economic incentives to US businesses investing in Haiti. It would also remove trade barriers to Haitian exports of manufactured goods to the United States.

"It would give our inventors not only an opportunity to manufacture textiles but to help them get immediately into the American market," Rangel explained.

"But even more than what's in the bill, which certainly can be built on, it would be a strong word to other countries; Canada, certainly, has been in Haiti longer than we in the US have been.

"But it would say to the rest of the world that if Canada and the United States are with Haiti, then Europe and Asia should be with them as well."

The New York Democrat is hoping the new measure would do for the Caribbean country what the Economic Empowerment Zone designation has done for Harlem and surrounding communities in the city of New York.

"It's amazing how businesses and people respond," the influential lawmaker told BUSINESS AUTHORITY.

"You get a restaurant in the district and it encourages other restaurateurs who want to be right next door. It goes beyond – much beyond – restaurants; it serves as a magnet for all kinds of businesses."

CIDA: New Canada-Brazil Partnership for Children's Health in Haiti
CCN Matthews
May 23, 3006

OTTAWA, ONTARIO- - The Honourable Josee Verner, Minister of International Cooperation, today announced the signing of a partnership agreement between Canada and Brazil to support the immunization of children in Haiti. The signing took place at the donor conference for Haiti today in Brasilia, Brazil. The conference brings together Haitian officials and representatives from the international community.

"I am pleased with this new partnership, which will enable Canada and Brazil to pool their resources and expertise in order to improve child health conditions in Haiti," Minister Verner said. "This initiative is an innovative way to deal with the fundamental health needs of the Haitian people and obtain long-lasting results."

Canada and Brazil will equally split the cost of the \$2.5 million agreement. The Canadian International Development Agency will be responsible for managing the agreement in Canada, and the Brazilian Cooperation Agency will do likewise in Brazil. The project will span a period of 18 to 24 months. Both countries will combine their efforts in providing immunization training for Haitian technicians as well as in providing necessary vaccines and equipment.

Funding for this initiative was provided for in the May 2006 federal budget and is therefore built into the existing fiscal framework.

Haiti Recovers CARICOM Space
Prensa Latina
May 23, 2006

Port au Prince, The Haitian government is moving to national economic improvement and recovering space in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), with Haiti's membership into the Caribbean Development Bank.

The first step towards Haiti's integration to the regional bank authority will be a joint association agreement that it will sign with Trinidad and Tobago.

According to sources from that sector, monetary operations can be carried out in this French-speaking nation, because the new President Rene Preval's administration is working to guarantee a way out of the serious crisis the country is undergoing.

CARICOM accepted Haiti again after the general elections in February, because after a coup d'Etat in 2004 against the former president Jean Bertrand Aristide, the Community's Board refused to recognize the interim Executive imposed.

Accountability of the successful statewide electoral process also allowed for recovery of the necessary help from other territories to stabilize the deteriorated national economy.

One of Preval's recent successes was Haiti's inclusion in PETROCARIBE, a Venezuelan energy program that includes the supply of oil and its derivatives to the Caribbean, with payment preferences.

As a result of that agreement, a ship from Caracas is already in Port au Prince, with 40,000 barrels of gasoline and 60,000 of diesel.

Amorim calls for new form of cooperation in Haiti

Cecília Jorge

Reporter - Agência Brasil

May 23, 2006

Brasília - Haiti is in need of a new form of international cooperation, with a focus on combatting poverty and strengthening the capacity of the State to provide services to the population. This strategy was defended today (23) by the Brazilian minister of Foreign Relations, Celso Amorim, at the opening of the High Level International Meeting on Haiti, which is going on in Brasília.

According to Amorim, who reiterated what the president of Haiti, René Préval, has already said, the presence of the United Nations peace mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) remains necessary, even after the presidential elections.

"But president Préval also made it clear that the terms of the MINUSTAH mandate should be reformulated in light of the new situation. In the president's words, steam shovels and cement mixers should replace combat vehicles," the chancellor noted.

According to the minister, the international financial community must continue to allocate resources to Haiti and adapt the bureaucratic requirements involved in the process of disbursing the funds to the reality of the country. "In the past, certain bureaucratic requirements, valid, perhaps, by themselves, have often eliminated the chances of a real cooperation," Amorim recalled.

The purpose of the meeting, which is being attended by representatives of 16 countries and 11 international organizations, is to evaluate the results of international cooperation in Haiti during the past two years and define directions to be followed on the basis of the priorities set by the new Haitian government. The meeting will also serve as a preparation for the Conference of Donors scheduled for July in Port-au-Prince, the Haitian capital.

Translation: David Silberstein

Amorim comments on progress achieved in Haiti
Cecília Jorge
Agência Brasil
May 23, 2006

Brasília - At the opening of the International High Level Meeting on Haiti, the Brazilian minister of Foreign Relations, Celso Amorim, defended Brazil's participation in the international mission in support of Haiti, despite domestic criticisms. Amorim acknowledged that Brazil also suffers from "tremendous social privations," but he emphasized that this does not justify denying aid.

"That is a lesson I learned from Brazilians themselves of the most humble origins: that one doesn't have to be rich to be solidary," he affirmed. The meeting, which is being held in the Itamaraty Palace, is gathering representatives of 16 countries and 11 international organizations. The purpose of the meeting is to evaluate the results of international cooperation in Haiti during the past two years and outline new actions.

Amorim affirmed that Brazil's participation was important for Haiti to acquire prospects for the future. Among the advances achieved, the Brazilian chancellor mentioned the closer ties between Haiti and the other countries in the region.

"Brazil has constantly sought to build bridges to restore the dialogue between Haiti and the other countries in the region, especially the ones in the Caribbean." According to the minister, Haiti will be reintegrated with the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) at the next summit meeting, in July.

The minister observed that Brazil is part of the United Nations peace mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Furthermore, the country engaged in an international campaign to gather resources for Haitian reconstruction and the democratic reinforcement of Haitian institutions.

Amorim said that the Brazilian government has also developed 13 sectorial cooperation projects in areas that will have an immediate social impact. They include initiatives to develop agricultural production, distribute school lunches, combat gender discrimination, and train firefighters.

The meeting will continue all day today (23) in sessions that are off-limits to the press. At 4:30 P.M., Brazil, Argentina, Canada, and the World Bank will sign international cooperation measures on behalf of Haiti, to be followed by a collective interview with the press.

Translation: David Silberstein

Haiti's Preval Nominates Close Ally Prime Minister
By VOA News
23 May 2006

Haitian President Rene Preval has nominated close ally Jacques Edouard Alexis to be the Caribbean country's new prime minister.

Alexis is an agronomist who previously served as prime minister and education minister during Mr. Preval's first presidency from 1996 to 2001. President Preval was quoted earlier as saying Alexis is trustworthy and knows what he is doing.

Legislators will have to approve the president's choice. If confirmed, the 58-year-old Alexis would succeed interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, who was appointed after an uprising ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

Haiti is the Western Hemisphere's poorest country and is plagued by civil and political strife.

Haiti's Preval picks close ally as PM-designate

May 22, 2006

Reuters

By Joseph Guyler Delva

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - Haiti's newly inaugurated president, Rene Preval, has designated a longtime friend and ally to be the troubled Caribbean country's new prime minister, officials said on Monday.

Jacques Edouard Alexis, 58, an agronomist who served as prime minister during Preval's first presidency from 1996-2001, is widely seen as a good political deal-maker and pragmatist.

"We have a lot of challenges ahead of us and I think we'll have a chance to work with other sectors to advance the cause of the country," Alexis told Reuters.

Preval was installed on May 14 as Haiti's first elected ruler since former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in an armed revolt in February 2004.

He, and the government under him, face daunting challenges in uniting a country whose rich and poor are bitterly divided, and where the bulk of the population lives in abject poverty.

Preval wrote on Sunday to the presidents of both the upper and lower houses of parliament to officially inform them of his choice, after he had consulted with them on the matter as required by Haiti's constitution.

Legislators will have to approve the president's choice.

While presidents have tended to exert the most influence in Haiti's short and troubled experience of democracy, under the country's constitution it should be the prime minister who dictates government policy.

Preval's coalition, known as "Lespwa" for hope, has 11 of the 27 Senate seats where election results are definitive. The votes of 14 senators are needed to approve the nomination of the prime minister.

The task could be more difficult in the lower house, where Lespwa has only 20 of the 85 seats declared so far from elections that took place on April 21.

There are 30 seats in the Haitian Senate and 99 in the Chamber of Deputies.

Alexis has previously served as interior minister and education minister, in addition to being prime minister during Preval's first term.

Haiti's president nominates a prime minister
By JACQUELINE CHARLES
Miami Herald
May 22, 2006

Haitian President René Préval Monday nominated Jacques Edouard Alexis, a trusted ally and former prime minister, to help him govern the troubled country as his new prime minister.

Préval ended weeks of speculation by sending letters to the presidents of the Haitian Senate and Chamber of deputies informing them that he has chosen Alexis.

Alexis, who has been coordinating Préval's transition team -- he was inaugurated May 14 -- said he expects his nomination will be approved by parliament.

"The president has been preparing the terrain," he said in an interview with The Miami Herald.

Senate President Joseph Lambert said Préval's nomination letters were received this morning, and that Alexis has been asked to appear before a seven-member commission of parliament Tuesday to present his qualifications for the job.

If all goes well, Lambert said, the 114 elected members of parliament will vote on Wednesday afternoon.

Alexis is one of the main architects of Préval's election win in February. He first served as prime minister at the end of Préval's first presidential term, May 26, 1999 to Feb. 7, 2001.

At the time, Haiti was in the midst of a political crisis following Préval's decision to dismiss parliament -- and Alexis was installed by presidential decree.

United Nations Says It Will Continue Helping Haiti Stabilize Global donors urged to provide budget support to nation

By Eric Green

US State Dept.

May 23, 2006

Washington -- An official with the United Nations says the world body must maintain its stabilization mission in Haiti in order to help strengthen the "extremely fragile security" situation in the Caribbean nation.

In a May 19 statement, Juan Valdés, the U.N. special representative in Haiti, said the time had not yet come for the United Nations to leave that country.

Valdés said Haiti's new president, René Prével, had requested that the U.N. mission, known by the acronym MINUSTAH, stay in the country until a professional Haitian police force had been trained and the structure of the judiciary had improved.

Valdés said the international community must give urgent financial support to Haiti's government, which he said will lack the money to pay its expenses in the immediate future.

"It is absolutely urgent that the international community give budget support" to Prével for the first six months of his government, Valdés said. He warned that if Prével does not get such support, "he will face a very difficult situation because he has to pay police, he has to pay teachers, he has to pay health workers and the present situation doesn't permit him to do so."

INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS ON HAITI

The United States is participating in two upcoming international meetings to help rebuild Haiti. A May 23 ministerial meeting is being held in Brazil's capital of Brasilia, with the U.S. delegation at that event led by Thomas Shannon, assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, and Adolfo Franco, assistant administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

An international donors' conference for Haiti will be held in July in Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince.

Between July 2004 and the end of 2005, international donors had disbursed to Haiti some \$780 million, with the United States contributing \$277 million of that total. The United States is by far the world's leading donor to Haiti. (See related article.)

Valdés said the May 23 meeting in Brasilia reunites what is called the "Core Group on Haiti" -- the United States, Canada, Latin America and the European Union -- and also would confirm the commitment of nations that have sent peacekeeping troops to Haiti under the U.N. banner. Other members of the group, which was created by a U.N. Security Council resolution of April 30, 2004, are international organizations that are involved with promoting democracy and stability in Haiti. The

Security Council's 2004 resolution said the core group was designed to enhance the "effectiveness" of the international community's response in Haiti. (See related article.)

At the Brasilia meeting, Valdés said, Haitians will need to clarify how they have spent aid money received to date, especially on projects to strengthen the country's infrastructure.

Valdés said he hoped that new international aid pledges for Haiti will favor a program that includes combating corruption, controlling seaports and ending all illicit trafficking, particularly of weapons.

For more information on U.S. policy, see Haiti.

Donors to meet in Brazil to pledge short-term aid to Haiti

AFP

Caribbean Net News

Monday, May 22, 2006

UNITED NATIONS, (AFP): Donors and countries contributing troops to the United Nations mission in Haiti will meet in Brasilia next Tuesday to marshal funds to assist newly elected Haitian President Rene Preval, the outgoing head of the mission said Friday.

Juan Valdes of Chile, who is being replaced as chief of the UN Stabilization Mission (MINUSTAH) by Guatemalan diplomat Edmond Mulet, told reporters here that the Brasilia meeting was "absolutely urgent to mobilize funds for Haiti for the next sixth months."

The meeting will bring together donors, troop-contributing countries as well as the so-called Friends of Haiti: the European Union, Canada, the United States and Latin American countries.

Participants are to "follow and accelerate contributions promised in 2004," Valdes said.

He noted that 1.2 billion dollars had been pledged to Haiti in 2004, of which 800 million were disbursed, and said the meeting would help get a clearer picture of how much and how the money was spent.

He stressed that the Preval administration would be expected to present concrete proposals for social development over the next five years.

Valdes emphasized the urgency of providing Preval with budget support over the next sixth months so that he can pay teachers, police and health workers and weather "a difficult economic situation."

He said the World Bank was planning to convene another donors meeting in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince at the end of June or early July in the hope of securing additional pledges.

MINUSTAH, which was established in 2004 and is under Brazilian command, is made up of 7,500 military troops, including more than 1,200 Brazilians, and 2,000 international police.

In February the UN Security Council renewed the mission's mandate in the impoverished Caribbean island nation for at least another six months.

Preval, a 63-year-old agronomist, was sworn in as president last Sunday following his February 7 election with 51 percent of the vote.

He enjoys broad support among the poor in his country of eight million people.

Way paved for Haiti to become member of Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)
The Jamaica Gleaner
Tuesday | May 23, 2006

THE 36TH annual conference of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) Board of Governors ended on Friday, with the Caribbean financial giant welcoming the announcement that the way has been successfully paved for Haiti to become a full-fledged member.

President of the CDB, Dr. Compton Bourne, in his closing address during the final session of the conference said: "We welcome the announcement by the government of Trinidad and Tobago of its decision to enter a joint constituency arrangement with Haiti, which would pave the way for that country's full-fledged membership in the bank," he said.

"Now that elections have been held and the security situation has improved, we expect that a way has been paved to commence some operational work in Haiti," Dr. Bourne added.

The conference, which opened at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Montego Bay on May 15, ended Friday.

Addressing journalists after the closing ceremony, the CDB president said the week of meetings "went extremely well", with a general commitment to improving the economic prospects and livelihood of the Caribbean people.

COMMON CAUSE

"We came to the view that the CDB and the region must make common cause in increasing the flow of investment resources that are required for the economic transformation of the countries, and that we should devote sustained efforts toward expanding the membership of the bank, improving our relationship with other international agencies and countries that may contribute to the financial resources of the bank," Dr. Bourne said.

He observed that while the organisation had made progress towards reducing poverty in the region and building human resource capacity, there was still the looming existence of the challenge of poverty alleviation.

"The meeting of Governors of the CDB welcomed the completion of successful negotiations for the replenishment of the special development fund in the bank, targeted towards poverty reduction," Dr. Bourne said.

"We expect that there would be further contributions to that fund before this year is over, so we would be able to sustain our efforts, or provide resources directly to communities, as well as for various investment projects at the governmental level, for the improvement of the livelihood and economic prospects of all our people in the Caribbean," the CDB president added.

Haitian President Nominates Ally for Post

By STEVENSON JACOBS

The Associated Press

Washington Post

Monday, May 22, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Moving quickly to form a new government, President Rene Preval said Monday he has nominated former Cabinet member and close ally Jacques Edouard Alexis as prime minister.

If confirmed by parliament, Alexis would succeed outgoing interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, who was appointed to lead this impoverished Caribbean nation after an uprising ousted former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

Alexis, who served as prime minister and education minister during Preval's 1996-2001 presidency, is considered an able broker with the clout needed to hold sway in Haiti's splintered parliament, which is made up of members from 16 different parties.

"Alexis is going to do the Haitian people's work," Preval, who took power eight days ago, told reporters after meeting with legislators. "He is trustworthy and knows what he is doing."

Haitian lawmakers didn't say when they would vote on the nomination.

Alexis, 58, said he was ready for the job, telling Haitian broadcaster Radio Metropole that he would work to form "an open government" _ an apparent indication he would include members from different sectors of Haiti's fractured society.

As the official head of government, Alexis would appoint Preval's Cabinet and most administrative posts.

Alexis, who like Preval is a trained agronomist, had an icy relationship with the international community at times during his first term as prime minister.

When foreign donors threatened to cut off aid to protest flawed legislative elections in 2000, Alexis likened that move to when Haiti won independence from France in 1804 and "the international community was against us."

Haiti staged the only successful revolt against slavery to become the world's first black republic. But it was governed by a string of civilian and military dictatorships.

Aristide won the first free elections in 1990 but was ousted the following year in a coup. The United States sent 20,000 troops to restore Aristide.

Alexis could also face pressure to bring back Aristide, who took asylum in South Africa after the 2004 revolt but has said he wants to return to his homeland.

Rudy Heriveaux, a senator with Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas party, has said Aristide supporters helped elect Preval and that there cannot be reconciliation without the ousted leader's safe return.

Asked in April about the prospects of Aristide's return, Alexis said he would be allowed to return but suggested he might have to face allegations by the U.S.-backed interim government that he stole millions in state funds.

Aristide "will be able to return to his country but not now. He will return to Haiti in the not too distant future to answer the facts that are brought before him," Alexis said.

The interim government last year filed a federal lawsuit in Miami accusing Aristide of stealing from the Haitian treasury and state-owned telephone company. However, no evidence has been brought formally before a criminal court in Haiti.

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US 'too hasty' in move to condemn Ecuador

By Richard Lapper in São Paulo

The Financial Times

May 22 2006

The secretary general of the Organisation of American States has sharply criticised the US for moving too swiftly to condemn Ecuador over its decision to seize the assets of California-based Occidental Petroleum following a legal dispute.

In an interview with the FT, José Miguel Insulza said the US should have examined the case more carefully before deploring the move and suspending trade talks between the two countries.

“I don't think more than few hours passed between the Ecuadorean announcement and the US response,” Mr Insulza said, adding that Ecuador had believed it had been “within its rights”. “These kind of things cause resentment ... and that is not good for the hemisphere.”

Mr Insulza, who completes his first year in office this week, downplayed fears that the region is becoming increasingly polarised as a result of the growing influence of Hugo Chávez, the radical leader of oil-rich Venezuela. “There has been no sharp shift to the left or the right,” he said.

“So far, the only change of real importance has taken place in Bolivia [which elected indigenous leader Evo Morales last December and nationalised its gas industry this month] but we have to await the results of elections,” said Mr Insulza. Colombia and Peru go to the polls in the next two weeks, Mexico in July, and Brazil, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Venezuela before the end of the year.

Criticisms tended to underestimate the extent of the region's political maturity, he said. “Latin America is not a baby. When the left or right win in Europe nobody pronounces about the destiny of the Continent or anything like that. You have to take the political process take its course.”

Fragmentation, however, was a concern. Mr Insulza lamented recent tensions within the Mercosur and Andean Pact trade blocs, as well as bilateral tensions between Bolivia and Brazil [over gas nationalisation] and Argentina and Uruguay [over an environmental dispute involving two new Uruguayan paper mills]. “Bilateral conflicts have increased and we have to look for a way to ease these problems more quickly,” he said.

He urged governments, multilateral banks and other international agencies to be more flexible in the way they disburse aid to Haiti, whose newly elected President, René Préval, took office 10 days ago.

Donors meet in Brasília on Tuesday to discuss ways of helping Mr Préval revive the country's stricken economy. Not much more than a half of the \$1.4bn pledged in July 2004 has actually been disbursed and too little of the spending has resulted in concrete and visible improvements to infrastructure.

“I know that it is not easy but the countries and organisations giving aid to Haiti are treating Haiti as if it was a normal country. We have to look for extraordinary procedures to allow resources to flow.” The OAS helped broker negotiations between political parties after the results of Haiti's elections last February were disputed.

Storms deepen misery in Haiti
STEVENSON JACOBS
Associated Press
The Bradenton Herald
May 21, 2006

GONAIVES, Haiti - Tropical Storm Jeanne blew away Markley Maitre's concrete block house in a rush of wind and water, forcing her to dig through the mud for debris to rebuild.

Now, two years later, Maitre, a mother of five, still lives in a skeletal dwelling of scrap metal and sticks that won't provide much shelter when the next powerful storm strikes Haiti.

"If we have another storm, I think we're all going to die," she says outside her home in Gonaives, a seaside city of dirt streets and open sewers in a region left vulnerable to storms by decades of deforestation.

Jeanne killed some 3,000 people in Gonaives and displaced many more. Today - with the start of the new hurricane season just weeks away - there is still a large fetid lake formed by floodwaters on the city's outskirts and thousands of people cram into a shantytown that sprang up to house survivors.

The dire situation is not unusual in the poorer corners of Latin America and the Caribbean, where tropical storms and hurricanes often bring death and destruction on a far greater scale than in more developed areas with evacuation routes, modern communications and better drainage.

Wealthy places like the Cayman Islands or high-profile tourists zones like Cancun have quickly marshaled resources to rebuild after storms in recent years. It's a far different situation in Haiti, where reconstruction has been largely left to a few private aid groups, or Guatemala, where Hurricane Stan last fall brought deadly floods and landslides to remote communities with few resources.

Last year's Atlantic season saw a record 27 tropical storms, which affected more than 4 million people and caused damage of more than \$7 billion in Central America and the Caribbean, according to the U.N.-run Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean, or ECLAC.

Forecasters say they expect this season will have fewer named storms than last year but will still be above average.

"We have already started to be on alert," says Evan Thompson, a meteorologist at the national weather service of Jamaica, where Hurricane Ivan wiped out crops, destroyed thousands of homes and killed 17 people in 2004. "Most of our population lives along the coast and there's not many places you can go to escape the wrath of these systems."

Even with fewer storms, many places in the region could have a devastating season because of inadequate disaster planning and years of environmental mismanagement, says Ricardo Zapata-Marti, a natural disaster specialist with ECLAC.

"The vulnerability has not decreased and the risk has increased," he says, citing Central America as one of the more vulnerable regions.

Stan struck there in October 2005, unleashing deadly flooding and mudslides that killed 700 people in Guatemala and left thousands homeless. The storm also wreaked havoc in southern Mexico, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Costa Rica.

Six months later, reconstruction is dragging on, prompting protests from frustrated storm survivors. In Guatemala, for example, most of the 9,000 families who lost their homes still live in temporary shelters of plastic canvas and tin roofs.

"The Spaniards founded 100 towns in 100 years, now we have to do it in 12 months," says Eduardo Aguirre, the Guatemalan official in charge of reconstruction.

But rebuilding alone isn't always enough. The best solution, Zapata-Marti says, is for those struggling areas to replace their buildings, roads and drainage systems with more modern infrastructure that can withstand a powerful storm.

In places such as Haiti, the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, that's simply not an option, at least not in the near future.

"We don't even have funds to pay our employees, so how are we supposed to prepare for storms?" says Gonaives Mayor Gartha Jacques, who has to walk to City Hall since her office doesn't have a budget for a car.

With no help from the government, international groups such as CARE and the U.S. Agency for International Development have helped rebuild parts of Gonaives. But the risk remains for thousands of storm survivors who still live in a muddy, makeshift settlement named "Cite Jeanne."

For Maitre, a 32-year-old ice vendor, life only got harder after the storm. With little work, she hasn't been able to finish rebuilding her one-room home, where sunlight pokes through her roof of discarded tin.

UN SHOULD STAY LONG ENOUGH TO CONSOLIDATE HAITI'S PROGRESS, MISSION CHIEF SAYS

Press Release - U.N. News Center

May 21, 2006

The international community must give urgent financial support to the Government of newly elected President René Prével of Haiti, who will lack the money to pay State workers in the immediate future, the United Nations Secretary-General's outgoing Special Representative in that country, Juan Gabriel Valdés, said today.

"It is absolutely urgent that the international community give budget support to Mr. Prével for the first six months of his Government. If he doesn't get that support he will face a very difficult situation because he has to pay police, he has to pay teachers, he has to pay health workers and the present situation doesn't permit him to do so," Mr. Valdés stressed at a news conference at UN Headquarters.

The World Bank had approved a loan for Haiti which would only be released after October, he said, but he added that both the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank had shown flexibility.

A team sent to Haiti two weeks ago and led by economist Jeffrey Sachs recommended that aid be sent in three phases: the first six months of the new Government, the first two years, and then Mr. Prével's entire presidency, the UN envoy said.

A meeting in Brasilia next Tuesday would reunite donor representatives with the Core Group on Haiti - the European Union, Canada, the United States and the Latin Americans - and would also confirm the commitment of the troop-contributing countries, he said.

At that meeting, it would be important for Haitians to clarify how they had spent some \$800 million, which donor countries said they had disbursed out of the \$1.2 billion pledged, especially with respect to the execution of such projects as strengthening the infrastructure, Mr. Valdés said.

A subsequent meeting in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, had been called by the World Bank and would reunite donor countries with key financial institutions.

The envoy expressed the hope that new aid pledges would favour a programme that included combating corruption, controlling seaports and ending all illicit traffic, particularly of weapons.

On the security situation, he said the UN, which on some half dozen past occasions has left Haiti before improvements took hold, should now reinforce its presence, maintain current troop levels and strengthen the extremely fragile security.

While there might be some changes in the nature and composition of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the time had not yet come to leave, said Mr. Valdés, who is also MINUSTAH chief until the end of the month.

He noted that Mr. Préval has requested that the MINUSTAH stay on until a professional police force had been trained and the structure of the judiciary had improved - and, indeed, for the duration of his presidency.

He expressed the hope that the new Special Representative, Edmond Mulet of Guatemala, who would take over in June would find the Mission well organized in terms of its work in the security sector and in social development, especially in the poorest areas.

The second coming of Preval

Analysis

Rickey Singh

The Jamaica Observer

Sunday, May 21, 2006

IN an editorial last April 4, while arrangements were being made for the inauguration of Rene Preval as president of Haiti, the Barbados Daily Nation expressed a widely shared sentiment beyond our Caribbean region:

Rickey Singh

"A constant feature of life in Haiti, long after the 'Duvalierist' era ended in the 1980s", the editorial noted, "is the utter poverty, unstable political climate and uncertainty about the independence, competence and integrity of its law enforcement and judicial institutions..."

Indeed, poverty, illiteracy, violence and fear are deeply located across the landscape of what remains the oldest and poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, and whose involvement in our Caribbean Community is still quite marginal as its newest member of nine years.

A week ago today (May 21), Preval's inauguration took place in a comparatively low-keyed ceremony - in contrast to that of his elected predecessor and former mentor, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, ousted from power on February 29, 2004 by a combination of local and foreign forces.

The shared hopes of Haitians at home and of the Diaspora is that Preval's second coming as president would make a qualitative difference in improved governance and their basic needs to that of his first term 10 years ago.

There, however, lingers the fear of *deja vu* in the return to the Presidential Palace in Port-au-Prince of the 63-year-old agronomist as Haiti's elected head of state. Fear of a general pattern of hopes dashed with recurring new administrations since the end of the long, painful Duvalierist era two decades ago.

Preval holds the record as the sole elected president to have served a full five-year term since Haiti became an independent nation in 1804. But that first administration is best remembered for functioning in the shadow of Jean-Bertrand Aristide and for failing to make any significant impact in the country's socio-economic and political life.

It was a kind of holding operation in governance of the nation until the return of Aristide who had faced his first coup in 1991 only after one year in office as Haiti's first freely elected president since independence. The second came in 2004.

Within Caricom, Preval is remembered as the Haitian leader who, with strong support from Aristide, had signed up Haiti for provisional membership of the Community back in July 1997 in Montego Bay under the then chairmanship of the now retired P J Patterson.

Regularising Haiti's role as a full-fledged member of Caricom to participate in the CSME as well as expediting its access to the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) as a borrowing member country remain unresolved issues. The latter could well have re-emerged for discussion at last week's annual Board of Governors meeting of the CDB in Montego Bay.

Whatever the reason, Caricom was not chosen for inclusion in Preval's pre-inauguration priority visits abroad that took him first to the USA for a meeting with President George W Bush and later to Cuba to meet with President Fidel Castro.

Nor did Caricom, which had a token official presence at last Sunday's inauguration ceremony, considered it a priority to invite him following his February 7 election as president-elect for consultations ahead of the Heads of Government Summit in July in St Kitts and Nevis at which he is expected to be a principal speaker for the opening session.

If in deciding to meet with Bush and later with Castro Preval was signalling the independent spirit with which he hopes to govern Haiti, in co-operation with a newly-elected Parliament, then he must be given the respect and support to do so.

America's influence can make much difference in helping Haiti to scale its mountainous problems. Sadly, this influence, overall, has not been used for the good of the Haitian people.

The results of the pre-inauguration Bush-Preval meeting in Washington in terms of aid flows and co-operation with a new administration in Port-au-Prince will be closely monitored.

Going to Havana for a meeting with Castro was perhaps Preval's own way of expressing gratitude to the government and people of Cuba for staying the course with Haiti during the traumatic periods of dislocations from natural and man-made disasters when some 600 Cuban doctors and nurses served, virtually round-the-clock, the various needs of affected Haitians.

Now, as he settles down to form his new government, Preval would be conscious that his victory was made possible with segments of support from Aristide's popular Fanmi Lavalas party.

Understandably, he would also be mindful not to antagonise domestic and foreign anti-Aristide forces. He, therefore, has to walk a tightrope in carrying out his pledge to build the foundation for a stable and democratic state that could attract overseas investments and development aid from the international community.

As last Sunday's inauguration ceremony was taking place, I sought the views of two Haitian human rights activists and a well-known retired diplomat and social commentator of Trinidad and Tobago. All three are quite knowledgeable about the politics and culture of Haiti and the challenges facing Preval.

For Dr Jean Claude Bajoux of the Haiti Ecumenical Centre for Human Rights, priority number one must be governance based on laws that recognise fundamental rights "without exceptions" in order to generate national confidence and restore basic infrastructure - roads, electricity and water - as well as getting educated some one million children who are currently out of the school system.

Jocelyn McCalla, executive director of the National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR), commended Preval for setting his sights on providing a "justice and security" climate while aware that he cannot seriously depend on the existing police force to function with credibility and efficiency.

Suggesting that he makes the best possible use of the huge presence of United Nations peace-keeping force, McCalla feels that Preval and his allies could succeed if they are able to achieve the following, not necessarily in order of priority:

- . reform the police and judiciary;
- . secure alternative sources of energy;
- . put thousands of young men and women to work in community-based and national infrastructure projects;
- . establish strong anti-corruption mechanisms; and
- . work out practical migration and immigration agreements with the USA and neighbouring states like The Bahamas, Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

From Trinidad and Tobago, Reginald Dumas, who had served as a personal adviser on Haiti to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, following Aristide's 2004 overthrow, was emphatic that, given the divided state of the Haitian polity, Preval "needs to be a healer". The circumstances in which he was elected means that there are many who remain suspicious of his relationship with Aristide and would wish him to fail.

Further, as Dumas emphasised, the international community has to "stop insisting on the application of its developed country ideology to Haiti" and start paying more attention to the views of grassroots organisations, and non-government organisations that are recognised for their legitimacy and commitment.

He also agrees on the need for a critical review of Caricom-Haiti relations now that both sides have, for different reasons, failed to have direct contact prior to last Sunday's inauguration of President Preval.

From my personal perspective, while Preval's official call for healing and unity is encouraging, the reality is that he cannot afford to delay for too long reaching out to Aristide's Lavalas party whose support was crucial in his election. Ambivalence on this score could be exploited by those whose personal agendas conflict with the needs and aspirations of the Haitian masses.

From exile in South Africa, the crafty, some say "Anancy" Aristide, who had failed to promote meaningful national reconciliation while in power, would be anxiously following developments and looking forward, quite rightly so, to his return home.

Haiti donor conference begins tomorrow in Brasilia

Priscilla Mazenotti

Reporter - Agência Brasil

May 22, 2006

Brasília - Now that the new president of Haiti, Rene Préval, has taken office, negotiations are scheduled to begin once again on international assistance for the reconstruction of the country. Talks begin tomorrow, May 23, here in Brasilia, when representatives of Brazil, Chile, the United States, France and Canada, countries which are overseeing Haiti reconstruction programs, along with representatives of other countries and international organizations, will meet to discuss extending activities (action plans and investment projects) in Haiti for another 18 months (the present mandate ends in September).

At least four agreements are to be signed in Brasilia for Haitian assistance: two of them, one by Brazil and Argentina, the other by Brazil and the Organization of American States, will provide technical cooperation; another by Brazil and the World Bank is for a school lunch program; and a Brazil-Canada agreement will assist with vaccination programs in Haiti.

Translation: Allen Bennett

COMMENTARY

Last chance for Haiti?

Monday, May 22, 2006

by Sir Ronald Sanders

Caribbean Net News

“The Haitians are a proud and energetic people, and given the tools they can do the job of their own development”. This is the view of Cecil Pilgrim, a former Caribbean diplomat, who observed both the Haitian Presidential and Parliamentary elections.

Most people, who have either never visited Haiti or read very little about it beyond news reports, would probably be surprised by Mr Pilgrim’s judgement of the Haitian people.

For the most part, the world’s public understands the Haitians to be largely illiterate, extremely poor, and anxious to flee their country, preferably to the United States, as quickly as they can. The idea, then, that they would be capable of managing their country sensibly if given the tools is at odds with most of the received knowledge of Haiti.

But, Mr Pilgrim does not underplay the enormous task that confronts Haiti and the international community to bring this blighted country to normalcy. He has stressed the enormous financial resources that are needed, and the fact that external skills will be required in a number of technical and other fields.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere; the vast number of its people survive on less than one dollar a day; many families survive only on remittances sent by relatives abroad; HIV/AIDS is rampant; infant mortality is high as is early death in comparison with the rest of the Caribbean.

Beyond the human condition, Haiti’s physical infrastructure is dire. Its roads are, for the most part, not paved making transportation difficult; its electricity generation is spasmodic; its hospitals are less than basic; its countryside is shorn of trees and subject to flooding from even moderate rainfall.

It is a grim situation, made even worse by the internal political factionalism that continues to plague it.

Neither the popular election of Rene Preval, nor the relatively peaceful parliamentary elections has ended the divisions within Haiti.

This is underscored by the fact that there are still armed groups throughout country and were it not for the United Nations peacekeeping force, order would not exist.

At a meeting of May 16th, the UN Security Council emphasised the need to reform and strengthen Haiti’s law enforcement systems.

Members of the Security Council are keen for discussions to be held between the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti and the new Haitian authorities on security issues. This would include dealing with the problem of a police force that has run away from confrontation with armed gangs.

The UN Security Council is in no doubt about the country's needs. The list includes, "the need to ensure a secure and stable environment; to strengthen its democratic institutions, foster national reconciliation, inclusiveness and political dialogue, promote and protect human rights and the rule of law, and build government capacity".

President Preval's biggest challenge is how to meld the various factions in Haiti into a cooperative force in the country's interest. This will take a great deal of openness and a readiness to include in governance political opponents of the past.

Much maturity will be necessary by all parties, and Haiti's survival will depend on their capacity to set aside narrow political ambitions in the wider interest of the country.

It is left to be seen whether the groups, including those around President Preval, can set aside their enmities for the national good.

Incidentally, this includes the very wealthy business community who live behind high walls shutting out the widespread poverty and deprivation that stands in stark contradiction to their own life styles.

For its part, the international community has not been miserly with Haiti.

For instance, the US State Department has revealed that, between July 2004 and the end of 2005, international donors have disbursed \$780 million to Haiti of which the US has contributed \$277 million.

Unfortunately, the money has not been used for attacking the root causes of Haiti's problems which remain education and training, health, sanitation, infrastructural development and job creation.

And, the money will never be directed at tackling these overdue and urgent fundamental problems until the influential groups in Haiti decide that the time has come to focus on building the country.

On May 23rd, a ministerial meeting will be held in Brazil at which many governments and agencies will be represented. A major objective of the meeting is to plan for a Donor's Conference on Haiti in July.

CARICOM countries, apart from Trinidad and Tobago, are not in a position to provide funds to Haiti, but they can, and should, provide expertise in building the institutions of governance and of regulation. They can also play a part in helping Haiti to prepare feasible projects and programmes that Donors can fund.

It is good to know that Haiti has gifted people who can contribute meaningfully to their own development if they are given the tools.

The July Donors Conference should show an international community willing to help even more. But, Haiti's politicians must now show themselves prepared to work together for the benefit of Haiti and the Haitian people. The international community cannot afford to make financial resources available to

Haiti if the internal conditions do not exist to make good use of it. There are too many other parts of the world that also need the attention of the global community.

Therefore, Haiti may now be in the last chance saloon.

By any measure, Haiti is already a completely failed State. If its leadership, including Mr Preval, squanders the opportunity of his popular election and the expression of genuine will by the people in the parliamentary elections, they will have no one but themselves to blame if the country eventually has to be declared a UN Trusteeship run under martial law until democratic institutions are constructed for it.

VIEW: The Haitian miracle? — Jeffrey D Sachs
The Daily Times, Pakistan
May 22, 2006

With its beautiful beaches and remarkable arts and music, Haiti could once again become a major tourist destination. Indeed, Haiti can become an inspiration for many other fragile and impoverished new democracies. The US, France, Canada, and other major donor countries must not miss this historic opportunity to give vital help

This spring's presidential election in Haiti sadly reinforced the country's blighted reputation. The paradox is that today Haiti has a chance, perhaps the best in its modern history, to escape from its long history of extreme poverty and turmoil.

A mere one-hour flight from Miami, the country struggles with poverty levels akin to the poorest parts of sub-Saharan Africa. But, whereas many parts of the world are extremely poor because of their isolation, Haiti is extremely poor despite its proximity to the world's largest market. Now, Haiti can turn its geography into a competitive advantage, but only if the United States helps.

Haiti recalls a famous lament once heard about another US neighbour, Mexico: "So far from God and so close to the United States." As with Mexico, Haiti's proximity to the US has cut both ways in its history. Proximity to the US should, of course, be an advantage for exports and attracting investment.

However, proximity has also meant US meddling. Haiti was the second country, after the US, to win its independence from Europe, following a slave rebellion in 1804. But America regarded Haiti as a threat rather than as a colleague in freedom, refusing to extend diplomatic recognition until after the outbreak of the Civil War, which finally brought an end to slavery in the US.

Even after recognition by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862, relations remained sour. Haiti was exploited and occasionally occupied by US troops, rather than being regarded as a legitimate partner in trade and diplomacy.

Meanwhile, Haiti's ecological and demographic conditions posed huge development challenges that have never been overcome. The island is hit regularly by devastating hurricanes. It has been massively deforested, and its soils have been depleted of nutrients. Tropical diseases remain killers to this day.

A devastating economic blow occurred in the mid-19th century, when Europe learned to produce sugar from a temperate-zone crop, beets, rather than from tropical sugarcane. World sugar prices collapsed, and Haiti fell into deeper disarray. Extreme poverty bred illiteracy and miserable governance, which in turn intensified hunger, disease, and instability.

Haiti's recent economic history is marked by a remarkable and tragic downslide since the mid-1980s, exacerbated by sometimes well-intentioned but typically disastrously executed US diplomacy. In an attempt to push Haiti towards democracy, the US imposed economic sanctions, which crippled Haiti's fragile and newly emerging export sector, especially apparel and other labour-intensive production. Unemployment soared. Urban violence spiralled.

The US then entered into a destructive 15-year relationship with Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who is massively popular among Haiti's poor, but distrusted by most of the business sector and many leading US politicians. When Aristide came to power in 2001, the Bush administration cut off most international aid, thereby helping send the economy into a freefall. Aristide's government was ousted under highly contested circumstances in 2004.

The newly elected president, Rene Preval, is a highly talented and experienced agronomist, and thus has the perfect background to revive Haiti's degraded rural economy. With the US market close by, Haiti could achieve a remarkable recovery of exports of horticulture, fruits, and other agricultural products, as well as tourism and light manufactured goods.

The key will be for the new government to provide a sound framework which combines key public investments — roads, power, soil nutrients, improved seed varieties, public health, safe water — with confidence-building outreach to the business community and fruitful relations with the US and other donor countries. This time, the US has a strong interest in cooperating fully to promote economic progress: another round of failure would only provoke chaos, including massive numbers of new refugees to the US.

The gap between Haiti's performance and its potential is now so large that great gains can be achieved in income levels, farming, health, education, and more. Crop yields are below one ton of cereal per hectare of farmland — far less than half of what is readily achievable if farmers are helped to gain access to fertilisers, improved seeds, and basic infrastructure.

Similarly, health conditions are horrendous, but could be improved dramatically just with immunisation, de-worming, safe water, antibiotics, and anti-malaria bed nets. Community health workers could be trained in a matter of months to extend basic healthcare throughout rural areas, which could then be better mobilised to fend off the debilitating results of future hurricanes.

On the economic front, Haiti can become a profitable exporter of tropical crops such as groundnuts, mangos, cut flowers, string beans, and bamboo — a source of progress among Haiti's Caribbean-basin neighbours. Preval's own hometown has successfully used a modest level of external donor support to create new rural cooperatives to market improved crops. And, with its beautiful beaches and remarkable arts and music, Haiti could once again become a major tourist destination.

Indeed, Haiti can become an inspiration for many other fragile and impoverished new democracies. The US, France, Canada, and other major donor countries must not miss this historic opportunity to give vital help to Preval's democratically elected new government. —DT-PS

Jeffrey Sachs is professor of economics and director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University

Preval faces big challenge in Haiti's largest slum

21 May 2006

By Tom Brown

Reuters AlertNet

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti - The volatile situation in Haiti's largest and most violent slum could prove a major obstacle for President Rene Preval as he seeks to stabilize his country and put it on a democratic path.

Preval appealed for peace in the troubled Caribbean nation last Sunday as he was inaugurated as Haiti's first democratically elected leader since Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled an armed revolt more than two years ago.

But leaders of gangs in Cite Soleil, a shantytown home to at least 300,000 people and a potent symbol of misery in the poorest country in the Americas, say there can be no peace without justice and a speedy response to their demands.

No ultimatums have been set, according to several gang leaders who voiced cautious support for Preval when interviewed by Reuters last week.

But chief among their demands is one for the return of Aristide, who went into exile in February 2004 in the face of a bloody rebellion and pressure from Washington and Paris to step down.

Preval, a one-time Aristide ally and previously president of Haiti from 1996 to 2001, has said there is nothing to prevent Aristide's return. He stopped short of saying he would welcome back a figure still seen as a champion of the poor but reviled by Haiti's tiny, wealthy elite.

"Aristide must come back," said Augudson Nicolas, a slight man known as General Toutou who controls one of the gangs in the teeming warren of shacks, narrow alleys and open sewers.

The United States has warned Preval not to allow Aristide back -- accusing him of despotism and reliance on armed thugs to silence opponents. But that could reignite violence in Cite Soleil, which has seen an orgy of bloodshed over the past two years.

A U.N. peacekeeping mission, now numbering about 9,000 troops and civilian police, has been in Haiti since June 2004 to support a U.S.-backed interim government.

U.N. PULLOUT

Preval has asked the mission, widely despised in the slums, to stay on for now but that too could backfire on him.

Cite Soleil's gang leaders are demanding the withdrawal of the U.N. troops, saying they have killed women, children and other defenseless people since rolling into the shantytown in menacing armored personnel carriers.

Resentment runs high among many residents, whose cinder-block homes are pockmarked by bullets fired during pitched battles between U.N. troops and Cite Soleil's gangs.

Georges Masillon, 54, standing outside a sand-bagged former supermarket where blue-helmeted U.N. troops are bivouacked, bemoaned the fate of his 29-year-old son on crutches nearby.

The young man was shot by Jordanian peacekeepers while trying to run for safety on Feb. 1 when gunfire erupted for no apparent reason, Masillon said. One bullet severed his Achilles tendon while the exit wound from another damaged his genitals.

"MINUSTAH has done nothing to help us, they have only hurt us," said Masillon, using the French-language acronym of the U.N. mission

"Cite Soleil gave Preval power," said Sonson Pierre, a self-proclaimed soldier in what he described as the army of Commander Evans, one of Cite Soleil's main gang leader.

"If Preval doesn't respond to us it's going get hot," he said, referring to the demands for a U.N. withdrawal.

Several of Haiti's gangs had offered to lay down their weapons once Preval took office but none has disarmed so far.

Evans' followers, many barefoot and brandishing automatic assault rifles, danced through mud-choked alleys and fired off gunshots into the air last Thursday in celebration after briefly taking a Brazilian army colonel hostage. Evans, who figures prominently on Haiti's most wanted list, said there had been a botched U.N. attempt at his arrest.

"All we want for this country is peace," he said. "I don't think the whites (U.N. peacekeepers) want peace. They should leave."

Annan names Guatemalan diplomat as his top envoy to Haiti

AP

The Jamaica Observer

Sunday, May 21, 2006

UNITED Nations secretary general Kofi Annan appointed veteran Guatemalan diplomat Edmond Mulet his top envoy for Haiti on Tuesday.

Mulet, Guatemala's ambassador to the European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg, will lead the 9,000-strong UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti, the United Nations said in a statement from its headquarters in New York.

He joins the mission at a critical time, just two days after Haitian President Rene Preval was sworn in. On Monday, Mulet's predecessor, Juan Gabriel Valdes, appealed for urgent foreign aid and warned that Haiti could suffer another crisis unless Haitians see progress soon.

Haiti, the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation, has been in turmoil since a violent rebellion toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

Mulet, who has also served as Guatemala's ambassador to the United States, is a longtime advocate of democracy and indigenous rights.

He was expelled from Guatemala several times and briefly imprisoned in 1981 when the country was under military rule, the UN statement said.

Born in 1951, Mulet, was educated in Canada, the United States and Switzerland. He won a seat on Guatemala's National Congress in 1982, and became its president in 1992.

U.N. Envoy Urges Continuing Aid for Haiti
The New York Times
Reuters
May 20, 2006

UNITED NATIONS, May 19 — The top United Nations envoy in Haiti urged international donors on Friday to keep aid flowing during President René Prével's first six months in office, or risk renewed instability.

"At this point in time it is absolutely urgent to mobilize funds to support Haiti for the first six months," said the envoy, Juan Gabriel Valdés, a former Chilean foreign minister.

Mr. Prével took office last Sunday and quickly appealed for peace in his impoverished country, which has suffered violent outbreaks recently that have taken hundreds of lives. He is Haiti's first democratically elected leader since Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled into exile more than two years ago.

If outside aid starts drying up, Mr. Prével will face a very difficult environment that could undermine recent political progress and fuel new violence, Mr. Valdés said.

A United Nations peacekeeping mission now numbering about 7,000 troops and 1,700 police officers has been in Haiti since June 2004, supporting an interim government installed to run the country until elections could be held.

Run-off election disputes continue around Haiti

By Haiti Progres

Political Affairs Magazine

May 19, 2006

Although Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) announced winners of the April 21, 2006 legislative run-off elections on May 8, dozens of candidates that lost their bid for Senate and Deputy seats continue to demand new votes in several districts, charging fraud and irregularities.

The Senate candidate for the West Department of Serge Gilles' social democratic Fusion party, Marie Denise Claude, claims that there was massive fraud at several voting centers around the capital, Port-au-Prince. Finishing in fourth place according to final CEP results, Claude charges that most of the irregularities took place in Building 2004, where Cité Soleil residents voted. (Cité Soleil, Haiti's largest and poorest slum, was a stronghold for former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.) Claude is calling for the vote at this center to be reheld and for a recount at the other centers where she charges there was fraud.

Fusion's candidate for deputy from the southern district of Port-au-Prince, Yvette Mengual, accuses her victorious rival from President-elect René Préval's Lespwa party, Jean Myrtil Clédor, of having bribed voters and members of electoral offices to fix the vote in his favor. Mengual is backed in her protest by the "Network of Women Candidates to Win," which is affiliated with the USAID-supported Haitian Coalition of Women Leaders (COHFEL). Mengual, who garnered only 24% of the vote to Clédor's 76%, has called for annulment of that district's election.

Also in the West department, the losing candidates for the Fonds-Verettes/Ganthier district near Croix des Bouquets, which was won by MODEREH's P. Jude Destiné with 20% of the vote, have marched in front of the CEP's headquarters to denounce what they claim was massive fraud on April 21.

On the island of La Gonâve, the candidate for deputy of Evans Paul's Alyans party, Marie Ginette Galliotte, charged that there were flagrant irregularities. She said she was the victim of sexual discrimination and is calling for a new vote.

In the Artibonite, partisans of the Senate candidate of Leslie Manigat's Assembly of National Progressive Democrats (RDNP), Willy Jean-Baptiste, called for annulment of the vote in certain districts. They even held protests blocking the southern entry to the city of Gonaïves to show their anger. However, one would expect Jean-Baptiste to simply concede the race because Manigat, to protest the CEP's ruling that Préval won in the first round where RDNP placed a distant second, asked all his party's candidates to withdraw from their races.

Similar cries of foul are coming from Fusion's candidate for Deputy for the district of Marchand-Dessalines, Wouldi Simon. He claims that voters and his poll watchers were brutalized by supporters of Jean Pressoir Dort, his adversary from Youri Latortue's Artibonite in Action party (LAAA) who won with 56% of the vote. In Desdunes, the candidate for Deputy of the Struggling Peoples Organization (OPL), Beaudelaire Noelsaint, has accused a local group called Base 32, which supported the Fusion's winning candidate Levaillant Louis-Jeune, of mistreating his partisans and preventing them from voting for him. He is calling for annulment of the vote.

In the Northwest department, the Senate candidate of the Bridge party (PONT), Evallière Beauplan, placed second with 39.42% of the vote, thereby winning a four-year Senate term. But he rejected the CEP's results which proclaimed Alyans' Eddy Bastien victor with 41.56% of the vote, which nets a six-year seat. Beauplan says he has evidence to prove fraud and has called for cancellation of the elections at certain voting centers, like that in Saint Louis du Nord.

Meanwhile, the MIRN's candidate for Deputy for the district of Jean Rabel, André Joseph, called the CEP to carry out a serious investigation before publishing its final election results. Joseph accuses Gerard Thérémène, his adversary from the party Konba, of having his partisans stuff ballot boxes.

In the Southeast department, one of Lespwa's Senate candidates, Frantz Large, curiously came in fourth after having placed second in the first round. "The people in charge of the polling stations stuffed the ballot boxes in favor of other candidates," Large declared. "In communes like Belle-Anse, Thiotte and Cayes-Jacmel, the number of the citizens who voted is much greater than the number of people registered." At least Large brings verifiable charges. Two other Lespwa candidates – Joseph Lambert and Laurent Féquière Mathurin – won the first and second Senate seats for the Southeast. The OPL's Ricard Pierre, who finished well behind Large in the first round, won third place.

In the Nippes department, Anglade Jacob, one of Lespwa's Senate candidates, accused CEP secretary general Rosemond Pradel and director general Jacques Bernard of carrying out under the table maneuvers which favored Fusion's candidate, Huguette Lamour, who finished third, securing a two-year Senate seat. Jacob is protesting his fourth place finish, which denies him any Senate seat. Another Lespwa candidate, Nenel Cassy, finished in first place, winning a six-year Senate seat.

Frantz André Féquière, the ADEBAH's candidate for deputy for Anse-à-Veau, has also called for new elections in his district, charging fraud which favored Fusion's candidate Frantz Robert Mondé, who got 62% of the vote.

In Haiti's westernmost Grande Anse department, the police arrested Sorel Yacinthe, Fusion's candidate for Deputy for the district of Moron/Chanbellan. They charge that he assassinated a Lespwa partisan. However, according to the CEP's partial results, it seems the accused murderer is winning the race with 52% of the vote.

As one can see, there are no shortage of disputes, and unfortunately some which might be very justified will be lumped together with frivolous challenges and dishonest maneuvers. Despite the jostling, the fact remains: Préval's Espwa party is far from having a majority in either house of the Parliament.

On May 8, the Haitian state's official journal, Le Moniteur, published the official results of the run-offs for 27 of 30 senators and 86 of 99 deputies. The elected rushed the same day to the "newly renovated" Legislative Palace to register for Haiti's 48th Legislative session.

The registration process continued on May 9, and the new parliamentarians also prepared to hold their first National Assembly. Three Senate seats and thirteen lower house seats are still vacant because of

the vote was annulled in thirteen districts in the Northeast department for obvious cases of irregularities and fraud.

The Deputy elected from Maïssade, Willio Joseph, had been arrested and imprisoned in January on charges of stealing cars and criminal conspiracy. But a judge set him free, and he was sworn into the Parliament.

Meanwhile, the vice-president of the Parliament's Maintenance Commission, Alix Richard, said that there is still a great deal of renovation work to be done on the Legislative Palace, which means that the new legislators will be working in less than ideal conditions.

Préval is scheduled to be sworn in before the Parliament on the morning of May 14.

UN accused of slaughter inside Haiti's National Penitentiary
Prisoners claim ten were killed
Haiti Information Project
May 18, 2006

Haiti Information Project (HIP) - Port au Prince - While Président-elect René Préval was attending a special inaugural mass on May 14 at the Port-au-Prince Cathedral in Haiti's, UN peacekeepers apparently opened fire on a demonstration inside the National Penitentiary. Prisoners took over the facility at about 9 a.m. as a protest in solidarity with incoming president Preval, to condemn the holding of political prisoners and the return of exiled president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

According to the UN more than 90% of detainees in Haiti's prisons are in pre-trial detention, and that most have been in jail for more than two years without seeing a judge.

Displaying large banners from a high rooftop within the penitentiary compound, prisoners also shouted to journalists below that U.N. forces had killed ten protestors as they opened fire earlier in the morning. Haiti Information Project (HIP) correspondents were at the scene and Director Kevin Pina videotaped the UN action. The footage clearly shows MINUSTAH soldiers shooting at the demonstrators above on a secured catwalk inside the prison. Prisoners raised the corpses of two victims they claimed were shot by UN sharpshooters. While attempting to cover the story from the street below Pina was forcefully restrained by a contingent of Jordanian soldiers who claimed that it was too "dangerous" for anyone to enter the area.

How the prisoners got out of their cells remained unclear while some in the local Haitian press were claiming that a few guards were responsible. The breakout and protest came on the heels of the arrest of well-known Lavalas activist and community organizer Rene Civil. Civil had attempted to enter Haiti from the Dominican Republic the night before and was detained by U.N. forces and then turned over to the Haitian police. Rene Civil, along with Annette Auguste and Paul Raymond, are seen as the most popular community level leaders of Aristide's Lavalas movement among Haiti's poor. Auguste was arrested by U.S. Marines in May 2004 and Raymond was arrested last year in the Dominican Republic by police and a U.S. embassy security detachment. Auguste and Raymond have been held in prolonged detention without trial amid shifting allegations and charges. Their fates remain unclear to this day.

Families and friends of the prisoners left a large crowd gathering in front of Haiti's National Palace for Preval's inauguration celebration after hearing about the incident. Several thousand marched to the penitentiary to demonstrate their solidarity with the prisoners as U.N. soldiers fought to hold the crowd back. Loud wails and screams came from the crowd upon seeing the bodies of dead prisoners as the survivors of the shooting held them above their heads for all to see from the street below.

The stand-off ended calmly despite the earlier violence as Haitian police took control of the compound and brown uniformed members of the Corps d'Intervention et de Maintien d'Ordre (CIMO) cleared the rooftop. As the last of the prisoners were cleared from the roof the crowd below began chanting "Down with the U.N., Long Live CIMO!!" and "Free the political prisoners and arrest Latortue!!" Gerard Latortue is the U.S.-installed prime minister who has been accused of innumerable human rights violations during the past two years including the holding of political prisoners in Haiti.

Haiti documentary gets mixed reviews at London screening

By Charles Arthur

Haiti Support Group

AlterPresse

May 19, 2006

There was a mixed reaction from the audience at a special screening of a new documentary film about Haiti at Brixton's Ritzy Cinema last week. "Failing Haiti", a 60-minute documentary released in November 2005, seeks to examine why international efforts continue to fail to make a difference in the lives of Haitians.

Directed and produced by US American film-maker, Rod Paul, and written and narrated by the St. Petersburg Times' Latin American correspondent, David Adams, the film centres on interviews with key political players in Haitian and US-Haitian politics with the aim of providing insight into why Haiti has suffered misrule for so long. A key issue explored in "Failing Haiti" is the end of Jean-Bertrand Aristide's presidency, and the role of the US in his February 2004 ouster.

Chris Chapman, who lived and worked in Haiti for a number of years in the mid-1990s for Peace Brigades International, said: "I found the film interesting and well-made, making good use of images and music, and with great access to a wide variety of key players."

Others though felt that the focus on US policy-makers and the lack of Haitian voices was a serious deficiency. Peter Hallward, who is currently writing a book on the Jean-Bertrand Aristide presidency of 2000-2004 (Haiti: Damming the Flood - Verso, spring 2007), bemoaned the fact that the most frequently interviewed person was Roger Noriega - President George W Bush's Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs.

Leah Gordon, a freelance film maker and photographer, and director of an award-winning documentary about Haiti for Channel 4 television, said, "The film maker, while ostensibly allowing many different voices and opinions on the complex issue of the genesis of Haiti's current situation, in fact puts across a deeply conservative message. The majority of opinions come from ex-army officers, pro-neo-liberal politicians, World Bank officials, and bourgeois factory owners, with a thin smattering of sound-bites from those with an engaged left-wing perspective." She concluded, "The director, perhaps unwittingly, has created a piece of work that purports to 'let the audience make up its own mind', whilst upholding and disseminating the ideology that has created the grave situation in this unfortunate state."

A different viewpoint was held by Christian Wisskirchen, who worked for the United Nations human rights mission in Haiti in 1995-6. He said, "One could argue that the film gave way too much air time to an assortment of recent US ambassadors and State Department officials, but at least they were allowed - and maybe that was intended - to indict themselves through their blatant insincerity and contradictions." But Wisskirchen echoed a general sentiment among audience members interviewed after the screening when he said, "Probably the greatest criticism must be how few Haitians were given airtime in this film. Patronising officials galore, but hardly a local voice."

There were other criticism too, as Chapman noted. "Some people I spoke to criticised it for leaving the viewer with a sense of hopelessness; while Haitians are not naively optimistic, they continue to be resilient and resourceful, and face the ongoing trials of their country with good humour and a refusal to be ground down."

The film was followed by a debate organised by the Haiti Support Group. The screening of 'Failing Haiti' was a collaboration between the Haiti Support Group and the French Institute, and was part of French Institute's 8th Mosaïques Festival of World Culture. It followed similar collaborations in 2005 - when the film screened was Juliana Ruhfus' "When I am Misery, I Sing" - and in 2004 when Jonathan Demme's "The Agronomist" played to a full house.

Speaking after the 9 May screening of "Failing Haiti", the French Institute's Suzy Gillett said she was delighted with the attendance, remarking, "This is one of the best attended events of the festival so far."

UN Official Hopeful about Rene Preval**Prensa Latina****May 19, 2006**

United Nations-- The outgoing head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), Juan Gabriel Valdes, said on Friday that President Rene Preval has brought hope to that Caribbean country.

Reviewing the period during which he headed the UN forces in Haiti, Valdes said that Haitian society is mobilized in favor of improvement, and the international community must continue to support development in that poor country.

The Chilean diplomat told a news conference at the UN headquarters that MINUSTAH must be strengthened to back up governmental development programs and to fight poverty.

He added that MINUSTAH's future composition will be debated at the General Assembly and the Security Council, but that mission must be consolidated in order to maintain the situation of security that will allow the Preval government to carry out its plans.

It is evident that the international community must take advantage of this situation to promote Haiti's development, stressed the diplomat.

Valdes will be replaced as MINUSTAH head by Guatemalan diplomat Edmond Mulet, who was appointed by Secretary General Kofi Annan on Tuesday.

More aid crucial to Haitian leader's success -UN

19 May 2006

Reuters AlertNet

By Irwin Arief

UNITED NATIONS - The top U.N. envoy in Haiti urged international donors on Friday to keep aid flowing during President Rene Preval's first six months in office or risk renewed instability in the poor Caribbean country.

"At this point in time it is absolutely urgent to mobilize funds to support Haiti for the first six months," said Juan Gabriel Valdes, Secretary-General Kofi Annan's special representative for Haiti.

Valdes, a Chilean, is stepping down next month, to be replaced as U.N. mission head in Haiti by veteran Guatemalan diplomat Edmond Mulet.

Preval took office last Sunday and quickly appealed for peace after decades of dictatorship and military rule and recent political violence that took hundreds of lives. He is Haiti's first democratically elected leader since Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled into exile more than two years ago under international pressure to quit.

If outside aid starts drying up, Preval would face a very difficult environment that could undermine recent political and development progress and fuel new violence, Valdes said.

"He has to pay teachers, he has to pay policemen, he has to pay health workers, and the present situation does not allow him to do so," he told reporters.

A U.N. peacekeeping mission now numbering about 7,000 troops and 1,700 international police has been in Haiti since June 2004, supporting an interim government installed to run the country until elections could be held.

"It is not the moment to leave. It is the moment to reinforce our presence," Valdes said.

Several of Haiti's disparate armed gangs have offered to lay down their weapons once Preval took office. But none has disarmed so far.

**Haiti visit ends on emotional high
'Child of Jacmel' welcomed home
Michaëlle Jean overcome by joy
May 17, 2006
FRANCINE KOPUN
The Toronto Star**

JACMEL, HAITI—She cried on the airplane, she cried on the tarmac. She danced with a voodoo band. Governor General Michaëlle Jean let loose in her ancestral home yesterday, drawing adoring crowds to hear her message of hope.

It was Jackie in Paris. Margaret in Cuba. And a dash of Diana.

"Jacmel is my alma mater, it was my point of departure, it's been my anchor," said a joyous Jean, after exiting the UN plane that flew her from Port-au-Prince to Jacmel, the sleepy, sweet seaside town where she spent so much time as a girl. "All the images I kept in my heart of Haiti are here."

Jean was 11 when her family was forced to flee the brutal Duvalier dictatorship in 1968. Yesterday marked the end of a four-day visit to Haiti, her first since becoming Governor General.

The outpouring of affection for Jean in Haiti has been overwhelming, with standing ovations at nearly every event in the capital of Port-au-Prince. The pride that Haitians felt for a poor Haitian immigrant who achieved so much was palpable.

In Jacmel, where Jean's mother and grandmother and great-grandmother were born, the feeling was joyous, with plenty of song and dance. As far as Jacmelians were concerned, their daughter had come home.

"Everyone is out to see her, this child of Jacmel," said Dr. Jean-Elie Gilles, a local historian and author waiting to meet her at the city's tiny airport — an airstrip in the middle of a pasture where cows graze.

Her family was there, too.

"My heart is beating very fast," said Camille Depestre, clutching a program of events featuring her cousin's face.

Airport staff spent all night applying a fresh coat of paint to the building. In one of the world's poorest countries, with half the population illiterate, a few residents in the town of 40,000 managed to hang banners welcoming Jean. Her name was spray-painted on walls. One banner read: "Merci Luce Depestre," a reference to Jean's mother.

Everywhere she could, Jean went off track, jumping on a chair to address a crowd at an irrigation project funded by Canada, dancing with a voodoo band that came to meet her at the site of an electricity project, also funded by Canada, and standing on the running board of a sports utility vehicle to wave to the crowds that filled streets, steps and balconies to see her.

"I feel so relaxed," she said. "I feel like a 15-year-old, 14-year-old, 11-year-old."

She sat on the edge of her seat at a downtown music school to listen to music by Mozart and Strauss, performed by nervous children before a crowd of officials and sweating journalists.

She told them of her dreams for a better Haiti, and they told her theirs — to be musicians.

"Next time you won't come to this place, with journalists packed like sardines in a can — our dream is to build a theatre," said Fritz Valescot, the school supervisor.

Jean was often in tears, first on the plane and then the tarmac, when she was given a key to the city by three serious young children dressed in white.

At times she was like a preacher, waving her finger good-naturedly at the crowds she came to address, asking questions and answering back, usually in Créole.

There was even a touch of Eva Peron, when Jean stood on the second story of Jacmel's city hall and waved to several hundred people gathered below.

"Why did I come here today?" she asked the crowd. "To see you. To hear you. I want to hear your news. Because I love you. And I'm not alone. The Canadian people love you."

She asked the crowd assembled in the square, whose town, a tourist attraction that has fallen into ruin under decades of violent political conflict, what their dreams are.

"Change," they yelled.

"I know what my dream is," she told them back, "The Bay of Jacmel with beautiful boats and lots of tourists.

"The whole world is watching you, because the whole world wants Haiti to seize this moment and do what's needed to end the misery. My heart hears you. I hear you."

At lunch she met with local dignitaries and her numerous cousins from Jacmel.

"We reminisced, we talked about her childhood," said one cousin, Maude Hawley.

Her cousin Jean-Robert Oriol, who has not seen her since she was a child, could hardly believe the woman she has become.

"She was so shy, oh mon Dieu, she barely spoke at all. She smiled a lot though," he said.

The turnout in the main square at the end of the day was smaller than expected however, and among the crowd were many who didn't know who Jean was — they had come to see President René Préval, who had originally been scheduled to accompany her.

"We hope that her visit today has results — that goodwill continue to be done," said Judith Jeanpierre, 24.

An official close to the governor general said her only regret about the trip was that her mother, who has advanced Alzheimer's disease, was unable to see it.

Préval receives Esteban Lazo
The Granma, Cuba
May 17, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE.—René Préval, the president of Haiti, yesterday received the Cuban delegation headed by Esteban Lazo, vice president of the Council of State, whose members participated on Sunday in the investiture of the new leader of that country.

Lazo was accompanied by Marta Lomas, minister for foreign investment and economic cooperation; Yilliam Jiménez Expósito, deputy minister of foreign affairs; and Raúl Bárzaga, the Cuban ambassador.

In a fraternal atmosphere, the two sides discussed ways of extending bilateral cooperation in all possible fields, given the positive results of the labors of Cuban collaborators working to the benefit of the Haitian people.

The likewise member of the Political Bureau met in the capital with 115 compatriots lending their services in that country in diverse spheres including health, who affirmed their disposition to stay there as long as necessary.

On Sunday, the day of the investiture, Préval invited Lazo to be part of the ceremony in which Haiti entered Petrocaribe, a Venezuelan initiative for supplying hydrocarbons to nations in the region under advantageous conditions, and which the Haitian president signed along with José Vicente Rangel, vice president of the Bolivarian nation.