

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: MAY 25 – JUNE 2, 2006

Talk of AIDS No Longer Taboo in Caribbean

By STEVENSON JACOBS

Associated Press

Los Angeles Times

June 2, 2006

POR-T-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Standing beneath a towering crucifix, the Rev. Andre Pierre thundered at the faithful crowded elbow-to-elbow in the Sacred Heart Church to show mercy for the poor and the elderly.

Then he did something that until recently would have been close to heresy: He urged his flock to pray for people with AIDS.

"Today, we stand in solidarity with them," Pierre intoned, lighting a candle in remembrance of AIDS victims and passing it through the crowd, which spilled onto the church steps.

Such sentiment was virtually unheard of a few years ago in socially conservative Latin American and Caribbean countries, where open debate about sex is rare and many still consider AIDS a punishment for deviant behavior.

But 25 years after the pandemic began, a new spirit of openness is emerging, spurred by education and by a growing awareness that AIDS touches every sector of society. While discrimination persists, the stigma of HIV is diminishing as more people contract the disease.

Haiti's AIDS rate is the highest in the Western Hemisphere. The Caribbean HIV rate is second only to that of sub-Saharan Africa, and the virus is now the main killer of adults under 50.

Throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, the number of new HIV infections increased from 200,000 in 2003 to 230,000 in 2005, U.N. officials say. Most of the new patients were between 15 and 24, and health officials worry that awareness campaigns may not be reaching youths who are becoming sexually active earlier.

"Eighty to 90 percent of new infections are contracted sexually, so this clearly indicates we need to do something to reduce risky behavior," said Dr. Rafael Mazin, Western Hemisphere adviser on HIV/AIDS for the Pan-American Health Organization.

He said young people were most at risk.

"They were not in contact with the ravages of the AIDS epidemic in the early days. They are becoming sexually active but without the awareness of the ... severity of the scourge," he said.

Even so, many officials say frank talk from Barbados to Brazil is a plus.

"Now people are willing to talk about AIDS. ... It's a radical change," said Dr. Eddy Genece, director of POZ, a Haitian group that lobbies church leaders to discuss AIDS with their followers. "The stigma is still there, but it's less strong."

In Brazil, where more than a third of Latin America's 1.8 million HIV-positive people live, officials credit an aggressive prevention campaign with limiting the cases to fewer than half the number the World Bank estimated Brazil would have by 2000.

The campaign has been helped by widespread discussions about the virus -- and by the Roman Catholic church's low-key approach to its opposition to condom use.

"One of the things that's really helped is that the Catholic Church hasn't come out aggressively against condom use," said Paulo Teixeira, a former director of Brazil's anti-AIDS program. "In some cases, they've even supported it quietly," despite the church's birth control prohibition.

While Haiti's HIV rate remains the highest in the Americas, it has fallen from 9 percent of the population in 1993 to about 4 percent today -- a drop health workers credit to greater awareness and the aggressive promotion of condoms.

POZ officials said informal surveys indicate that the overwhelming majority of Haitians would care for a friend or relative with AIDS, while just a few years ago few said they would.

But the tolerance hasn't caught on everywhere. In Ecuador, which has a relatively low HIV rate, students and workers often must submit to HIV tests despite a 2000 law to crack down on AIDS discrimination, said Xavier Alvarado of the Kimirina Foundation, an AIDS research center in Quito.

Meanwhile, in Haiti's state-run hospitals, many patients lie on the floor for lack of beds. Doctors still regularly turn away people with AIDS, said Jean Sorel Beajour, head of Haiti's National Association for Solidarity with People with AIDS.

"For someone living with AIDS in Haiti, it's still a very degrading existence," said Beajour, a gay man who has HIV and was denied treatment for a cut three years ago.

He said the stigma will continue as long as the virus is associated with immorality.

"It's not just one group that is affected by AIDS," he said. "It's all of us."

Associated Press correspondents Michael Astor in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and Jeanneth Valdivieso in Quito, Ecuador, contributed to this report.

Ethanol fuels hope for sugar industry

AP

The Cayman Free Compass

Thursday 1st June, 2006

GUERRA, Dominican Republic (AP) – After declining for years, the Caribbean sugar industry is suddenly looking sweet again as a source of ethanol – the alternative fuel that some see as an answer to sky-high oil prices.

Ethanol, a cleaner-burning alternative fuel that can be made from corn or sugar cane, is also drawing renewed government interest and is expected to be a key topic for leaders from Central America, Mexico, Colombia and the Dominican Republic meeting this weekend in the coastal city of La Romana, which bills itself as the Dominican sugar capital.

Markets for ethanol are growing due to the insatiable demand for fuel and increasing demand for alternative energy sources. But Caribbean sugar is particularly attractive because of the region's preferential trade access to the U.S. market.

In the Dominican province of Monte Plata, a consortium led by Belgium-based Alcogroup has announced plans to build an ethanol plant, while the Dominican sugar cooperative says it is in talks with other partners to convert at least one sugar mill into an ethanol distillery.

"People are sort of tripping over one another to put up the mills," said Lester Lave, an economics professor at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who studies alternative fuels.

In Jamaica, a company based in Brazil – one of the world's leading ethanol producers – is seeking to buy out the struggling state-owned sugar producer so it can enter the U.S. market without paying tariffs under a regional free-trade agreement.

Brazil has also announced plans to advise other countries, including Haiti and Guatemala on producing the fuel.

"In the next 10 to 15 years, ethanol will be the king of fuels," said Juan Antonio Japa, general manager of the Dominican Republic's national sugar cooperative.

This wave of interest comes just as sugar was fading fast throughout the Caribbean, with growers turning to other crops and sending fewer machete-wielding workers into the cane fields. The industry has fallen on hard times because of free-trade deals and competition from cheaper sources of sugar such as Brazil.

In the Dominican Republic, which has lost tens of thousands of sugar jobs over the past 20 years, the industry is still key to the identity in sugar growing areas like La Romana, the coastal city where the energy ministers are meeting.

Vendors sell fresh cane stalks on the street. The local baseball team is called the "Sugar Growers," and it's still common to see men with machetes clutched in gnarled hands – mostly illegal immigrants from Haiti who make about \$US2 (?1.57) a day – heading off to backbreaking work in the cane fields.

But the work crews are much smaller than they used to be and longtime growers have steadily moved to other products as sugar waned, mostly because trade pacts and competition from cheaper producers elsewhere in the world has made Caribbean cane much less profitable.

"Sugar is not viable any more," said Teodulo Roque Rosario Jackson, whose family has grown cane for three decades near the town of Guerra, 14 miles (23 kilometers) east of the capital, Santo Domingo.

Many growers say they are not ready to take the plunge into ethanol production. Rosario said he's not convinced there is a market for the fuel and he's decided to wait, while continuing to plow money into chicken and other agricultural products.

But Japa said he believes that switching to ethanol will eventually triple the Dominican sugar work force and bring badly needed investment to the country.

280 Brazil troops embark for Haiti
Márcia Wonghon
Agência Brasil

Recife - Yesterday (1), the Military Command of the Northeast dispatched another 280 Army troops to Haiti. Upon their arrival, these troops will form part of the 5th Contingent of the United Nations Stabilization Mission to Haiti (MINUSTAH). The contingent includes 850 members of the Brazilian Navy, Army, and Air Force.

Last week 209 soldiers from various military units in the Northeast left for Haiti. There they joined the initial group of 58 officers who departed on May 19.

In Haiti the troops will provide security to government officials and convoys carrying food and medicine, as well as helping protect the population, since urban violence continues to plague the country. Haiti is experiencing a political crisis that began during the administration of president Jean Bertrand Aristide, who was ousted in 2004 after a popular uprising. The fourth and final group of soldiers assigned to Haiti this year will be embarked on Sunday (4).

Translation: David Silberstein
02/06/2006

Minister MacKay to Visit Haiti and Attend OAS General Assembly in Dominican Republic
Government of Canada Newsroom, Press Release
June 2, 2006

Foreign Affairs Minister and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency Peter MacKay today announced that he will visit Haiti on June 3, 2006. During his visit, he will meet with President René Préval and Prime Minister Jacques-Édouard Alexis.

From June 4 to June 6, Minister MacKay will attend the 36th Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic. He will also hold a series of bilateral meetings, including with the OAS Secretary General, José Miguel Insulza.

For more information, please contact:

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Guatemalan diplomat takes helm of UN peacekeepers in Haiti 31 minutes ago

AFP

June 2, 2006

POR-T-AU-PRINCE (AFP) - The new representative of UN chief Kofi Annan in Haiti, Guatemalan diplomat Edmond Mulet, arrived Friday in Port-au-Prince to head the UN peacekeeping mission in the troubled country.

Mulet was recently named by the United Nations secretary general to replace Chilean diplomat Juan Gabriel Valdez, who had directed the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) since June 2004.

"I expect to continue the work which began in 2004," he said on his arrival at the capital's international airport.

The Guatemalan diplomat said he would meet with President Rene Preval, and discuss with him and his team "the way we can work together to support the new administration."

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 was sworn in as president last month.

Brazil sends 280 soldiers to support UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti
People's Daily Online
June 2, 2006

A contingent of 280 Brazilian troops landed in Haiti on Thursday as part of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in the country, to which Brazil has already sent 850 soldiers.

The soldiers, being transported by a Brazilian Hercules C-130 transport plane, are members from the Northeast Military Command, and have been training for the mission since January. The last group of Brazilian reinforcements this year will leave for Haiti on Sunday.

The peacekeepers will provide security for the Haitian government as well as for food and medicine convoys, and will help to prevent urban violence.

Some 2,500 soldiers will be relieved over the course of 2006. The current UN peacekeeping forces in Haiti number around 9,000 with personnel from more than 40 countries.

Brazil has the largest contingent in Haiti and is responsible for the military command of the mission, which began to work in mid-2004 to help restore stability to the Caribbean nation after a rebellion overthrew President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Rene Preval, an ally of Aristide, won the presidential election in February, and took office in early May.

Also in February, the United Nations Security Council voted to extend the UN mission by six months, until the beginning of Preval's rule.

Source: Xinhua

International Monetary Fund Finds Haiti's Economy "Broadly Stable"
IMF adviser praised efforts by Haitian authorities to strengthen nation's economy
By Eric Green
Washington File Staff Writer
US State Dept.
June 1, 2006

Washington --- Haiti's overall economic situation is "broadly stable," reports an official with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In a statement released by the IMF May 31, Przemek Gajdeczka, an adviser for the fund's Western Hemisphere department, applauded efforts by Haitian authorities toward "restoring macroeconomic stability" in Haiti, "in spite of numerous obstacles."

Gajdeczka said the country's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to be 2.5 percent in 2006, an increase from the 1.5 percent GDP recorded in 2005, but inflation is projected to be 15 percent for 2006, as compared with an original target of 10 percent.

Gajdeczka, who made his statement May 23 in Brasilia, Brazil, at an international ministerial meeting for Haiti, said Haitian international reserves have increased substantially and the country's currency, the gourde, has strengthened.

Among the officials at the Brasilia meeting were Thomas Shannon, the U.S. State Department's assistant secretary for Western Hemisphere affairs; and Adolfo Franco, assistant administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Franco said at the meeting that the United States is working on new programs for Haiti aimed at reducing insecurity and increasing economic opportunity in the "hot spots" of Haiti's main cities, "taking development directly to those areas that need it most."

Through these programs, Franco said, "we hope to bring together the efforts of communities and the Haitian government to promote stability and bring revenue to those areas through short-term jobs and small-scale infrastructure projects." (See related article.)

According to a State Department fact sheet released May 25,, the United States spent more than \$340 million in fiscal years 2004 and 2005 to improve governance, security, the rule of law and economic recovery, as well as to meet critical humanitarian needs in Haiti.

With the addition of nearly \$200 million projected to be spent in fiscal year 2006, U.S. total assistance to Haiti in fiscal years 2004-2006 is expected to be more than \$530 million. The president's budget request for fiscal year 2007 includes \$194 million for Haiti, the fact sheet said.

The IMF's Gajdeczka said Haiti's new government of President René Préval needs to "accelerate preparations" for the country's 2006-2007 budget, "in order to coordinate properly" with aid provided by the United States and other international donors. The official said Haitian authorities hope to boost Haiti's economic growth by creating favorable conditions for private sector investment in the country.

The full text of Gajdeczka's statement is available on the IMF Web site.

The State Department fact sheet on Haiti is available on the department's Web site.

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

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

Green Light to Haiti New Administration
Prensa Latina
May 31, 2006

Port au Prince, Haiti's two parliamentary chambers Wednesday approved the program to stabilize the impoverished Caribbean nation presented by the newly appointed Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis.

The new official, appointed by President Rene Preval, was unanimously ratified by the Senate and the Lower Chamber this week.

Parliamentarians agreed on the need to put the manifesto in practice although the new administration will be made up by members of different political parties; since none of them obtained majority in the February elections.

The Preval-Alexis duo, who worked together in Preval's prior presidential term (1996-2001), will focus on creating the required institutions to achieve stability in the nation and generate new employment sources.

To achieve this, the new administration must overcome almost insurmountable barriers, such as the abject poverty the Haitian population has been plunged into, the high violence rates and the serious consequences left by the AIDS epidemic.

They also find themselves in a Catch-22 as the funds needed to carry out this work have been frozen by the international community, chiefly the US, until the domestic crisis is resolved.

Fortunately, Peval can count on support from the majority of Haitians who elected him, betting on his bettering their quality of life.

Haiti Progress: This Week in Haiti

May 31, 2006

International Tribunal on Haiti's Fourth Session: Three More U.N. Officers Convicted for Crimes Against Humanity

One Brazilian and two Canadian police officers working for the United Nations Mission to Stabilize Haiti (MINUSTAH) were convicted of crimes against humanity by a 12-member jury during the fourth session of the International Tribunal on Haiti, which took place in Montreal on May 27.

Canadian Police Chiefs David Charles Beer and R. Graham Muir are respectively the former and current commissioners of the MINUSTAH's Police Division in Haiti, known as UNPOL. Brazilian Capt. Leonidas Carneiro Junior commanded a UNPOL base in the Belair neighborhood of Port-au-Prince. All three were charged by the Tribunal's prosecution team with command responsibility for massacres and killings carried out by UNPOL troops in Belair between June 2004 and February 2006. Leonidas was further charged with personally carrying out the execution of an unarmed man on Rue Tiremasse in Belair on the night of Sept. 28, 2005.

The verdicts bring to ten the number of officers and officials of the U.N., Haitian National Police (PNH) and paramilitary groups that Tribunal juries have convicted, from 26 indicted, over the past eight months.

Over 300 people crowded into an amphitheatre at the University of Montréal for the four-hour session, at which live and videotaped testimony was presented. The presiding judge was former Haitian ambassador Benjamin Dupuy, assisted by judge William Sloan, head of the Canadian chapter of the American Association of Jurists, and by Lucie Tondreau, a Haitian activist lawyer based in Miami, FL. Human rights lawyer Brian Concannon, Jr. was the investigating judge.

MINUSTAH's two top civilian and military leaders – Chilean diplomat Juan Gabriel Valdès and Brazilian Lt. Gen. Augusto Heleno Ribiero Pereira – were previously convicted by a jury during the Tribunal's first session in Washington, DC on September 23, 2005, along with former Haitian Police Chief Léon Charles.

"Never doubt the importance of what is being done here," said former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who heads the Tribunal's Commission of Inquiry, formed to investigate human rights crimes. "This Commission, and this Court, intends to seek the truth about the summary executions, about the unlawful use of deadly force, about the excessive use of force, and about the deliberate effort to destroy popular movements, and to hold those responsible accountable."

Clark said that over the past two years, the Haitian people have been "facing the whole world that is dominated by wealth." Since the Feb. 29, 2004 coup d'état against former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, "they've been up against the United Nations itself, which is acting subservient to the will, primarily, of the United States," he said.

Clark asserted that the U.N. had been given the mission "to destroy the popular movement and the popular opposition, and to systematically kill its young leadership. The Stephen Bikos of Haiti had to die because they were committed, they were courageous, they were intelligent, and they wouldn't be

stopped. We think they have failed. But we have to remember. We thought they had failed in 1990. We thought they'd failed in the second election of President Aristide... But unless this Tribunal can bring to justice some of the people that seem so high and mighty, so immune to accountability, then how long will this last election [of President René Préval] have any meaning, whether it is taken over from within, as has too often happened, or from without?"

Independent Vancouver-based journalist Anthony Fenton took the witness stand and was questioned at length by lead prosecutor Desiree Wayne about Canada's role in the 2004 coup, which he has researched extensively.

"It's quite striking because Canadian development assistance to Haiti was gradually reduced over the years preceding the coup d'état," Fenton explained. "Back in 1997-98, you had \$44 million in disbursements by the Canadian International Development Agency [CIDA], which is the Canadian counterpart to the U.S. Agency for International Development. These went down to the lowest point in 2001-2002 to under \$19 million. In fact, these disbursements to Haiti were cut in half in a two-year period from 1999-2000 to 2001-2002," when Aristide had just come to power for the second time.

Fenton outlined how the Canadian government funneled money through and to Canadian "non-governmental organizations" to subvert democracy in Haiti and helped plan Aristide's overthrow with a high-level secret meeting in Ottawa in 2003. He also gave information about police commissioners Beer and Muir, about Canadian investments in Haiti, and about the collusion of various Canadian agencies with those of Washington before and after the coup.

The prosecution also presented a half-hour of videotaped testimony from six victims and witnesses from Belair, who detailed how UNPOL forces had carried out arson, beatings and killings in the hilltop slum. Presented by assistant prosecutor Kim Ives, the video testimony was collected by the Commission of Inquiry in October 2005.

The UNPOL cops came into the house where Peterson "Dan Serré" Venord was sleeping with his girlfriend, one witness explained in the footage. "Peterson spoke to [Captain] Leonidas and said 'Don't kill me, I'm a former policeman.' Léonidas said. 'No, you are Dan Serré' and shot him dead... They had that exchange, and Léonidas shot him in front of everyone." Léonidas later boasted about the killing, the witness said.

The identity of the witnesses was not revealed by the prosecution to protect their security.

During its second session in Boston on Nov. 19, 2005, a Tribunal jury convicted U.S. Brig. Gen. Ronald Coleman and Haitian Police Chief Jean-Michel Yves Gaspard for massacres committed under their command in Belair and Carrefour. Two "rebel" leaders, former Haitian police chief Guy Philippe and former FRAPH death-squad No. 2 Louis Jodel Chamblain, were convicted during the Tribunal's third session in Miami on March 11, 2006.

In one major development, Investigating Judge Concannon indicted former Haitian de facto Prime Minister Gérard Latortue and his Justice Minister Bernard Gousse for their role in encouraging, commanding and overseeing some of the worst violence committed during the coup by the PNH.

The Tribunal casts a spotlight on the question of justice in Haiti, where hundreds of political prisoners still languish in jail and human rights criminals still walk the streets.

The International Tribunal on Haiti was formed by a series of Latin American and Haitian solidarity organizations last year. Haitian Resistance in Quebec, the Canada Haiti Action Network and the Quebecois Committee to Recognize the Rights of Haitian Workers in the Dominican Republic (CQRDTHRD) helped organize the Montreal session. A delegation from the New England Human Rights Organization for Haiti drove up from Boston to participate.

The jury deliberated for over 40 minutes before rendering its verdict. When jury forewoman, Darlène Fabienne Lozis, read guilty verdicts, the hall erupted in applause. The jury also made two recommendations: that the prosecution in the future provide proof that it has notified those indicted of the charges against them and that the investigation into the Feb. 29th coup continue.

The multinational jury, equally divided between men and women, included a nurse, a unionist, a teacher, an economist, a community organizer, and a researcher. Their decision was unanimous.

The proceedings were conducted primarily in English, with simultaneous translation via headsets into French. However, the presiding judges opened the session in French, explaining the purposes and conduct of the court.

The International Tribunal on Haiti is now planning to hold its fifth session in Port-au-Prince, Haiti in September. The Tribunal will present the evidence it has collected to the courts in Haiti and petition for justice. If the Haitian courts prove unwilling or unable to take up the case, the Tribunal will submit its findings and the names of those convicted to the International Criminal Court in The Hague for prosecution.

Jacques Edouard Alexis: Préval's Former Premier Returns

Both houses of Haiti's Parliament overwhelmingly ratified President René Préval's choice for prime minister last week. Jacques Edouard Alexis, a 58-year-old former agronomist and college dean who was Préval's prime minister from March 1999 to February 2001, will return to the post.

Twenty-two out of 25 senators present voted in favor of Alexis on May 24. Joseph Pierre-Louis of the Struggling People's Party (OPL), the Senate's treasurer, abstained from the vote, and another OPL senator, Mélius Hyppolite, left the room before the vote. The Senate president, Joseph Lambert from Préval's Espwa (Hope) party, was barred from voting by Senate rules.

The next day, the Chamber of Deputies also ratified Alexis with 79 out of 82 deputies voting in favor. Again, it was two OPL deputies who abstained.

The OPL harbors a grudge against Préval and Alexis. The OPL-dominated 46th Legislature allowed itself expire on Jan. 11, 1999, ending months of obstructionism against Préval's attempts to replace his first Prime Minister who resigned, the OPL's Rosny Smarth. After the 46th Legislature self-destructed, Préval appointed Alexis prime minister. Préval and Alexis foiled the attempts of Washington, the OPL and other reactionary parties to rig parliamentary elections against Jean-Bertrand Aristide's Lavalas Family (FL) in May 2000. The FL won handily. Charging fraud, the OPL and its confederates – now assembled in the Democratic Convergence front – boycotted the November 2000 presidential election, which Aristide therefore won by an even wider margin.

The ratification makes Alexis Haiti's 13th prime minister under the Constitution of March 29, 1987.

On June 1, Alexis will present his policy objectives and cabinet to the Parliament for ratification, where things are expected to again go smoothly. Intense negotiations and bargaining over weeks will produce a cabinet with appointees from several rival parties.

"We will set up a government of opening and unity in order to foster a climate of peace," Alexis said. "It is the only way to allow Haiti to move forward. The people are expecting a lot from this new government and this new Parliament."

Rumors and speculation over the "open" government's composition have swirled. One of the most fantastic – and implausible – predictions has been that former Duvalierist mayor and police chief Frank Romain of the PAKAPALA party would be appointed Public Works minister. Romain is widely believed to be the mastermind of the Sep. 11, 1988 massacre at St. Jean Bosco church in the Port-au-Prince slum of La Saline, in which 13 were killed and 77 wounded. Préval, who was at the church that day, barely escaped with his life.

More likely nominations are the following: Daniel Dorsainvil, one of Préval's economic advisers, may end up in the Finance and Economy Ministry; agronomist François Severin, formerly Préval's Agriculture minister, is expected to be Planning Minister; Joseph Jasmine, a former deputy of

the 46ème Legislature and Espwa's platform head, would go to the Justice Ministry; Dr. Ariel Henri, formerly of the de facto Council of Wise which appointed de facto Prime Minister Gérard Latortue, is favored for the Public Health Ministry; Victor Benoit, head of the Konakom and the president of the social-democratic Fusion platform, would wind up Education Minister; Fritz Longchamp, chancellor during Préval's first administration, would return to the same post or to the Interior Ministry; Robert "Bob" Manuel, a close Préval aide and his former Secretary of State for Public Security, is also rumored to be front-runner for Interior; Claude Roumain, head of the Generation 2000 party and a leader of the Alliance platform, would end up at the Ministry for Youth and Sports; and the former director of the Museum of the National Pantheon (MUPANAH), Pradel Henriquez, would be Culture Minister.

To date, Préval and Alexis have outlined a very traditional political program. "Today, we need peace to have investment in the country," Préval declared in a speech on May 18, Haitian Flag day, in Arcahaie. "The foreign troops will leave before we are our own masters. To be our own masters, we must create wealth in our country. To create wealth in our country, we must have investment. To have investment, we must have peace. To have peace, we must sit down and talk together."

U.S. Official Affirms Commitment to Developing Democratic Haiti

State Department fact sheet details U.S. aid to Caribbean nation

By Eric Green

Washington File Staff Writer

May 31, 2006

Washington -- Haiti faces many challenges and the international community must remain engaged over the long term to help that beleaguered Caribbean nation recover from many years of political, economic and social instability, says U.S. official Adolfo Franco.

Speaking May 23 at a ministerial meeting on Haiti, held in Brasilia, Brazil, Franco said the United States believes the international community needs to help the Haitian people complete their nation's transition to democracy. (See related article.)

The February 7 election of Haiti's new president, René Préval, and his subsequent inauguration May 14, "mark major milestones in Haiti's return to democracy," said Franco, who is assistant administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean at the U.S. Agency for International Development. Franco said the people of Haiti demonstrated their commitment to democracy when they "peacefully voted in large numbers to reestablish democracy in their country" during two rounds of elections on February 7 and April 21.

Préval's government, said Franco, should focus on promoting reconciliation, stability and economic growth. The international community, added Franco, should support Haiti in holding elections for the mayors of Haiti's 140 municipalities later in 2006 and elections for communal level officials and assemblies "as soon as feasible."

Franco said the United Nations estimates that Haiti's local and municipal elections will cost \$18 million. The United States, he said, "is prepared to contribute up to \$4 million to that effort. I hope other donors will join us in a strong show of support for holding municipal and local elections by the end of 2006."

Franco said that thanks to the U.N. stabilization mission in Haiti, known by the acronym MINUSTAH, along with the "good work" of the Haitian national police, "we have made great strides over the last two years in bringing stability to Haiti."

But the official warned that security in Haiti remains a challenge and that "redoubled efforts to extend the umbrella of security to all of Haiti's people are essential."

The global community, Franco said, must support "vetting, training, and equipping" an increased Haitian police force, "paying particular attention to their role in protecting human rights." The U.S. government, he said, is providing \$15 million a year to support Haiti's police force.

However, no effort to help Haiti will work, Franco said, "without addressing the causes of political, economic and social instability in the most conflictive areas of the country."

Despite what Franco said was "great progress" made in Haiti in the last several years, Cité Soleil and other "urban slums remain sources of instability. We need to address the lack of basic services and jobs in Cité Soleil as well as in other key population centers. I believe it is essential for the international community to develop new and innovative approaches to addressing these sources of instability."

In that regard, Franco said the United States is working on new programs aimed at diminishing insecurity and increasing economic opportunity in the "hot spots" of Haiti's main cities, "taking development directly to those areas that need it most."

Through these activities, Franco said, "we hope to bring together the efforts of communities and the Haitian government to promote stability and bring revenue to those areas through short-term jobs and small-scale infrastructure projects."

UNITED STATES COMMITTED TO IMPROVING LIVES OF HAITIANS

The U.S. State Department released a fact sheet May 25 that said the United States is committed to developing a democratic Haiti and to improving the lives of Haitians.

The fact sheet said that in fiscal years 2004 and 2005, the United States spent more than \$340 million to improve governance, security, the rule of law and economic recovery, as well as to meet critical humanitarian needs in Haiti.

With the addition of nearly \$200 million estimated to be spent in fiscal year 2006, U.S. total assistance to Haiti is expected to be more than \$530 million by the end of the fiscal year. The president's budget request for fiscal year 2007 includes \$194 million for Haiti, the fact sheet said.

The United States also works closely with other bilateral and multilateral donors to ensure that all donor assistance to Haiti is coordinated under a development strategy called the Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF).

In operation since July 2004, the ICF outlines Haiti's many needs, from restoring electricity services to feeding disadvantaged children and getting them to enroll in school. (See related article.)

Since July 2002, international donors have disbursed more than \$800 million to Haiti, including more than \$277 million from the United States, which exceeds the original U.S. pledge to Haiti of \$230 million, according to the fact sheet.

The fact sheet outlines a number of U.S. government programs to help Haiti. For instance, the United States has distributed more than 200,000 loans to small and microenterprises, provided \$24 million to support electricity generation and created more than 200,000 short-term jobs.

Haitian judge plan

By AP

The Edmonton Sun

May 31, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- A proposal by the new United Nations envoy to use foreign judges, including some from Canada, to help run Haiti's corrupt justice system drew harsh criticism yesterday from top government officials, who called the idea an insult to national sovereignty.

Edmond Mulet, who arrives Friday to assume control of the UN peacekeeping mission, said over the weekend he would talk with President Rene Preval's government about the possibility of enlisting foreign judges to help reform Haiti's justice system.

Joseph Lambert, Senate president and a member of Preval's Lespwa party, acknowledged "weaknesses" in Haiti's judicial system but insisted that foreign judges weren't the solution.

Haitians stand to benefit from immigration bill
BY CASEY WOODS
Knight Ridder Newspapers
May 28, 2006

MIAMI - Marie Michel still recalls seeing dead bodies in her Port-au-Prince neighborhood and the fear she felt remaining in a country wracked by so much violence.

The Haitian woman escaped using a fake passport to board a flight to the Bahamas and a second flight to Miami. The year was 1994.

"I used those documents because I was trying to save my life and my son's life," said Michel, 46. "We would have died if we had stayed in Haiti."

Michel sought legal residency through the 1998 Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act but was deemed ineligible because she had used false documents to enter the United States.

Congress approved the law to rectify the mistreatment of Haitians who fled their country's bloody governments of the 1980s and early 1990s by offering them legal residency.

Nearly 13,000 Haitians were allowed to remain here. Excluded, however, were Michel and thousands of Haitians who had used false documents or were children when they applied and later "aged out" before their status was approved.

A provision added to the landmark Senate immigration bill approved Thursday could change that by expanding eligibility.

Last week, as news circulated of the provision, Haitian immigrants flooded the telephone lines at Haitian advocacy organizations and radio stations.

"People have been calling all day," said activist Lucy Tondreau. "There are so many people who could be affected by this."

U.S. Rep. Kendrick Meek, a Florida Democrat who sponsored a similar bill in the House, said the legislation is long overdue. "These people were fleeing for their lives because of what was happening in Haiti at that particular time," he said.

There is no exact number on how many Haitians could benefit from the provision, but Meek's office estimates it could cover as many as 8,000 people. Steve Forester, an immigrant activist with Haitian Women of Miami, calculates the number would be closer to 1,250.

Meek, who has been pushing similar legislation for three years, worked with Republican Sen. Mike DeWine of Ohio and Democratic Sens. Bill Nelson of Florida and Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts to make it part of the Senate bill.

Meek was unsuccessful in his attempt to attach a similar amendment to the immigration bill approved by the House in December.

Final approval of the provision rests with a group of House and Senate lawmakers who must negotiate the differences between the Senate and House versions of the immigration bill. Those negotiations begin next week but could take months to complete.

The main sticking point has nothing to do with the provision that would benefit Haitians.

The Senate bill contains what many House Republicans consider deal-breaker provisions that would create a guest worker program and grant legal status to millions of undocumented immigrants. To soften objections from conservatives, the Senate added some tougher law-enforcement provisions, including building 370 miles of fences along the border.

House Republican leaders continue to support a border-enforcement-only bill that the House passed in December. President Bush has urged Congress to approve comprehensive immigration reform.

"We are cautiously optimistic, but we have serious concerns in terms of the position of House Republicans," said Jean-Robert Lafortune, president of the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition.

Haiti Hypocrisy: MINUSTAH comes to aid of UCREF director while hundreds rot in Jail.
by Bay Area Indy Media
Sunday, May. 28, 2006

Port-au-Prince, May 25, 2006 (AHP)- The director general of the Central Unit of Financial Information (UCREF), Jean Yves Noël, appeared this Thursday before investigating Judge Jean Pérès Paul.

Mr. Noel, accused of abduction and illegal confinement of bailiff Réginald St-Jean, who was on active duty at the Justice Ministry, was arrested on May 23 for refusing to collaborate with the justice system, said Judge Paul.

After appearing before the judge for 15 minutes, he was escorted back to his cell.

The UCREF director general was appointed by interim Prime Minister Gérard Latortue to investigate cases relating to funds that are alleged to have been misappropriated. The mandate of UCREF in this case was restricted to the period February 7, 2001 to February 29, 2004 (when Aristide was president).

MINUSTAH's interim spokesperson, Sophie Lacombe, expressed the force's concerns about the arrest of the UCREF director general.

Sophie Lacombe said that members of the human rights section of MINUSTAH went to the National Penitentiary on the day Mr. Noël was incarcerated to ensure that his rights were being respected.

She stated that Jean Yves Noël said he was concerned about his own safety.

At the same time, the justice section of MINUSTAH met with investigating judge Jean Pérès Paul regarding this case, and provided a series of comments and points of protest about the case to the National Prison Administration (APENAH), said Ms. Lacombe.

"MINUSTAH is associating itself with other human rights organizations seeking to bring about respect for the rights of the UCREF director", declared the acting MINUSTAH spokesperson.

Hundreds of Haitians, most of whom are members of the former Aristide government or Fanmi Lavalas have been languishing at the National Penitentiary in Port-au-Prince or at other detention facilities in the country for more than two years without any charge having been brought against them other than perhaps their political affiliation.

Several organizations, for the most part members of the anti-Aristide GNB campaign such as RNDDH have been exerting pressure for the release of Mr. Noel.

Numerous sectors consider that it is the interim government, which is still in power, and especially acting interim Prime Minister Henri Bazin and interim Justice Minister Henri Marge Dorléans who should be held responsible.

These same sectors have said that investigating Judge Jean-Pérès Paul should be questioned as to the reason for his order for the incarceration of the UCREF director general. These same organizations

expressed no interest when Judge Pérès Paul recently ordered the release of a group of police officers accused of involvement in the massacre of more than ten people in the populist district of Grand'Ravine (south of the capital) during a soccer game sponsored by the US Embassy in August 2005.

Alexis endorsed as Haiti's prime minister

Tuesday, May 30, 2006

by Vario Sérant

Caribbean Net News

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: Haiti's Deputies Chamber endorsed Jacques Edouard Alexis for Prime Minister last week, thus conforming their choice with that of the Senate.

Of the 82 deputies present, two chose to abstain from the election, and Alexis received 79 favourable votes.

The newly-approved Prime Minister also obtained the confidence of each of the two Chambers for his programme of government.

President René Préval appointed a special subcommittee of the Deputies Chamber to analyse the proposals by Alexis and his manifesto was approved with unusual speed.

The deputies and senators who are not members of the presidential political party, "Espoir" (aka: Hope Platform), announced that their favourable votes for Alexis should not be interpreted as "a blank check".

They invited President Préval and the future government to support a broad consensus between the various political forces in order to stabilise political, economic and social conditions.

Alexis is 58 years old and a personal friend of President Préval as well as a leader of the presidential political party, the Hope Platform.

Under the first Préval administration, Alexis served as Prime Minister from March 1999 to February 2001 and in 1998 he was a minister for National Education, Youth and Sports.

Like the Head of State, Alexis is also an agronomist and was formerly a senior member of Faculty at the agronomy and veterinary medicine unit within the public university.

In addition, Alexis is also a founding member of Quisqueya University, a private University where he served as vice-chancellor from 1990 to 1995.

The future government will have two essential missions: "the installation of the institutions envisaged by the Constitution, in order to create the conditions of stability, and the creation of conditions favorable for private investment in order to generate jobs," stated President Préval following his victory at the February 7 presidential elections.

These presidential ambitions face astronomical challenges. Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas with approximately 75% the population surviving on less than two dollars per day. The unemployment rate is about 60%, average life expectancy is just 53 years and high infant mortality rates of 71.65 per 1,000 newborns. It will take years of hard work to overcome the damaged infrastructure and the chronic social insecurity to which most have become accustomed.

Democracy Rhetoric Confronts Caribbean Reality

Mother Jones Magazine

Emerson Sykes, Jeffrey Laurenti, The Century Foundation

May 25, 2006

At a time when Washington is preoccupied with the paralysis of the regime it changed in Baghdad, and hints darkly of another military attack to effect regime change in Iran, the installation of a newly elected government this past week in Haiti is a reminder of the limited capacity of outsiders to shape a democratic transition to their liking.

Haitians celebrated last Sunday the inauguration of René Préval as president, three months after his election over 25 opponents. Yet at the very hour of his investiture, United Nations peacekeeping troops—whose major planned activity that day was to provide security in Port-au-Prince for the inauguration—had to be rushed to quell a prison riot elsewhere in the capital.

This was a telling metaphor for the beleaguered island's current situation. Just as Haitians dare to feel a rare moment of optimism at the restoration of a democratically elected government, raw violence remains an ever-present threat. This violence is not a stubborn, disciplined insurgency like Iraq's, but the tidal wave of gang violence confronting U.N. peacekeepers has made much of Haiti virtually ungovernable since former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide's ouster two years ago.

The United Nations peacekeeping force that has sought to maintain order over the past two years—currently 7,200 soldiers and 1,750 police from two dozen countries, mostly Latin Americans—costs a half billion dollars a year. This may be tiny in comparison to America's flailing effort to sustain a friendly regime in distant Iraq, but there are already political pressures to cut back this force when its current mandate expires this August. This is no time to cut and run.

Fortunately, the troops involved are not from America's overstretched military, but those of partner countries in the hemisphere and beyond. Still, to keep those troops there the Congress is going to have to make speedier payment on America's share of U.N. peacekeeping dues. (Awkwardly, the Bush administration is currently engaged in budget brinkmanship at the United Nations over management reforms, which could shut down much of the organization on July 1.) And the Europeans and Canadians will have to join Washington in supporting the elected government with assistance for Haiti's social and economic development.

The mutual loathing between Haiti's traditional elite and impoverished population is at least as bitter as that between religious Shia and Sunni in Iraq. Haiti's poor at last discovered their democratic muscles in electing Aristide, and after his ouster in 2004 many steadfastly refused to accept the legitimacy of the figures recruited by outsiders to govern them. Aristide may not be the only president convinced that God speaks through him, but his simplistic good-versus-evil populism makes him uniquely detested in elite circles. Since 2001 conservatives in Washington denied Haiti needed assistance, destabilizing Aristide's administration, and intrigues of the International Republican Institute secured his overthrow.

But times have changed since the 1953 CIA-led coup in Iran: In our new age of democratic sensibilities, it is far easier for a foreign power to depose a government than install one. None of the “moderate” candidates for president could muster more than a tiny fraction of the votes that Haitians gave to Aristide’s ally Préval. Préval is far less polarizing than Aristide, however, and the Bush administration must commit itself to support rather than subvert his government.

Préval starts by confronting gang rule and violence with an essentially non-existent judicial system, a predatory police force, and a deeply fractured and ineffectual government. The first and most obvious thing the international community should do is renew and expand the U.N. peacekeeping mandate before it expires on August 15. Troop contributing countries seem to favor its extension, but there is not yet agreement on how the mission can be gradually shifted from an emphasis on troops to U.N. (and finally Haitian) civilian police.

Next, the United States and other donors should make good on their promise to provide assistance to Préval’s government as it tries to build the parliamentary coalitions that will be necessary for establishing a cohesive and effective government. Haiti may be the first test of the capacity of the new U.N. Peace-Building Commission to fix a common international plan to sustain a strife-shattered country’s reconstruction, and mobilize the money needed to achieve it.

Préval set one extraordinary precedent in his first presidential term from 1996 to 2001—he was the first elected president in Haiti’s history to serve out his term and hand over power to an elected successor. But if this island state is to end the costly cycle of rehabilitation and relapse that has repeatedly sent it to the international intensive care unit, the international community has to do better this time. Only with sustained international support for its democratic development can Haiti one day produce a more lucrative main export than desperate migrants.

Jeffrey Laurenti is senior fellow in international affairs and Emerson Sykes is a research assistant at The Century Foundation.

Haiti: Giant Crowds Hail Préval and Demand Aristide's Return

By Haiti Progrès

Political Affairs Magazine

May 25, 2006

In three ceremonies where he performed a political balancing act that will likely continue for at least the next few months until he is forced to choose sides in Haiti's on-going class war, René Garcia Préval, a 63-year-old agronomist, was sworn in as Haiti's president on May 14, 2006.

Constitutionally, Préval should have been inaugurated 96 days earlier, on February 7. But, due to election delays, that was the day he trounced a field of 34 candidates by garnering 51% of the vote (see Haïti Progrès, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2/22/06).

Despite the outgoing de facto regime's abysmal organization, ridiculously stringent but ultimately ineffective measures aimed at crowd control, and a deadly early morning riot at the National Penitentiary, the ceremonies at the Parliament, Cathedral and Presidential Palace took place amid relative calm and more on schedule than the presidential inaugurations of 1991, 1996 and 2001.

If one excludes the four illegal chiefs of state who briefly came to power via coups d'état against constitutional governments over the past 15 years – Raoul Cédras in 1991, Joseph Nerette in 1991, Emile Jonassaint in 1994, and Boniface Alexandre in 2004 – Préval is Haiti's 56th president, having served as the 54th from 1996 to 2001. He is one of the very few Haitian presidents to have come to and left from power peacefully via elections. Unfortunately, like Philippe Sudré Dartiguenave (1915), Louis Bornó (1922), Louis Eugène Roy (1930), and Sténio Vincent (1930), Préval has for the second time been elected to preside over a country that is militarily occupied and controlled by foreign powers. Because he takes the presidency under a Constitutionally forbidden foreign occupation whose conductors – Washington, Paris and Ottawa – still forbid exiled former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide from returning to his homeland, Préval will face a difficult challenge to adhere to his swearing-in oath “to faithfully observe the Constitution and laws of the Republic, to respect and have respected the Haitian people’s rights, to work for the Nation’s grandeur, and to maintain national independence and territorial integrity.” Presently, these laws, rights, grandeur, independence and integrity are all compromised, if not entirely trampled.

But already in the ceremonies, Préval displayed a deft assertiveness that augurs what kind of tactics he may use in the tricky weeks ahead. For example, in a surprise move at the Legislative Palace, Préval refused to accept the Presidential sash from de facto president Boniface Alexandre, as tradition dictates. Instead, while Préval studiously kept his back turned on the scene, a befuddled Alexandre was directed to turn over his presidential sash to Joseph Lambert, the Senate president who conducted the swearing-in ceremony before the National Assembly (i.e. convocation of both houses) of Haiti's 48th Parliament. Then a separate Presidential sash was produced from the wings, and Lambert, who is from Préval's Espwa (Espoir) coalition, placed it on the new president. Again, during the VIP reception in the Parliament's Senate lounge immediately following the swearing-in, Préval refused to have his photo taken standing between Alexandre and outgoing de facto Prime Minister Gérard Latortue, preferring to stand to their side.

In fact, it is remarkable that there were not more thinly-veiled conflicts because the de facto regime organized the transition ceremonies in practically no coordination with Préval's organization.

A roll call before the ceremony revealed that 25 out of 30 senators and 87 out of 99 deputies were present. A number of Haitian artists such as Boulo Valcourt, Gracia Delva (Mas Konpa), Don Kato (Brothers Posse), Ti Pay (Rev), King Kino (Phantoms) and Jacques Sauveur-Jean were also on hand, along with famed North American actor Danny Glover and California progressive radio host Margaret Prescod.

Political invitees spanned the political spectrum, ranging from anti-coup popular resistance leaders like Sanba Boukman from Belair and John Joel and René Momplaisir from Cité Soleil to right-wing dinosaurs like former dictator and prison fugitive Prosper Avril. Préval's former wife Geri Benoît Préval and various former ministers from Préval's first administration, like Fritz Longchamps (Foreign Affairs), François Severin (Agriculture), and Jacques Edouard Alexis (Prime Minister), were also in attendance.

"Mister President," said Lambert in his address to the room, "let us salute democracy's victory which saw the national destiny emerge through the overwhelming popular consensus of Feb. 7, 2006... This victory obliges you to construct a present and a future that will permit the people's material and spiritual blossoming. You have just won elections marked by turbulence but they also mark an undeniable return to constitutional order."

"Past experience must not condemn us to relive these same events," Lambert continued "and we should turn the page and aim for other objectives which will allow us to build a climate of peace for this people."

But the chances of simply "turning the page" seemed remote as the chants of hundreds of anti-coup demonstrators calling for justice for the massacres and violence of the coup could be heard inside the sweltering parliament before and during the swearing-in ceremony, which began with Préval's arrival 40 minutes after the 11 a.m. scheduled start-time. "Tie up Latortue" and "Whether they like it or not, Aristide is returning," the protestors cried. Like the thousands of demonstrators who later massed outside the Cathedral and the Palace, many wore yellow and green Espwa T-shirts emblazoned with Préval's smiling face, but held up pictures, cards, and posters of Aristide.

U.S. Special Forces kidnaped President Aristide from his home on February 29, 2004. He today is exiled in South Africa. Since his abduction, Haiti has been militarily occupied first by U.S., French and Canadian troops, and then by U.N. troops beginning in June 2004.

"We voted for Préval on February 7, 2006, so that Aristide could return," said Claude, a 26-year-old unemployed laborer from Martissant. "We have come here to support Préval. But we say to Préval he must get tough so that Aristide can return to the country."

Some of the demonstrators denounced the riot at the Penitentiary that morning as a ploy by the de facto regime to sabotage Préval's inauguration. "Michaelle Lucius [a police chief] managed to create a problem at the National Penitentiary so that prisoners would try to escape so that he could take the actions he took," said Michel, a 30-year-old tailor from Cité Soleil. "We call for the arrest of Michael

Lucius.” Prison guards reportedly opened fire on the protesting prisoners. The Haiti Information Project’s Kevin Pina said prisoners told him 10 inmates were killed. Pina and journalist Reed Lindsay report seeing the prisoners on the Penitentiary’s roof holding up two apparently dead bodies, covered in blood. The Haitian government and United Nations say that no prisoners died, but that several were injured when beaten with clubs.

Although no other head of state attended the inauguration, vice-presidents from Venezuela and Brazil led delegations, as well as Canada’s governor general, the Haitian-born Michaëlle Jean, niece of renowned Haitian poet René Dépèstre. France and the Dominican Republic sent their foreign ministers, and Chili its defense minister.

Despite the less than overwhelming diplomatic presence, the de facto’s protocol department performed disastrously. Confused diplomats were left hunting for their names on chairs in the Parliament, and more than one case of seat-swapping occurred.

At the Parliament, Florida Governor Jeb Bush, the brother and emissary of U.S. President George W. Bush, was seated only two chairs away from José Vicente Rangel, Venezuela’s vice president, resulting in interesting body language. The two, both keenly aware of the other’s presence, never shook hands or addressed each other, although they did so with most of the other diplomats. The coldness increased hours later when they were seated, with one empty seat between them, next to the podium at the Palace. Rangel was seated closer to Préval.

Following the post-ceremony reception at the Parliament, Préval emerged after all the other VIPs and made an impromptu excursion across the street where he waved to the hundreds of demonstrators. They responded with impassioned cheers. As dozens of security personnel from the Special Unit of the Presidential Guard (USGPN), the Haitian National Police (PNH) and UN pushed and shoved frenzied journalists who swarmed around him, a smiling Préval walked back to his motorcade and was whisked off to the Te Deum at the Cathedral, which like the Parliament and Palace had been repainted and repaired by work crews only in the final days before the weekend.

In his address at the Cathedral, Monseigneur Louis Kébreau, the bishop of Hinche, called on Préval to make “a national effort to forge history in a new manner to benefit the sons and daughters of the country.”

“Things must change deeply in this country,” Kébreau said, echoing Pope John Paul II’s words to Jean-Claude Duvalier when he visited Haiti in 1983, “so as to bring about a cultural, economic and social renaissance and resurrection in Haiti.” Kébreau added that “at this juncture of Haiti’s history, we need to march together and to live by our motto – union makes strength – to save the country” and that “we must all together shed our fatalism and give Haiti new foundations.”

Kébreau closed by asking Préval and all Haitians to work together “to get the country out of dishonor and to save the land of our ancestors.”

Although the police and U.N. Mission to Stabilize Haiti (MINUSTAH) had established a ban on all vehicles in the vicinity of the Parliament, Cathedral and Palace, the street leading from the Cathedral to the Palace was choked with masses of people. In front of the palace, hundreds of U.N. troops –

grouped in national contingents from China, Nigeria, Senegal, Pakistan, Benin, Pakistan, Brazil, etc. – held back a boisterous sweating sea of humanity. A man on stilts dressed in red and blue walked back and forth through the throng.

The musical animation that blasted through the giant banks of speakers set up on the Palace lawn had a timidly anti-coup theme which pleased the crowd assembled outside the gates. Many sang along with the songs. An emcee at one point saluted the people of Cité Soleil for their “resistance.”

Ironically, however, most of the people in the stands were the government officials and politicians which backed 2004 coup and kidnaping of Aristide. Many in the throngs in front of the Palace, which eventually pushed their way through lines of the Haitian police and UN troops up to the Palace fence, resented that the people who voted Préval in were outside the gates while the coup-backers were inside. “Those who used to kill us, who used to try to prevent Préval from becoming president, are inside,” Marline Joinville, 20, told Reuters.

“The bourgeoisie wants to hijack the president,” another demonstrator, Lesly Cherubin, told Reuters. “They are all over him, while, we, who elected him, can't even see him.”

After his arrival at the Palace, Préval made a chaotic review of different police units which had been standing under the grueling sun on the Palace lawn most of the afternoon. The review became a free-for-all as journalists and photographers chased after the president, bolting down the ranks of policemen standing at attention while security personnel tried to block them.

Around 2 p.m., Préval finally took the podium at the Palace to carry out his first official act, a speech to the nation and the world. “Peace is the key “ to Haiti’s progress and development, he said again and again. “We must make peace, we must talk to each other.”

“Without justice in Haiti, there will be no peace,” quipped one demonstrator listening in the crowds outside the Palace gates.

Préval thanked outgoing MINUSTAH chief, Chilean diplomat Juan Gabriel Valdès, saying “your task was not easy, but you can be happy because the results are there.”

He said that the MINUSTAH would continue in Haiti, but that they needed to change their mission to economic development rather than “peace-keeping.”

“We must replace armored cars with bulldozers,” Préval said.

Finally, Préval reiterated his desire to foster reconciliation between Haiti’s polarized classes, the privileged elite and the suffering masses. “Collaboration between the different sectors of national life has already begun and must be consolidated with humility,” he said.

Almost immediately after speaking, Préval executed an elegant diplomatic snub. He personally came to Venezuelan vice-president Rangel, who had been sitting one seat away from Jeb Bush, and led him away without even acknowledging Bush. The governor, stone-faced, quickly left for the airport.

Meanwhile, Préval took Rangel to a conference room on the second-floor of the Palace and called an impromptu press conference. “Today, we are signing with Venezuela the Petrocaribe accord,” Préval announced. “At 7 a.m. this morning, already 100,000 barrels of oil arrived in Port-au-Prince. We know what kind of relations there have been between Haiti and Venezuela. In Jacmel, [Francisco de] Miranda created the Venezuelan flag and received aid from Haiti from President [Alexandre] Pétion. And the alliance was so strong that today at the foot of the stairs to [Venezuela’s] National Palace one finds two busts: one of Pétion and the other of [Simon] Bolivar.”

Préval then let Rangel speak. “Here you have the second official act of your government,” Rangel said. “With this act, Venezuela pays an historic debt to Haiti. An eternal debt, which is also the root of liberty and the root of the Venezuelan nation. It is a debt not only to President Pétion but also to the thousands and thousands of Haitians who fought alongside Miranda for the liberty of not only Venezuela but of all Latin America.”

Rangel continued by saying that in Venezuela today, “we do not cultivate rhetoric. We do what is practical and concrete. We believe that solidarity means concrete acts.”

He explained that, of the 100,000 barrels that arrived, 60,000 were diesel fuel and the other 40,000 gasoline. “The daily consumption of fuel in Haiti was 11,000 barrels a day. Venezuela will bring 7,000 barrels a day to Haiti under the PetroCaribe accord,” Rangel said. “The other 4,000 barrels needed to complete the 11,000 daily barrels of total Haitian consumption will also be furnished by Venezuela under the San Jose accord,” a separate treaty offered to Haiti by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez on April 24 when Préval visited Caracas.

Rangel also announced that Venezuela would give “a donation of 120 tons of asphalt per month for 12 months for infrastructure projects which will be carried out by the UN’s Brazilian contingent, under an accord signed between President Chavez and President Lula of Brazil.”

The Venezuelan vice-president said that a team of experts would inspect and attempt to put back into service 130 electrical generators around Haiti. He alluded that there would be projects concerning agriculture, livestock, and culture.

Rangel closed by saying that “this cooperation has no political emblem. We don’t intend at all to influence the direction of your government. It is an completely transparent cooperation. We hope they don’t say tomorrow morning that we are trying to guide Haiti towards the axis of evil. We want the Haitian people to be engaged completely with the Venezuelan people and this for the good of all Haitians. President Chavez is presently in London and called me this morning. He is very interested in this event and sends his best wishes concerning this solemn act today.”

Préval and Rangel then signed both the PetroCaribe and the San Jose accords and embraced.

After all the ceremonies, a strange and surreal reception of about 400 people was held in the Palace Garden at which both putschists and their victims mingled. In addition to Lavalas leaders like Milot’s former mayor Moïse Jean-Charles, Cité Soleil’s John Joel and René Momplaisir, and Sept. 30th Foundation’s Pierre Lovinsky, one found pro-coup politicians like Fusion’s Serge Gilles, the OPL’s Paul Denis, LAAA’s Youri Latortue, the Alliance’s Evans Paul, and the Group of 184 No. 2 and third

placed presidential candidate, Charles Henri Baker. Some of the other personalities noted there, in no particular order, were Prosper Avril, assembly industrialist Gregory Mevs, Aristide's former information minister and now a women's empowerment activist Marie-Laurence Lassegue, Aristide's former Bahamas consul Joe Etienne, Boston Fanmi Lavalas delegate Yves Alcindor, Joe Beasley of Jesse Jackson's PUSH, and most of the winning and losing candidates from the 2006 presidential elections.

The "party" had a strained feel as anti-coup and pro-coup groups eyed each other suspiciously as they dined on traditional chicken, griot, and rice and beans.

As the reception was closing, outgoing Prime Minister Gérard Latortue came up and warmly shook the hand World Bank economist Eriq Pierre, who many suspect to be Préval's leading choice for Prime Minister. Latortue and Pierre chuckled briefly about their common service for the international financial institutions. The encounter symbolized the crossroads and question Haiti now faces: will the Préval regime offer a break from the past, or be a simple continuation of it?

HAITI: Preval's choice for PM ratified

The Jamaica Gleaner

Associated Press

Thursday | May 25, 2006

HAITI'S SENATE yesterday ratified President Rene Preval's nominee for prime minister, paving the way for his confirmation.

The nomination of Jacques Edouard Alexis, 58, who was Prime Minister during Preval's 1996-2001 presidency, was expected to be considered by the lower house of parliament on Thursday.

If confirmed, Alexis would replace 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 received 22 votes in favor and one abstention in the 27-seat Senate, said Jean-Junior Joseph, Latortue's press secretary. Four senators did not vote.

A trained agronomist and the architect of Preval's Feb. 7 electoral victory, Alexis is considered a strong negotiator with a chance to hold sway in Haiti's splintered parliament, which includes 16 different parties, none of which hold a majority.

But while Alexis was expected to win approval from the lower house, two parties have said their deputies will not vote for him.

Acluche Louis-Jeune, a legislator with the Organisation for the People's Struggle, accused Preval on Tuesday of "returning to old political tricks" by nominating his old Prime Minister, and said his party would abstain in the vote, Radio Kiskeya reported.

Preval has not responded publicly to the comment.

After his nomination over the weekend, Alexis pledged to form "an open government" by including members from different sectors of the country's fractured society.

Senate vote gives hope to undocumented immigrants in South Florida

By Ruth Morris & Tal Abbady

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

May 26 2006

For undocumented immigrants in South Florida, news that the U.S. Senate on Thursday passed an immigration overhaul was another emotional lurch toward a long-lived dream.

Some spoke with heady relief, hoping they would soon break free of a life on the fringes of the law. Others tempered their joy with consternation over the wrangling that still lies ahead.

"At least now we are free. We can get a driver's license, have status. That's the help that we're asking for," said Ivan Suarez, 29, who has lived seven tense years on the hope that he might eventually emerge from the shadows. A restaurant cook who lives and works in Fort Lauderdale, Suarez crossed the U.S.-Mexico border with his wife and daughter, just as thousands of immigrants do every week. The couple's second child was born here.

Suarez said if the Senate proposal stands, it would allow millions not just to stay, but to go home again. "The first dream is to be here. The second dream is to go back home to visit," he said.

The Senate bill answers President Bush's call for immigration reform, tighter border controls and legal status for millions of men and women living in the United States without documents.

The Senate voted 62-36 to pass the bill. Florida Sens. Mel Martinez, a Republican, and Bill Nelson, a Democrat, both voted for it.

Lawmakers will face a tough fight as they strive to reconcile the Senate proposal with a House bill passed in December. The House measure focuses on enforcement and would make felons of immigrants who slipped across U.S. borders undetected.

In Little Haiti, reaction was less enthusiastic. The Senate bill would not apply to immigrants who have lost their asylum cases and then stayed in the United States, laying low -- a familiar scenario for Haitians who have tumbled onto South Florida shores from overcrowded boats.

U.S. Rep. Kendrick Meek, D-Miami, persuaded senators to include provisions expanding the Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act passed by Congress in 1998. The move would help most Haitians who arrived by air but were refused protection because they lacked proper documents.

"If they want to do something fair, they should allow people to qualify if they've been here a long time, with a good record," said Rikenson Chir-Frere, a musician and permanent U.S. resident, from behind a counter of Caribbean compact discs. "It keeps getting harder [for Haitians] to get a green card."

After years of skirting the law, Angela Tun suspected the Senate proposal was too good to be true. Tun, 34, a West Palm Beach resident from Guatemala City, is the mother of four children born in Florida. After a hard fight, her husband became a resident in 2005. But in 1998, under the advice of an

attorney, Tun agreed to voluntary deportation, thinking she could re-enter the country legally. On the departure date, she never showed up.

"I didn't leave because I couldn't separate myself from my children," Tun said. "I know I'm a fugitive. Whenever I see a cop, my heart's in my throat ... I hope with all the proposals at hand, something can be done to help immigrants. I prayed for this to happen and now it has. But then I despair and think the bill won't become a reality and nothing will change, that I'll be stuck in the same place."

Aileen Josephs, Tun's West Palm Beach attorney, thinks Tun would be eligible for legal status as an exception if the Senate bill becomes law. But Tun's eligibility is not guaranteed.

Experts estimate about 500,000 men and women who have lost asylum claims nationwide could be left out of the Senate's legalization plan unless they can prove they did not receive their final deportation order. Another 1.6 million immigrants who only arrived in the past two years also would be ineligible. The Senate bill does call for a temporary worker plan that would offer additional temporary permits to 200,000 foreign workers a year.

Under the bill, immigrants who have been here from two to five years can seek legal status by returning to a port of entry. Those here for more than five years can apply without leaving, granted they pay \$3,250 in fees and fines, learn English, pay back-taxes and pass criminal checks.

Marisol Zequeira, who until last month ran legal services for immigrants at Catholic Charities in West Palm Beach, said the deportation order cutoff would apply to all nationalities. It also would affect those who agreed to leave voluntarily, and stayed, including hundreds of Venezuelans and Colombians.

"Anyone thinking the immigration system is equal and fair needs a little talking to," she said. "But the Senate is making tough choices. They will have to cut it off somewhere."

Washington bureau chief William E. Gibson contributed reporting to this report.

Immigration bill won't help Haitians
Opinion Editorial
Miami Herald
May 25, 2006

The Senate proposal for immigration reform leaves Haitians in this country once again without hope for relief. Most Haitians, about 80 percent, will not benefit from it. We urge Sen. Mel Martinez to include three categories to ensure Haitian participation.

First, Haitians who had their immigration cases heard should be able to reopen their cases and apply for asylum. Haitians who came forward in compliance with the law often had their cases denied, resulting in a "final order." These legitimate asylum seekers with final orders cannot apply for the program unless they have children who are U.S. citizens. Many do not.

Those with U.S.-citizen children need a special waiver and must prove that deportation would result in "extreme hardship." Easy for Haitians, right? Deportation would either heartlessly break apart a family or keep them together in Haiti, the poorest country in our hemisphere. The "Sophie's choice" of cruel family separation or crushing poverty should be enough for a waiver. But it isn't. Immigration authorities routinely deny these waivers to Haitians now and will do so under these reforms.

Second, the legislation should include people forced to enter the United States with false documents. Some Haitians had no choice but to flee their homeland with fraudulent entry documents. It was a matter of life and death. Haitians entering this way usually acknowledged their true identity. Their honesty resulted in a "fraud charge," which now prevents them from participating in the program. Again, they are either outright ineligible or need a waiver that is frequently denied.

Third, HIV-positive individuals are not even eligible to apply for a waiver. They lead healthy and productive lives with life-giving treatment unavailable in Haiti. Failure to include this small group amounts to a death sentence for them. It is simply shameful.

Without these changes Haitians once again will be left behind, denied equal treatment by our immigration system. Making these minor changes would ensure equal treatment for them.

As we thank Sen. Martinez and his colleagues for their efforts, we urge them to include the Haitian community in its reforms.

RANDY MCGRORTY, executive director, Catholic Charities Legal Services, Miami

Haiti denies family visas for funeral of worker
South Florida Sun Sentinel
May 27 2006

MIAMI · The widow and children of a man fatally buried in concrete at a Bal Harbour construction site have been denied visas to travel from Haiti for his funeral, the family's attorneys said Friday.

The family of Menes Daniel, 48, of North Miami Beach, were ineligible for visas because "they were unable to provide any evidence of ties to Haiti that would compel their return from the U.S.," the nonimmigrant visa section of the U.S. Embassy in Port-Au-Prince wrote in an e-mail provided by the Miami attorneys representing his family.

"The family really wants to come for the funeral then go back home," attorney Steve Rossman said.

The U.S. State Department does not discuss individual visa matters, spokeswoman Janelle Hironimus said.

Daniel was one of three men killed when a structural support above them failed, trapping them in quick-drying concrete and construction debris May 6. His relatives have sued the developer of One Bal Harbor, claiming WCI Communities was ultimately responsible for his death and did not properly oversee the high-rise project.

Daniel left Haiti in 1981 and became a legal U.S. resident and sent money back to his common-law wife, Saint Rose Guerrier, his daughter Bedline, 24, and son Bedlin, 17.

"They are distraught and desperately want to come to Florida for his funeral," Daniel's sister Solange wrote in a May 23 letter to the embassy.

She wrote that her brother's widow and children would stay at her North Miami Beach home and that his former employer, Southland Forming, had offered to pay for the airfare from Haiti.

Daniel's funeral is scheduled June 3, Rossman said.

Haitians stand to benefit from bill

BY CASEY WOODS

Miami Herald

May 28, 2006

Marie Michel still recalls seeing dead bodies in her Port-au-Prince neighborhood and the fear she felt remaining in a country wracked by so much violence.

The Haitian woman escaped using a fake passport to board a flight to the Bahamas and a second flight to Miami. The year was 1994.

"I used those documents because I was trying to save my life and my son's life," said Michel, 46. ``We would have died if we had stayed in Haiti."

Michel sought legal residency through the 1998 Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act but was deemed ineligible because she had used false documents to enter the United States.

Congress approved the law to rectify the mistreatment of Haitians who fled their country's bloody governments of the 1980s and early 1990s by offering them legal residency.

Nearly 13,000 Haitians were allowed to remain here. Excluded, however, were Michel and thousands of Haitians who had used false documents or were children when they applied and later "aged out" before their status was approved.

A provision added to the landmark Senate immigration bill approved Thursday could change that by expanding eligibility.

Last week, as news circulated of the provision, Haitian immigrants flooded the telephone lines at Haitian advocacy organizations and radio stations.

"People have been calling all day," said activist Lucy Tondreau. ``There are so many people who could be affected by this."

U.S. Rep. Kendrick Meek, a Miami Democrat who sponsored a similar bill in the House, said the legislation is long overdue. "These people were fleeing for their lives because of what was happening in Haiti at that particular time," he said.

There is no exact number on how many Haitians could benefit from the provision, but Meek's office estimates it could cover as many as 8,000 people. Steve Forester, an immigrant activist with Haitian Women of Miami, calculates the number would be closer to 1,250.

Meek, who has been pushing similar legislation for three years, worked with Republican Sen. Mike DeWine of Ohio and Democratic Sens. Bill Nelson of Florida and Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts to make it part of the Senate bill.

Meek was unsuccessful in his attempt to attach a similar amendment to the immigration bill approved by the House in December.

Final approval of the provision rests with a group of House and Senate lawmakers who must negotiate the differences between the Senate and House versions of the immigration bill. Those negotiations begin next week but could take months to complete.

The main sticking point has nothing to do with the provision that would benefit Haitians.

The Senate bill contains what many House Republicans consider deal-breaker provisions that would create a guest-worker program and grant legal status to millions of undocumented immigrants. To soften objections from conservatives, the Senate added some tougher law-enforcement provisions, including building 370 miles of fences along the border.

House Republican leaders continue to support a border-enforcement-only bill that the House passed in December. President Bush has urged Congress to approve comprehensive immigration reform.

"We are cautiously optimistic, but we have serious concerns in terms of the position of House Republicans," said Jean-Robert Lafortune, president of the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition.

Knight Ridder Washington correspondent Dave Montgomery contributed to this report

Haiti -- Donors' Meeting in Brasilia
Statement by Przemek Gajdeczka
Advisor, Western Hemisphere Department
International Monetary Fund
May 23, 2006

Thank you for this opportunity to speak at this important meeting.

Recent Developments

1. As most of you know, the Fund team traveled to Haiti earlier this month to assess the economic situation and to agree with the authorities on a macroeconomic framework for April-September 2006. We found the overall economic situation broadly stable, and we applaud the outgoing authorities' efforts toward restoring macroeconomic stability, in spite of numerous obstacles. For the year as a whole, real GDP is expected to grow by 2.5 percent as envisaged, but end-September inflation is expected to be 15 percent, as compared with the original EPCA target of 10 percent. On the external side, net international reserves have increased substantially and the gourde has strengthened.
2. These results to a significant extent reflect the performance under the government's EPCA-supported program. The program is broadly on track, even though some targets were missed. Although central bank financing of the budget at end-March was slightly above the target (0.1 percent of GDP), reflecting some expenditure overruns, the use of current accounts was curtailed as envisaged, and information on the central government budget has been published. With regard to monetary policy, the ceiling on net domestic assets of the BRH was missed, reflecting mostly purchases of foreign exchange to rebuild depleted international reserves. Thus, net international reserves were far above the program floor (by US\$24 million), and limits on debt and arrears were honored.

Framework through end-September

3. We held discussions with both the outgoing transition government and representatives of President Préval who, while endorsing the policy framework, noted that further corrections may be needed once they take full stock of the situation. The agreed framework through end-September is meant to provide a basis for extending our monitoring of policy implementation in the run-up to a PRGF-supported program. The authorities have committed to implement the supplementary budget in line with the agreement reached with Fund staff in early May.
4. The representatives of the incoming authorities emphasized their commitment to fiscal discipline while reprioritizing expenditures, and to avoid central bank financing of the budget. The budget for April-September 2006, as agreed with Fund staff, targets higher revenue and expenditure. In particular:

Higher revenue reflects largely taxes from higher than anticipated petroleum prices.

Central government expenditure funded from domestic resources will increase by 0.3 percent of GDP. This is accounted for by higher transfers and subsidies to the electricity sector to offset the impact of higher petroleum prices, while domestically-funded investment will be reduced by about one third. Nearly half of the remaining investment will be re-allocated to quick-disbursing high priority projects

that are being prepared in consultation with donors (program d'appaisement social). We support Mr. Préval's transition team's focus on such projects, which would help preserve recent improvements in the security situation.

Assuming no new borrowing from the central bank, there would remain a budgetary gap of some US\$18 million. This is after including forthcoming disbursements from the IDB (\$15 million), and an EC disbursement of Euro 10 million. The authorities are considering offsetting measures if additional external financing to fill the gap is not forthcoming.

5. On the structural front, the authorities committed to complete several measures by end-September 2006. In particular, they will: (i) verify information on domestic payments arrears and prepare a plan for their settlement; (ii) extend computerization of data to all customs offices; (iii) apply the single fiscal identification number in taxpayers files; (iv) implement a monitoring mechanism for government transfers to the electricity sector; and (v) finalize and publish audits of the central government and of the BRH. In addition, they committed to continue to strictly limit the use of the ministerial current accounts.

Budget for 2006/07

6. The incoming authorities need to accelerate preparations for the 2006/07 budget, in order to coordinate properly with donors and obtain parliamentary approval before end-September 2006. They hope to boost economic growth by creating favorable conditions for private sector investment. Fund staff recommended to begin working with projections of real GDP growth of 4 percent, inflation of 8 percent, and an increase in gross international reserves to at least seven weeks of imports by end-September 2007. However, there is an estimated remaining financing gap of around \$80 million.

Next steps

7. The authorities agreed on a work program toward a PRGF arrangement and a HIPC decision point, with Executive Board consideration in the fall of 2006. This is a very ambitious agenda that will require exceptional efforts by the authorities and donors.

The IMF team is planning discussions on the three-year PRGF-supported program to take place in June and August. We envisage two Executive Board meetings related to this work program: (i) in August/September on a preliminary HIPC document; and (ii) in October on a PRGF arrangement and HIPC decision point.

In the meantime, in addition to carrying out the agreed program through September 2006, the new authorities will need to complete and endorse the interim Poverty Reduction Strategy, agree on HIPC completion point triggers, and establish a plan to improve tracking of poverty-reducing expenditures.

This plan also assumes that the pledging meeting takes place in time to provide inputs to the 2006/07 government budget. Most importantly, it is necessary that the budgetary gap is filled before a PRGF-supported program can be presented to the Fund's Executive Board for approval, as the program is required to be fully financed.

DEVELOPMENT: Reconstruction of Haiti - Part II

Mario Osava

Inter Press Service News Agency

May 26, 2006

RIO DE JANEIRO - Brazil has expressed its staunch support for reconstruction in Haiti, signing several agreements with the new democratically elected government of René Préval to contribute to school lunch programmes, the promotion of sports as educational support, the production and use of ethanol fuel produced from sugar cane, and a massive vaccination campaign.

Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim called for greater participation by Latin America and the Caribbean in the reconstruction process in Haiti, where Préval took office on May 14, in order to consolidate democracy and boost development.

Haiti "cannot be, should not be, and is no longer seen as the disowned son of Latin America and the Caribbean," Amorim said at a high-level international conference on Haiti this week in the Brazilian capital, in which representatives of 19 governments and several international bodies took part.

The minister was not only referring to the isolation of Haiti, which will be formally readmitted to Caricom (the Caribbean Community) at a July donor conference in Port-au-Prince, but also to its economic plight as the poorest country in the Americas.

Haiti is the only nation in the Americas included in the category of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), noted Amorim.

Tuesday's meeting in Brasilia was aimed at encouraging dialogue among donor countries, United Nations agencies and multilateral lenders, in search of a vote of confidence in Haiti's new government, and a commitment to expand aid to that country, said Ambassador Gonçalo Mourao, director of the Brazilian Foreign Ministry's Central America and Caribbean Department.

The meeting also began to prepare for the July donor conference in Haiti, which will reach decisions on international aid, but "according to the priorities and plans defined by the new government," Mourao told IPS.

Besides the agreements reached with Haiti, Brazil signed accords with Argentina and Canada that will involve joint cooperation efforts in the impoverished Caribbean nation in the fields of health, agriculture, social development and the strengthening of institutions to achieve "democratic governability."

The Brazilian military, which is heading the U.N. Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), will remain in that country as long as the Préval administration "sees fit, and considers it useful," said Mourao.

Although Haiti lived up to the commitment to hold general elections on Feb. 7, with a presidential runoff on Apr. 21, it still needs military aid to maintain order and curb crime and civil unrest. "There

are only 4,000 police officers in that country of 8..5 million, while Brasilia, with a population of two million, has 20,000 police," the Brazilian diplomat pointed out.

But MINUSTAH, in both its civilian and military functions, is in need of a major overhaul. President Préval said his country now needs tractors and construction machinery "instead of tanks," said Amorim.

Brazil could make a particularly important contribution, with its experience in social programmes and technology in the areas of education, health and even public safety, said Mourao.

In the field of agriculture, the significant technological advances made by the governmental Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA) is a vital part of the aid that Brasilia offers to other developing countries, especially the poorest.

Another important contribution would be to share Brazil's experience in prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, which has been recognised as one of the best programmes of its kind in the world, said Argemiro Procópio, professor of international relations at the University of Brasilia.

Procópio told IPS that Brazil's decision to send peacekeeping troops to Haiti, to strengthen its case for an eventual permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council, was a foreign policy mistake.

It is not foreign troops that Haiti needs, said the analyst, but "the recovery of its industry, agriculture and forests" - activities that would generate the jobs so desperately needed in the country.

In response to the frequent criticism of Brazil's participation in the peacekeeping operation in Haiti, Amorim said "it is not necessary to be rich to show solidarity."

He also advocated "intense" Latin American cooperation in order to help reestablish democracy and foment development in Haiti. Not only Brazil, but Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay are all taking part in MINUSTAH, the minister noted.

In Haiti, "it was imperative to resume the democratic process," as occurred with the elections held this year, "and there was a serious public security problem and weakening of the structures of the state, besides the severe poverty and other social woes," he underlined.

The minister said cooperation efforts with Haiti are three-pronged: maintaining security and stability; political dialogue for national reconciliation; and the promotion of economic and social development.

The talks that Préval is holding with all of the country's political forces, seeking to overcome the fact that his coalition, Lespwa - the Haitian Creole form of the French l'espérance, which means "hope" - lacks a majority in parliament, was one of the reasons for the overall sense of "optimism" among the participants in the meeting in Brasilia, said Mourao.

The products exported to Haiti are of good quality
The Dominican Today
May 27, 2006

SANTO DOMINGO.- The exporting sector rejected the notion that most products the Dominican Republic sells to Haiti are inferior in quality, as it was denounced by the multidisciplinary academic group Ciudades y Fronteras (Cities and Borders).

Kai Scheenhals, Dominican Exporter Association (Adoexpo), executive director said most products exported to Haiti are from companies like Mercasid, Jajá, Cesar Iglesias and INCA, which also have an ample local market and are of unquestionable quality.

The academic group may be referring to the border's informal commerce with Haiti, where no product quality statistics are registered, but in the case of official exports, registered by the Export and Investment Center (CEI-RD), the products are the same sold in DR, Scheenhals finished.

As Préval becomes president

Haiti's crises persist

By G. Dunkel

Worker's World

May 26, 2006

René Préval was finally inaugurated as Haiti's president May 14, after being elected in February. The first step, getting the sash of office, took a little longer than expected because the electricity went out. Port-au-Prince had been suffering from outages all week.

Just before he spoke as the new president of Haiti, 800 prisoners, mostly political prisoners, held a protest in the National Penitentiary, within walking distance of the National Palace where Préval was inaugurated. Reporters heard firing during the night and morning. Prisoners said that 12 of them had been killed. The Haitian National Police admitted 11 prisoners had been seriously injured and a number of cops had been hurt, but not seriously.

Préval's speech was short. He emphasized peace and dialog. Speaking in Creole, he said: "Peace has already begun to establish itself. Peace is the key to open all the doors. To attract investment, to create jobs. Jobs combat unemployment. To bring more tourism to the country. To bring more schools, more hospitals."

The Haitian radio station Metropole broadcast interviews with people listening to Préval's speech May 15, without asking people to identify themselves. The BBC's Worldwide Monitoring Service distributed a report in English on this broadcast a few days later.

The announcer began, "After the speech made by President Rene Préval, some people in the crowd that gathered in front of the National Palace say that Préval's speech was not very convincing, while others appreciate the straightforwardness that he expressed."

The first person interviewed commented, "He told us not to destroy the country and to stand united for the country's progress."

The second said: "I am a Lavalas [the party of U.S.-deposed Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide] partisan. I sincerely did not see anything serious in what he said. He did not give us hope. I did not see anything that would cause us to be hopeful."

The journalist asked interviewees, "What were you expecting him to say?"

The first person interviewed responded: "I was expecting him to speak to the people. It is the people who elected him. He should have talked to the people about what he is going to do for them and what he can do for them. But Préval did not say anything worthwhile."

A third person responded to a question about solidarity: "Solidarity? With whom? If the people are not part of anything then there cannot be solidarity. He did not put the people first."

Another person said: "Actually, I am really pleased with what he said, especially concerning the military tanks of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti [Minustah]. He wants the military tanks to be replaced by bulldozers for the country's development."

Radio Metropole ended its broadcast with a long quote from a Lavalas organizer, who said in part: "If Préval is in power today it is because of Aristide. There are three questions that we asked him. First, we told him that in order for us to support him he would have to assure the immediate return of Aristide. Second, he would have to assure the release of all the political prisoners. And third, he would need to lower the high cost of living and make education available for all of us."

About 40 percent of school-age Haitians are in school. The rest can't afford the fees and supplies needed to go. Sixty percent of all Haitians, especially those in rural areas where most Haitians still live, try to survive on less than \$1 a day.

The economy of Haiti depends on foreign aid and remittances. The government is so broke that it will have problems meeting its June payroll. It doesn't even have the money to finish the elections for the National Assembly.

Venezuela is offering solidarity. Through Petrocaribe, Venezuela is planning to supply Haiti's oil needs, about 11,000 barrels. The Venezuelan government said it will donate as much asphalt as Haiti can use for a year.

The first shipment of 100,000 barrels of oil products arrived in Port-au-Prince's harbor May 15, the day after Préval's inauguration.

The new Haitian government has inherited major problems, both political and economic. Political prisoners that the departing de facto regime threw in jail without charges are still there waiting to be released.

The medical aid that Cuba provides and the oil from Venezuela are sorely needed by the Haitian people. The White House will no doubt try to put pressure on President Préval to break ties with these two anti-imperialist governments.