

HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: NOVEMBER 17-29, 2006

UN says Haiti donors should focus on civil service

28 Nov 2006

Reuters

By Sabina Zawadzki

BRUSSELS, Nov 28 (Reuters) - An international donors meeting for Haiti should focus on helping it build a civil service to deal with the problems it faces after retreating from the brink of civil war, a senior United Nations official said on Tuesday.

Haiti is recovering from decades of political violence topped by a 2004 ouster of then-leader Jean-Bertrand Aristide, but remains one of the world's poorest countries, plagued by brutal armed gangs, corruption and poor infrastructure. The donors conference, taking place in Madrid on Thursday, aims to pledge money for the mid- and long-term development of the Caribbean country. The U.N. says the majority of Haiti's state budget comes from international aid. Donors had already pledged \$750 million in July for Haiti's immediate economic needs, but without a functioning administration this money had been poorly absorbed, U.N. special envoy Edmond Mulet told reporters.

"They already received a lot of money, which is in the coffers of the government, but they don't have the administrative capacity, the civil servants to even spend that money," he told reporters.

"That is why ... one of the main requests of the Haitian government to the international community will be to help the government to help train and finance civil servants' jobs -- to create the administrative structures which don't exist anymore."

Countries including the United States and organisations such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, which are all due to attend, will discuss Haiti's request.

They will consider ideas such as creating a multilateral trust fund run by the World Bank to channel any money pledged.

Haiti said in July it needed \$7 billion to help revive its moribund economy through investment in roads, agriculture, tourism and institutional reform.

Mulet said Thursday's conference had no targets for a final sum.

Rains leave destruction in Haiti

By Jacqueline Charles

Miami Herald

November 27, 2006

At least four people are confirmed dead and 100 are newly homeless in Haiti after days of heavy rain soaked the Caribbean nation's southern and northern peninsula.

Haiti's Civil Protection Agency confirmed the deaths in Jérémie, a town along the country's southern peninsula, and is investigating reports of at least two people missing in the northwest, said Sophie Boutaud de la Combe, spokeswoman for the U.N. stabilization mission in Haiti.

"The floods are under control," Boutaud de la Combe said in a telephone interview.

In Jérémie the torrential downpour that began Wednesday night and continued well into Saturday, carried away homes and made roads impassable after mudslides and rocks choked the roadway.

HOSPITAL DAMAGED

The town's main hospital also was severely damaged, and 100 town residents had to be relocated to a shelter. As a result of severe soil erosion, brought on by deforestation, Haiti has long been vulnerable to flooding and mudslides.

"Up to now, we cannot give a final count on how many people have died," Jean-Claude Delizaire, an officer with the Haitian National Police in Jérémie said in a telephone interview. "A lot of people are homeless."

Delizaire and others say there doesn't appear to be any relief in sight from the rain, which continued up to Saturday evening. The General Hospital, which sits at the bottom of a hill, was severely damaged when the roof could no longer sustain the heavy rain and water began pouring in, flooding patients and surgical rooms.

Water also rushed into the hospital when a retaining wall outside the building collapsed.

"There was a lot of water, it was just rushing down," said Sister Maryann Berard, the administrator at the Haitian Health Foundation, a local charity group that sits atop of a hill overlooking the hospital. "They had a couple of feet of water at the hospital."

By the time an eight-member delegation from Haiti's parliament and the Ministry of Health arrived Friday afternoon to survey the damage, most of the water inside the hospital had been cleared away by members of the U.N. mission and the Haitian Red Cross.

In the northwest, torrential rain caused a river to overflow. The river flows through the center of Jean-Rabel, a small town on the northwest tip of Haiti and 23 miles west of Port-de-Paix. Homes in Port-de-Paix were also carried away by the floods.

Jean-Rabel's only morgue, a gift from the community, was washed away. So were several homes and the main beach, Bord-de-Mer, said Father Reginald Jean-Mary, the priest at Notre Dame d'Haiti Roman Catholic Church in Little Haiti.

WASHED AWAY

Jean-Mary, who is from Jean-Rabel, said he received an e-mail Friday morning from a local doctor informing him that the town had endured a lot of damage. On Sunday morning, Jean-Mary was finally able to get through to someone in his hometown who reconfirmed what the doctor had said.

"There is almost nothing left standing in the town," Jean-Mary said.

"The hospital is completely damaged. Many people are homeless and living in trees. People's plantations, their livelihood, have been ruined. Not a banana tree is left standing."

He said he was told that at least one person, a woman, was killed when the wall of her house collapsed. Authorities have yet to confirm the death of another person reported missing from Port-de-Paix.

Two years ago, more than 3,000 people were killed near the city of Gonaives when Tropical Storm Jeanne soaked the area.

Kidnappings, violent crime surge in Haiti

Reuters

By Joseph Guyler Delva

28 Nov 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- Kidnappings and other violent crimes have increased in Haiti in recent weeks, and Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis on Monday blamed the surge partly on criminals deported by the United States.

As many as 100 people have been kidnapped for ransom in November, according to the Coalition of Victims and Friends of Victims of Kidnappings, a group that assists relatives.

"The situation is very serious," Reginald Delva, the group's leader, said.

According to police statistics, 40 kidnappings were reported in October and 30 in September. There seems to be no pattern to the abductions and they are not confined to any particular social class or group.

"We have noted a considerable increase in kidnappings," said Stanley Ralph Brice, police director for the West department (province), which includes the teeming capital, Port-au-Prince. "We have also noted several killings over the past few days."

Brice declined to comment on possible reasons for the surge.

Even with the presence of an 8,300-member United Nations peacekeeping force, Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, has struggled to contain gang and political violence since a bloody rebellion ousted then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

At least two recent kidnapping victims, a 20-year-old woman and a 6-year-old boy, were killed even after ransoms were paid.

The woman, Fara Natacha Dessources, was found dead last week after being kidnapped and tortured by gunmen outside the capital. She was shot several times and one of her arms was broken.

The body of the boy, Carl Rubens Francillion, was found near Cap-Haitien on Haiti's north coast, police said. He was kidnapped in Port-au-Prince.

At a news conference on Monday, Alexis said criminals sent to Haiti by the United States were partly at fault for the surge in crime and at least two deportees were sought in the woman's death.

"We are not going stand idly by. We are doing everything we can to arrest these criminals and bring them to justice," said Alexis.

Haitian officials have long complained that the United States sends dozens of Haitian criminals to the Caribbean island each month after they have finished serving their U.S. prison time. With its feeble judicial system and police force, the impoverished nation is ill-equipped to deal with them.

Human rights activist Renan Hedouville, who heads the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, blamed the surge in violence in part on the police and judiciary.

"The police should be vetted and the judicial system reformed for the struggle against criminality to be effective," Hedouville said.

Fewer kidnappings, improved security - but life remains harsh on the streets of Haiti
By Andrew Buncombe in Port-au-Prince
The Independent, UK
27 November 2006

Sheltering from the sun beneath a tattered piece of plastic in the crowded streets of Salamoun market, Jacqueline Charles shrugged when asked whether life had improved under the government of the man she voted for.

"We are thinking life will be better. Maybe one day," said the 60-year-old, who was selling rice. "[So far] there has been no real change. Only God knows. I voted for change but things cannot change right away."

Anyone looking for signs of improvement in Haiti has a frustrating and arduous task and this teeming market in the centre of the capital, Port-au-Prince, where some of the city's most beleaguered residents try to scrape out a living, may not be best place to start. But six months after René Prével was sworn in as president of the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere there are small, if flickering, signs that some sort of progress is being made.

Perhaps most noticeable is an improvement in the security situation, a factor that has long disrupted life in the capital city and which had threatened both the poor, which make up the overwhelming majority of the population, and the middle-class.

Streets that were once occupied by UN soldiers in armoured vehicle are no less chaotic but the troops are being deployed less visibly. And, vitally, the spate of kidnappings by armed gangs - a phenomenon that late last year had soared to extraordinary levels - appears to be in decline.

Figures provided to The Independent by the UN Mission in Haiti (Minustah) suggest that kidnappings have fallen every month since August when there were 78, to 45 in September, 27 in October and 12 to date in November.

"The security situation in the impoverished areas of the city is somewhat improved. In Cite Soleil the national police have established a presence for the first time in three years," said spokesman David Wimbhurst. "This does not mean the situation is resolved, but it is better than it was."

He said that Minustah troops were still routinely deployed in some areas of the city which have traditionally seen most violence from armed gangs, but he added: "There are fewer shootings from the gangs towards Minustah, but they continue nonetheless, and the gangs are still present, even if less able to undertake criminal activities as a result of our military operations."

Small but important steps have also been made from an economic perspective. Mr Prével's administration has passed a budget, is cautiously collecting taxes and has been promised around \$750m in international aid. Inflation is estimated to have fallen to around nine per cent from sixteen per cent and the IMF expects the economy to grow by 2.5 per cent.

"There is some kind of window of opportunity and the sense of stability that the country has some future," Edmond Mulet, the UN's special envoy to Haiti recently told the Associated Press. "It's still a fragile situation. I wouldn't say we've turned a corner yet, but I think in the next months we'll be able to assume that, hopefully."

Another area in which Mr Préval's government has drawn praise is its apparent readiness to reinstall the judicial and investigate process - something that had been ignored under the previous, interim government headed by Gerard Latortue. Judge Claudy Gassant, a government investigator who fled in fear to the US several years ago during his inquiry into the killing of a journalist, has been brought back as a director of prosecutions. The country's criminal courts have in recent months heard a flurry of cases.

"There is a sense that there is a stronger political will to pursue certain sensitive cases and to start to combat impunity," said Helen Spraos, country director of the British charity Christian Aid. "This is not to say that there are not still very serious problems with the legal system here, but it least it's going in the right direction."

Yet the pressing challenge for Mr Préval is to somehow seize this opportunity to bring about change in the lives of those people who voted him earlier this year - the country's huge numbers of desperately poor and vulnerable people. Supporters, in essence, like the women in the market place. Clearly the very large number of people at the bottom of the pile in Haiti do not believe their lives have so far been improved.

"Things have not changed. We have not seen a change," said another of the market traders at Salamoun, Jocelyn LaCrette. Asked what would make life better for her and her colleagues, she replied: "Food and security."

It is difficult to overestimate the impoverishment and hardship faced by Haiti's poor. More than three-quarters of the population survives below the official UN poverty line of two dollars a day while more than 50 per cent exist on just one dollar a day and are officially considered to be in "abject poverty". Not only is Haiti the poorest country in the western hemisphere but it is one of the poorest outside of sub-Saharan Africa.

In the worst of the city's slums, such as the notorious waterside shanty known as City Soleil, the squalor and misery that is mainstay of every day existence is difficult to describe. Less than half the nation's population has access to clean water and Haiti is ranked with Somalia and Afghanistan as having the worst worldwide daily calorific deficit per head of the population.

"Life is just too hard for the Haitian people," said Alex Toyo, a taxi driver who lives near the historic but crumbling Olofsson Hotel in the city centre. "There has been some improvement in the security but not in the economy. People are frustrated."

Alongside this crushing poverty there is a very small middle class and a small, often lighter-skinned elite that live in the small enclave of Petionville, a district of Port-au-Prince set high on the mountainside, overlooking the ocean and overlooking the poverty. The country's Gini coefficient - a

statistical tool that measures economic inequality - stands at 0.65, worse even than Brazil which is considered one of the world's most unequal nations.

Such a situation does not exist in a vacuum. Rather, Haiti has long suffered from a series of corrupt dictators, economic isolation and political interference. The country's previous elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was ousted in February 2004 following an uprising supported by elements in Washington.

In the two years of rule by the interim government imposed by the US, French and Canadian governments, members of Mr Aristide's Lavalas party suffered widespread political repression, violence and imprisonment. One survey carried out by researchers at Wayne State University in Michigan estimated that 8,000 people may have been killed and as many as 30,000 raped during this period.

Mr Aristide had previously been ousted in a CIA-backed coup in 1991 but he was reinstated with the help of US Marines three years later as a result of intervention by President Bill Clinton. But Mr Aristide's return to office came with a price: the international community insisted that if he wanted to receive aid to help his country he must also adopt a series of "liberal" economic measures to ensure the competitiveness of the country's labour pool. He was told to put aside his plans to impose price controls on some foods and to increase the minimum wage.

The result of this long-term policy insisted by the international community has brought few obvious benefits to the Haitian people. Indeed, the virtual absence of tariffs on imports has led to devastation within the country's agricultural sector - traditionally its largest area of export and its biggest income earner. Today in Port-au-Prince one is as likely to be eating rice, milk, and even sugar imported from the US - where these industries are heavily subsidised - than to be eating locally produced foods.

Whether Mr Aristide will ever return from exile in South Africa remains unclear. During his election campaign Mr Préval indicated there was nothing to prevent his return. He has also overseen the release from jail of a number of high profile colleagues of Mr Aristide, including former prime minister Yvonne Neptune.

Among the other high profile prisoners released earlier this year was the folk singer and Aristide ally Anne Auguste, also known as So-Anne or "Sister Anne". She had been imprisoned without formal charge for two-and-a-half years having been initially seized by US Marines who claimed she was a threat to them. Having been released after spending 826 days in jail, So-Anne is now helping her husband, Wilfred Lavaud, in his bid to become the mayor of the city's Delmas district.

In an interview at her home she spoke of the appalling conditions inside the women's prison located in Petionville and also of the need for the international community to help Mr Préval's government succeed. It had been more than 200 years since the country's rose up and achieved independence, she said, and still it was fighting for its freedom.

"If Préval is failing, everyone is failing" she said. "Haiti is a country that has struggled since 1804. We are in a hole now, struggling. We are still fighting. 2006 and we are the same. It's very bad."

Sheltering from the sun beneath a tattered piece of plastic in the crowded streets of Salamoun market, Jacqueline Charles shrugged when asked whether life had improved under the government of the man she voted for.

"We are thinking life will be better. Maybe one day," said the 60-year-old, who was selling rice. "[So far] there has been no real change. Only God knows. I voted for change but things cannot change right away."

Anyone looking for signs of improvement in Haiti has a frustrating and arduous task and this teeming market in the centre of the capital, Port-au-Prince, where some of the city's most beleaguered residents try to scrape out a living, may not be best place to start. But six months after René Préval was sworn in as president of the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere there are small, if flickering, signs that some sort of progress is being made.

Perhaps most noticeable is an improvement in the security situation, a factor that has long disrupted life in the capital city and which had threatened both the poor, which make up the overwhelming majority of the population, and the middle-class.

Streets that were once occupied by UN soldiers in armoured vehicle are no less chaotic but the troops are being deployed less visibly. And, vitally, the spate of kidnappings by armed gangs - a phenomenon that late last year had soared to extraordinary levels - appears to be in decline.

Figures provided to The Independent by the UN Mission in Haiti (Minustah) suggest that kidnappings have fallen every month since August when there were 78, to 45 in September, 27 in October and 12 to date in November.

"The security situation in the impoverished areas of the city is somewhat improved. In Cite Soleil the national police have established a presence for the first time in three years," said spokesman David Wilmhurst. "This does not mean the situation is resolved, but it is better than it was."

He said that Minustah troops were still routinely deployed in some areas of the city which have traditionally seen most violence from armed gangs, but he added: "There are fewer shootings from the gangs towards Minustah, but they continue nonetheless, and the gangs are still present, even if less able to undertake criminal activities as a result of our military operations."

Small but important steps have also been made from an economic perspective. Mr Préval's administration has passed a budget, is cautiously collecting taxes and has been promised around \$750m in international aid. Inflation is estimated to have fallen to around nine per cent from sixteen per cent and the IMF expects the economy to grow by 2.5 per cent.

"There is some kind of window of opportunity and the sense of stability that the country has some future," Edmond Mulet, the UN's special envoy to Haiti recently told the Associated Press. "It's still a fragile situation. I wouldn't say we've turned a corner yet, but I think in the next months we'll be able to assume that, hopefully."

Another area in which Mr Préval's government has drawn praise is its apparent readiness to reinstall the judicial and investigate process - something that had been ignored under the previous, interim government headed by Gerard Latortue. Judge Claudy Gassant, a government investigator who fled in fear to the US several years ago during his inquiry into the killing of a journalist, has been brought back as a director of prosecutions. The country's criminal courts have in recent months heard a flurry of cases.

"There is a sense that there is a stronger political will to pursue certain sensitive cases and to start to combat impunity," said Helen Spraos, country director of the British charity Christian Aid. "This is not to say that there are not still very serious problems with the legal system here, but it least it's going in the right direction."

Yet the pressing challenge for Mr Préval is to somehow seize this opportunity to bring about change in the lives of those people who voted him earlier this year - the country's huge numbers of desperately poor and vulnerable people. Supporters, in essence, like the women in the market place. Clearly the very large number of people at the bottom of the pile in Haiti do not believe their lives have so far been improved.

"Things have not changed. We have not seen a change," said another of the market traders at Salamoun, Jocelyn LaCrette. Asked what would make life better for her and her colleagues, she replied: "Food and security."

It is difficult to overestimate the impoverishment and hardship faced by Haiti's poor. More than three-quarters of the population survives below the official UN poverty line of two dollars a day while more than 50 per cent exist on just one dollar a day and are officially considered to be in "abject poverty". Not only is Haiti the poorest country in the western hemisphere but it is one of the poorest outside of sub-Saharan Africa.

In the worst of the city's slums, such as the notorious waterside shanty known as City Soleil, the squalor and misery that is mainstay of every day existence is difficult to describe. Less than half the nation's population has access to clean water and Haiti is ranked with Somalia and Afghanistan as having the worst worldwide daily calorific deficit per head of the population.

"Life is just too hard for the Haitian people," said Alex Toyo, a taxi driver who lives near the historic but crumbling Olofsson Hotel in the city centre. "There has been some improvement in the security but not in the economy. People are frustrated."

Alongside this crushing poverty there is a very small middle class and a small, often lighter-skinned elite that live in the small enclave of Petionville, a district of Port-au-Prince set high on the mountainside, overlooking the ocean and overlooking the poverty. The country's Gini coefficient - a statistical tool that measures economic inequality - stands at 0.65, worse even than Brazil which is considered one of the world's most unequal nations.

Such a situation does not exist in a vacuum. Rather, Haiti has long suffered from a series of corrupt dictators, economic isolation and political interference. The country's previous elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was ousted in February 2004 following an uprising supported by elements in Washington.

In the two years of rule by the interim government imposed by the US, French and Canadian governments, members of Mr Aristide's Lavalas party suffered widespread political repression, violence and imprisonment. One survey carried out by researchers at Wayne State University in Michigan estimated that 8,000 people may have been killed and as many as 30,000 raped during this period.

Mr Aristide had previously been ousted in a CIA-backed coup in 1991 but he was reinstalled with the help of US Marines three years later as a result of intervention by President Bill Clinton. But Mr Aristide's return to office came with a price: the international community insisted that if he wanted to receive aid to help his country he must also adopt a series of "liberal" economic measures to ensure the competitiveness of the country's labour pool. He was told to put aside his plans to impose price controls on some foods and to increase the minimum wage.

The result of this long-term policy insisted by the international community has brought few obvious benefits to the Haitian people. Indeed, the virtual absence of tariffs on imports has led to devastation within the country's agricultural sector - traditionally its largest area of export and its biggest income earner. Today in Port-au-Prince one is as likely to be eating rice, milk, and even sugar imported from the US - where these industries are heavily subsidised - than to be eating locally produced foods.

Whether Mr Aristide will ever return from exile in South Africa remains unclear. During his election campaign Mr Préval indicated there was nothing to prevent his return. He has also overseen the release from jail of a number of high profile colleagues of Mr Aristide, including former prime minister Yvonne Neptune.

Among the other high profile prisoners released earlier this year was the folk singer and Aristide ally Anne Auguste, also known as So-Anne or "Sister Anne". She had been imprisoned without formal charge for two-and-a-half years having been initially seized by US Marines who claimed she was a threat to them. Having been released after spending 826 days in jail, So-Anne is now helping her husband, Wilfred Lavaud, in his bid to become the mayor of the city's Delmas district.

In an interview at her home she spoke of the appalling conditions inside the women's prison located in Petionville and also of the need for the international community to help Mr Préval's government succeed. It had been more than 200 years since the country's rose up and achieved independence, she said, and still it was fighting for its freedom.

"If Préval is failing, everyone is failing" she said. "Haiti is a country that has struggled since 1804. We are in a hole now, struggling. We are still fighting. 2006 and we are the same. It's very bad."

**Haiti's Trade Push Hits
New Political Head Wind
Lawmakers Look Askance
At Effort to Ease Tariff Rule
Amid Globalization Concern
By GREG HITT
Wall Street Journal
November 27, 2006**

WASHINGTON -- Haiti's struggle to persuade Congress to help its apparel makers underscores a new reality: In the political climate on Capitol Hill, even small trade gestures face big hurdles.

Haiti is trying to secure passage of an initiative that would allow the Caribbean country to use non-American-made material in garments destined for the U.S., while still qualifying for duty-free access. Currently, Haitian garments must be made from material produced in the U.S., or in some cases from the Caribbean region, to get duty-free treatment. Using foreign-made fabric, such as from China, could significantly lower production costs for Haitian garments makers and make their goods more competitive in global markets.

Haiti exported \$447 million in goods to the U.S. in 2005, a fraction of total U.S. imports. Haitian officials say the deal could create as many as 40,000 sorely needed jobs there.

Lawmakers from textile-heavy states, worried the initiative would result in the widespread use of inexpensive Chinese fabric by Haitian garment makers, temporarily got the deal shelved earlier this fall. Haiti and a diverse group of supporters -- including the Catholic Church, American companies and musician Wyclef Jean -- have since renewed the campaign to push through the deal. But with voter concern over globalization having tipped important races in midterm elections and helped Democrats retake Congress, Haiti now faces an even-tougher environment, trade experts said.

"There's going to be a pronounced change of tone, from a period of accommodation and negotiation to litigation and enforcement," said Dan Ikenson, associate director of the Center for Trade Policy Studies at the Cato Institute, a free-market think tank.

Mr. Ikenson said small countries like Haiti aren't going to find much political support in Washington as lawmakers from both parties pull back from free-trade initiatives. Peru and Colombia, which have sealed deals with the U.S. that await congressional approval, could also be affected.

Underscoring the sensitivity of the trade issue, the House earlier this month failed to pass legislation that would end Cold War-era trade restrictions on Vietnam and give it the same benefits as other U.S. trading partners in the World Trade Organization. The bill's defeat shocked the Bush administration, which had hoped Congress would approve the measure in time for the president's visit to Vietnam last week for a regional summit.

As needy as Haiti may be, lawmakers from textile-producing states and industry lobbyists say a similar fate could befall the proposed Haiti bill. They contend the measure would open a new loophole in U.S. trade laws, exposing already stressed domestic producers to new levels of foreign competition.

"We can stop it," pledged Cass Johnson, president of the National Council of Textile Organizations, the largest U.S. textile-industry group. "If Vietnam shows anything, it will fail."

The increased protectionist environment is a cause of concern for Haiti's finance minister, Daniel Dorsainvil, who was in town earlier this month trying to drum up support among U.S. lawmakers for the Haiti bill. At the start, he was hopeful of gathering support, but after making the rounds for two days, he conceded, "It's not 100% guaranteed."

The Haiti trade proposal has been in the works for years, but really emerged as a divisive issue this fall. Perhaps the most controversial proposal on the table would allow Haiti garment makers to produce as much as 60 million square yards of woven apparel, such as chinos and denim jeans, with foreign-made material, while still qualifying for duty-free access to the U.S. Haiti's backers say that accounts for less than 1% of the U.S.'s overall apparel imports each year.

Supporters say the deal would give Haiti greater flexibility to meet the requests of retailers, and is needed to restore some competitive edge Haiti lost after Congress conferred special trade benefits last year on the Dominican Republic and five Central American nations.

Haiti is by far the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, with four-fifths of its 8.3 million people living in poverty, and newly elected president René Préval is grappling with the spread of AIDS, unreliable electrical service and criminal gangs, as he seeks to revive the economy. "We need these jobs," said Mr. Dorsainvil.

At the end of September, House Ways and Means Chairman Bill Thomas, a California Republican, folded the Haiti measure into a larger trade package aimed at helping poor countries, including in Africa. But only days after the package was introduced, Mr. Johnson and other textile lobbyists, working with House allies, persuaded Republican leaders to shelve the bill, after raising alarms about the Haiti measure. The maneuvering underscored the political leverage wielded by the textile industry.

After the setback, a loose coalition of business and religious interests with ties to Haiti began working quietly to revive the proposal. On Sept. 26, the day after the bill was pulled, the Catholic archbishop of Cincinnati wrote to House Majority Leader John Boehner, an Ohio Republican, to urge reconsideration.

An executive at Cintas Corp., an Ohio-based uniform firm with an apparel plant in Haiti, called Mr. Boehner's office. "For Haiti, it's a big deal," said Glenn Larsen, Cintas's vice president of manufacturing. Mr. Larsen said the proposed trade benefits for Haiti would allow his company to nearly double the work force at its plant there from 1,100.

At the time, Mr. Boehner said he would be open to reviving the bill after the midterm election.

As lawmakers left to campaign in late September, Haiti's allies built support among voters. Father Andrew Small, a trade strategist at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, distributed an alert to 1,000 Catholic leaders around the country, urging them to press lawmakers to back the bill. He

distributed a letter signed by leaders of the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church to every congressional office.

The week after the midterm elections, Mr. Dorsainvil, Haiti's finance minister, arrived in Washington to make a push for the legislation. His timing was ill-fated: That day, the Vietnam bill went down on the House floor.

Undaunted, Mr. Dorsainvil toured Capitol Hill with Haiti's ambassador to the U.S. and Mr. Jean, the musician, who also is the ambassador's nephew. They visited several lawmakers, including Rep. Charles Rangel, the New York Democrat who is set to take over the House Ways and Means Committee, the starting point for all trade bills in Congress. They also met with Mr. Boehner's chief of staff.

Mr. Jean later performed at a Capitol Hill reception, urging staffers, lawmakers and lobbyists to step up efforts for Haiti. A spokesman for Mr. Boehner said no formal decision has been made about how to proceed. But House Republican leaders have discussed bringing the Africa and Haiti package to a vote in early December, when Congress is expected to make another run at approving the Vietnam measure.

Mr. Rangel is supportive, suggesting that he isn't a knee-jerk opponent of free trade but sees moral and foreign-policy reasons for helping Haiti. Being able to see trade in those terms could help Mr. Rangel reach across party lines, since the Bush administration at times defends its own trade priorities in similar ways.

The Vietnam and Haiti-Africa packages could face resistance. Rep. Robin Hayes, a Republican who represents a textile-heavy district in North Carolina, led the opposition against Haiti earlier this fall, and he is less inclined to compromise now. Mr. Hayes had expected to cruise to re-election, but encountered a challenge from a Democrat who made much of the congressman's support for the Central America Free Trade Agreement in 2005. Nov. 7's election results were so close that a full recount is likely.

When lawmakers returned the week after the election, Mr. Hayes chided Republican leaders for bringing up the Vietnam legislation. He voted against the bill, and said he is opposed to helping Haiti if that trade deal comes up again.

"It's a way for China to get around quota agreements in place," a Hayes spokeswoman said.

Haiti Reaches Decision Point Under the Enhanced HIPC Debt Relief Initiative
Kansas City InfoZine
November 27, 2006

The World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have determined that the Republic of Haiti qualifies for debt relief under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative by reaching the decision point under the Initiative. The Republic of Haiti becomes the 30th country to reach its decision point under the Initiative.

Washington, D.C. - infoZine - The Government of the Republic of Haiti will receive interim debt relief from certain creditors, but in order to qualify for irrevocable debt relief at the completion point, Haiti will be implementing a broad set of reforms. In particular, Haiti has launched and is expected to implement an economic program supported by the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PGRF), prepare and implement a Poverty Reduction Strategy for at least one year, and implement key structural and social reforms, including in the areas of economic governance and debt management.

In addition to HIPC debt relief, the Republic of Haiti will be eligible for Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) assistance when it reaches the HIPC completion point. This will further increase the resources available to the Government in order to reduce poverty.

Mr. Takatoshi Kato, Deputy Managing Director of the IMF said: "Haiti has made good progress in strengthening macroeconomic performance and introducing key structural reforms. Together with the recent successful elections, the progress achieved so far provides an opportunity for a reversal of the trends of the past decades and sustained pro-poor growth. Haiti's external debt situation will remain difficult even after HIPC debt relief, and strong economic policies, prudent debt management, and continued donor support on highly concessional terms will be needed to ensure a sustainable external debt in the medium term."

Caroline Anstey, the World Bank Country Director for the Republic of Haiti, said: "The objective of debt relief is to free up resources to reduce poverty. The Haitian authorities have recently introduced important reforms in economic governance. Sustaining and building on those improvements will be needed to ensure that resources are used effectively, efficiently and transparently to improve the delivery of education, health and basic services for poor people. How donors can support Haiti in these areas will be central themes at the Haiti Donor's Conference to be held in Madrid, Spain on November 30."

Specifics of the Debt Relief Operation

Haiti's public and publicly guaranteed external debt was estimated at US\$1.3 billion in nominal terms as of end-September 2005, equivalent to US\$932.9 million in net present value (NPV) terms.

Debt relief under the enhanced HIPC Initiative will be approximately US\$140.3 million in NPV terms, equivalent to a 15.1 percent reduction of its debt after traditional debt relief mechanisms. Over time, this will reduce Haiti's debt service payments by about US\$212.9 million.

IDA's share of enhanced HIPC assistance to Haiti amounts to US\$52.8 million in NPV terms, including US\$33.1 million already provided through an arrears clearance operation undertaken in early 2005. Immediately following the approval of the decision point by the Boards of IDA and the IMF, IDA will begin to provide the remaining assistance (US\$19.7 million). The IMF will provide assistance of US\$3.1 million (equivalent to SDR 2.101 million) in NPV terms. Under the enhanced HIPC Initiative's burden sharing approach, other creditors of Haiti will provide the remainder of the Initiative's debt relief.

MDRI debt relief from IDA could amount to US\$243.3 million in NPV terms or approximately US\$464.4 million over time, assuming that Haiti reaches its completion point by end-September 2008. Haiti is not expected to have any eligible IMF debt for MDRI relief.

World Bank Note

Haiti is the poorest country in the Latin America and Caribbean region and amongst the poorest in the world. About 54 percent of Haiti's population lives below the US\$1 a day poverty line and 78 percent below US\$2 a day. After years of political deadlock following the disputed parliamentary elections of the year 2000 and a two-year period of political transition, presidential and parliamentary elections were held in February and April 2006, respectively. This provides an opportunity for Haiti to overcome the legacy of past decades.

The HIPC Initiative

In 1996, the World Bank and IMF launched the HIPC Initiative to create a framework in which all creditors, including multilateral creditors, can provide debt relief to the world's poorest and most heavily indebted countries, and thereby reduce the constraints on economic growth and poverty reduction imposed by the debt-service burdens in these countries. The Initiative was modified in 1999 to provide three key enhancements:

Deeper and Broader Relief. External debt thresholds were lowered from the original framework. As a result, more countries have become eligible for debt relief and some countries have become eligible for greater relief;

Faster Relief. A number of creditors began to provide interim debt relief immediately at the "decision point." Also, the new framework permitted countries to reach the "completion point" faster; and

Stronger Link Between Debt Relief and Poverty Reduction. Freed resources were to be used to support poverty reduction strategies developed by national governments through a broad consultative process.

To date, 30 HIPC countries have reached their decision points, of which 20 have reached completion point.

Special U.N. envoy to Haiti calls on EU to send more aid to impoverished country

The Associated Press

International Herald Tribune

November 28, 2006

http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2006/11/28/europe/EU_GEN_EU_UN_Haiti.php

BRUSSELS, Belgium: The special U.N. envoy to Haiti urged the European Union on Tuesday to send more aid to the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, saying it was key to make sure government reform would continue.

"The situation in Haiti right now is very difficult and very complicated," Edmond Mulet said. But "I can say confidently that we are on the right track."

Mulet was in Brussels to discuss the Caribbean country's situation with several European Parliament members before heading to Spain to take part in an international donors conference scheduled for Thursday.

Haiti, a country of 8 million, is struggling to recover from a bloody 2004 rebel uprising that toppled then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and pushed the country deeper into despair.

Today in Europe

Pope arrives on highly sensitive trip to Turkey

Azerbaijani answer to oil glut: Bathe in it

Croatia tries to shed light on Holocaust history

Recent unrest has come just weeks before municipal elections are scheduled to take place on Dec. 3. Earlier this month, around 100 university students in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, staged a protest calling for the removal of U.N. peacekeepers from the country and two Jordanian peacekeepers were killed.

Mulet said despite the recent unrest, much progress has been made toward stabilizing the country. He credited the Haitian government for its efforts to prevent corruption and establishing order, but said international aid was crucial in furthering the progress that has been made.

"Almost 60 percent of the Haitian budget comes from international donors," Mulet said. "The international community should get more involved in Haiti right now and try to support this enormous window of opportunity we have there."

Last week, European Development Commissioner Louis Michel visited Haiti to discuss the EU's pledge of €233 million (US \$293 million) in aid.

UN says Haiti donors should focus on civil service

28 Nov 2006

Reuters

By Sabina Zawadzki

BRUSSELS, Nov 28 (Reuters) - An international donors meeting for Haiti should focus on helping it build a civil service to deal with the problems it faces after retreating from the brink of civil war, a senior United Nations official said on Tuesday.

Haiti is recovering from decades of political violence topped by a 2004 ouster of then-leader Jean-Bertrand Aristide, but remains one of the world's poorest countries, plagued by brutal armed gangs, corruption and poor infrastructure. The donors conference, taking place in Madrid on Thursday, aims to pledge money for the mid- and long-term development of the Caribbean country. The U.N. says the majority of Haiti's state budget comes from international aid. Donors had already pledged \$750 million in July for Haiti's immediate economic needs, but without a functioning administration this money had been poorly absorbed, U.N. special envoy Edmond Mulet told reporters.

"They already received a lot of money, which is in the coffers of the government, but they don't have the administrative capacity, the civil servants to even spend that money," he told reporters.

"That is why ... one of the main requests of the Haitian government to the international community will be to help the government to help train and finance civil servants' jobs -- to create the administrative structures which don't exist anymore."

Countries including the United States and organisations such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, which are all due to attend, will discuss Haiti's request.

They will consider ideas such as creating a multilateral trust fund run by the World Bank to channel any money pledged.

Haiti said in July it needed \$7 billion to help revive its moribund economy through investment in roads, agriculture, tourism and institutional reform.

Mulet said Thursday's conference had no targets for a final sum.

Haitians gain young allies in legal battle
BY NOAH BIERMAN AND TRENTON DANIEL
Miami Herald
November 28, 2006

Here's a story that makes sense only in South Florida: An American law school clinic built with money seized from Cuba is suing the U.S. government on behalf of Haitian immigrants.

It's confusing, but the results could change the lives of hundreds of undocumented Haitians.

It begins in Haiti in 1991, when Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the elected leader, was ousted in a coup -- chaos and violence left thousands of Haitians scrambling for sanctuary.

Francoise Sicar, who lived in the northern town of Port-de-Paix, boarded a boat. Her father had been beaten to death years earlier, and her mother had died from heart disease. She was caught in the Bahamas, she said, and sent back to Haiti.

Several years later, Sicar made a second attempt. After about two weeks at sea in a packed boat, she and her two infant children reached shore along Palm Beach County. She remembers the date: Jan. 26, 1994.

"When you take a boat, you take a chance," said Sicar, now 38. "If I died, I didn't care. But God helped me -- he gave me life and saved my two kids."

Sicar was taken into custody at Krome Detention Center and released. In 1998, Congress passed a law called the Haitian Refugee Fairness Act that gave tens of thousands of Haitian refugees legal residence in the United States -- provided they met certain conditions.

Among those who benefited were Haitians given parole status -- a kind of immigration purgatory -- before 1996. But Sicar, and perhaps hundreds of others, were given "Orders of Release-on-Recognizance (ROR)." Lawyers who work for immigrants say ROR was a type of parole, but immigration judges disagree and ruled in 2003 and on appeal in 2004 against granting Sicar amnesty.

The Cuban end of the story picks up on Feb. 24, 1996. A Cuban-American pilot named Carlos Alberto Costa, 29, boarded a Cessna aircraft with Brothers to the Rescue, a group that conducted regular searches to aid rafters attempting to leave Cuba. He and three others on the mission were shot down by Cuban MiG fighter jets, and their bodies were never recovered.

A year later, Costa's family won part of a \$188 million judgment against the Cuban government and later settled for \$93 million. The Cuban government, considering the suit illegitimate, refused to pay, but the U.S. government used frozen Cuban assets to pay the families.

Costa's family donated \$500,000 in 2004 to help the new law school at Florida International University build an immigration clinic, where law students help recent arrivals navigate the system. The school was founded on a mission to educate lawyers from diverse backgrounds -- about half of the students come from immigrant families.

"We have some students send their families here," said Javier Arteaga, 23, a second-year law student who meets with clients at Krome regularly as part of his clinical hours.

"I'm an immigrant myself," said Joan "Tony" Montesano, 27, a third-year law student from Cuba. "I identify with the goal."

In October, the Costa Clinic students filed their most ambitious case yet, a class-action suit on behalf of Sicar and hundreds of others believed to be in her situation. Such complicated cases take hundreds of hours of research. Few private lawyers or nonprofit organizations can afford to take such cases.

"They basically made a life here," said third-year student Jordan Dollar, 24, about the clinic's Haitian clients. "They've been here for well over a decade now. They came here at a time when their government was having a bloody overthrow."

Dollar became acquainted with the plight of Haitians before he entered law school and began taking trips to Haiti with a Christian ministry that builds tilapia fish farms. Sicar lives in Hollywood, has three children and works as a line cook in a Boca Raton restaurant. Two of her children are also named in the suit. A third came later.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the U.S. attorney's office, which represents the government, both declined to comment on the suit, citing policies against discussing pending litigation.

"Had they filed the [asylum] application on time [by January 1996], they still should have been eligible for relief. So I'm not sure how that's the government's fault," said Rosemary Jenks, director of government relations with Numbers USA, a Washington legal organization that favors tighter controls on immigration.

The case came to FIU through clinic advisor Troy Elder, who previously worked for Catholic Charities Legal Services.

"They kept moving the bar on us to deny these people," said Randy McGrorty, executive director of Catholic Charities Legal Services. "We're only talking about hundreds of people, not thousands, but it's manifestly unfair because these people did go to court and they did file for asylum."

McGrorty said the nine attorneys in his office work like a MASH unit, serving 1,000 clients a month. The FIU students have drafted the complaint, identified potential plaintiffs and researched the history of the Haitian Relief Act, teaching themselves new areas of the law along the way.

"We could not do a federal lawsuit. We can take people through the administrative process, all the way through administrative appeals, but we cannot go to federal court," McGrorty said.

Elder said the case will probably take several years. A judge has yet to rule on whether to certify the suit as a class action. "I think we're going to have a big battle just staying in court," Elder said. "There was really no other way to help these people."

Making clothes could be an economic boost
Miami Herald Op Ed
November 28, 2006

OUR OPINION: APPROVE EXPANDED U.S. TRADE PREFERENCES FOR HAITI

When Congress reconvenes on Dec. 5 for the end of its lame-duck session, there will be little time to do more than the essential. Yet there is a chance to approve crucial trade preferences for Haiti -- and lawmakers should take it.

House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Bill Thomas, R-Calif., has been preparing a trade bill with the hope of passing it before the end of the year. Both he and incoming chairman, Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., are supporters of the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity Partnership Encouragement Act. This HOPE bill would grant duty-free access to U.S. markets for clothes made in Haiti with fabrics from third countries.

Such trade benefits could revive a Haitian apparel-assembly industry that is in danger of disappearing. Although it once employed more than 100,000 people, the industry now supports only 20,700 jobs. Yet making clothes remains key in an economy where more than two-thirds of the work force lacks a formal job.

President René Préval and other Haitian leaders say that the HOPE Act could help jump start Haiti's moribund economy by creating employment for tens of thousands of workers. Just keeping factories open would be a boon for a country with a devastated infrastructure and beset by violence, high financing costs and global competition.

Ultimately, any economic improvement that keeps Haitians from trying to migrate illegally to U.S. shores is in the best interest of our country. Unfortunately, for four years the U.S. textile industry has beaten back trade benefits that might have prevented the loss of Haiti's apparel-factory jobs.

The U.S. House should pass the HOPE bill, which would be reconciled with the HERO bill (S. 2261) that already has been approved by the Senate. Promoted by Rep. Kendrick B. Meek, D-Miami, the HERO bill's better trade benefits should be favored by Congress to boost Haiti's fledging democracy.

On the street
By Tim Collie
Sun-Sentinel
November 26, 2006

Life out here is tough: Surviving means begging, violence is rampant, and children make easy targets for gangs — and each other. As a generation of AIDS orphans comes of age throughout the Caribbean, the situation, already grave, likely will only worsen.

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- In major Caribbean cities, thousands of children live on the streets, sleeping in parks, crypts and crumbling movie theater doorways. Over the past five years, their numbers have soared.

The children, without education, medical care or even shoes, become harder and harder to reach. In Haiti, they are easy recruits for the kidnap, drug and political gangs that plague Port-au-Prince. Kingston, Santo Domingo, Port of Spain -- the capitals of Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and Trinidad, respectively -- all cope with the same problems.

The growing number of street children is due in part to AIDS orphans coming of age. And the trend will likely continue. Women of childbearing age now comprise the population with the highest new infection rate.

Their children can easily slip into the downward spiral that starts when parents, and the nurturing they provide, disappear. Roughly 75 percent of children born to infected mothers are HIV free. National health outreach groups struggle to find ways to identify and treat the others.

Today, street kids are more violent, more prone to crime, according to experts who have tracked the trend over the years. They often carry weapons like razors, known here as gillettes, and sniff cobbler's glue, called ciment, which staves off hunger and puts them, as the children themselves say, in a "zombie-like" state.

Among the street children are these boys, who go to Centre d'Action Pour le Development for meals. International agencies and the Haitian government pay the center to feed 500 street children, as well as to house and educate 70 others.

Fritz Junior, 15:

"My mother is in the Dominican Republic. ...

My father died of AIDS. My uncle was the one who told me.

His hair was straight and fine, and he had a lot of sores all over his body.

He would talk to me about it, but then one day he just laid in bed and died.

My uncle is now in New York. So now I live in the street. ...

I wash cars, clean windows and make dice to sell out of dog bones.

Sometimes I get sick, a fever, a headache.

And sometimes I have cramps when it's too cold in the street.

They abuse me, the older kids, the men.

They burn you with matches when you sleep,

melt plastic containers and pour them on you while you're sleeping.

Sometimes they put matches in each of your toes while you're sleeping.

And if you shake your leg, your clothes may catch on fire.

The bigger kids, they pour pepper in your eyes or take a stick and beat you.

Sometimes they pour cold water on you.

After they do that to me, I do the same to them. ...

I know kids who rape other kids.

But it hasn't happened to me.

There's this one American here, he used to run a home.

And he does try to have sex with the kids. He pays them.

I used to live at his orphanage. ...

But I had already left the orphanage because I saw he was bathing the young children and raping them.

He'd take them, bathe them, rape them and then give them money.

That's the way it was. ...

If my father was alive, I wouldn't be in the street

I remember when my father was alive.

He'd feed us and send us to school.

Jerry, 12, whose last name is not being published because he is a rape victim:

"I was living with my stepmother.

She beat me if I didn't do the dishes.

I refused to wash dishes because I'm not a girl.

I ran away in September. I forget the year.

When I ran away, I took 250 gourds [about \$6]. And when I got in the street, friends asked me for the money, so I gave them some.

When I first got in the street, I got beaten up a lot.

I'd eat, people would beat me for food.

When I bought sandals, other kids beat me for the shoes.

When I was with my mother, I'd bathe every day.

I'd eat three times a day. ...

There was a white guy [and a friend]. ... They went to a hotel with me.

And they told me they'd give me \$200 [for performing oral sex].

I ran away.

But they chased me, caught me and had me do it.

It was in the 'Hotel One Dollar' in Petionville.

And after they finished with me, they didn't give me the money.

This happened on Dec. 24th.

They found me and told me they were going to feed me.

I never saw these white guys again."

Akim Jean Francois, 13:

"I didn't know when my mom died. I was living with relatives, my stepmother, and they were mistreating me. ... I decided to go to the street.

I never went to school.

When I'm in the street, they burn me. They cut me with blades. They dropped cinder blocks on my face here

There's a lot of AIDS on the street.

All I know about it is what they say, that if you have sex with someone without a condom, you can get AIDS.

You start throwing up, you get a fever, and you get real thin."

Emmanuel Petit-Homme, 13:

"I was in a center for a while, a center for street children, but they kicked me out in December. ...

The police are really rough on us. ... One time, a policeman shot two kids just for sleeping in the wrong place.

There's a lot of sex. We're paid for sex, the older kids, they ... always want to have sex with us.

There's this old woman. ...

She'll have sex with us for 10 gourds [about 25 cents]. ...

When I see other people [with AIDS symptoms], other kids, and they offer me food, I don't take it. I know you can get AIDS from sharing the same food, the same drinks with people."

An unsavory effort to discredit Haiti report

By Tim Pelzer

Political Affairs Magazine

A London-based Haiti solidarity group with ties to shadowy U.S./Canadian-backed non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that participated in the campaign to destabilize the former center-left Haitian government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide is behind efforts to discredit a new report from the prestigious British medical journal *The Lancet*.

The *Lancet* study, "Human rights abuse and other criminal violations in Port-au-Prince: a random survey of households," written by Wayne University school of social work researchers Athena Kolbe and Royce Hutson, was released in September.

It reveals that 8,000 people were murdered and 35,000 women raped in Port-au-Prince between Feb. 29, 2004, and December 2005, the period immediately after the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Security forces belonging to the U.S./Canadian/French imposed interim government as well as anti-Lavalas gangs carried out a large share of these atrocities.

Media coverage of the *Lancet* study began casting doubt on the validity of the report. Charles Arthur of the London-based Haiti Support Group was widely cited as claiming that the *Lancet* report is seriously marred by bias because co-author Athena Kolbe had worked in an orphanage set up by Aristide. She also worked as a journalist under the name Lyn Duff, writing favorably of Aristide.

Arthur maintains that Aristide supporters also raped and murdered innocent people and that this is not reflected in the *Lancet* report. "I am concerned *The Lancet* has unwittingly been used as part of the pro-Aristide propaganda campaign," he told the Toronto-based *Globe and Mail*.

According to sources who have requested anonymity, Arthur has been pressuring the *Lancet* to re-evaluate the study, claiming that Kolbe used fabricated data. Other U.S.- and Canadian-funded NGOs have also complained to the *Lancet*. After weeks of pressure, *Lancet* editor Richard Horton asked Wayne University to investigate whether a conflict of interest colored Kolbe's reporting.

Arthur's criticisms of the *Lancet* report, as well as his motivations, must be viewed with suspicion. All other major human rights studies on the period on Haiti, from Harvard and the University of Miami to the U.S. National Lawyers Guild, support the *Lancet* study's findings that Aristide supporters were overwhelming the victims rather than the perpetrators of human rights violations.

When I asked Arthur about this via e-mail, he responded, "I am not sure that the reports that you mention are entirely reliable (apart from Amnesty) as they appear to see the undoubted violations committed by agents of the interim government, former soldiers, right-wing gangs and the Minustah (UN Stabilization Forces) but not the abuses committed by FL [Fanmi Lavalas Party] supporters." Instead he sent me extracts of Amnesty International (AI) reports (October 8, 2004; July 28, 2005) that make unsupported claims that gangs loyal to Aristide had killed many people. Well after the coup against Aristide, human rights activists in Haiti criticized Amnesty for not investigating and speaking out against the repression carried out by the interim government and its allies.

According to Marguerite Laurent of the New York-based Haitian Lawyers Leadership Network, the organizations that Arthur promotes, such as the Organization of People in Struggle (OPL), Platform to Advocate for Alternative Development (PAPDA), Haitian Women's Solidarity Organization (SOFA) and Kayfanm "stood silent during the horrific killings and illegal arrests of Lavalas supporters and rapes of Haitian women and men after the 2004 coup d'etat."

"Arthur was losing his credibility," she said. "This attack [against Kolbe] puts his name back in the circle." The groups that Arthur supports played a role in the U.S./Canadian/French-led effort to destabilize and undermine the elected Aristide government. OPL, PAPDA, SOFA and Kayfanm receive funding from either the U.S. government-backed National Endowment for Democracy, International Republican Institute, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) or the Canadian government-backed Canadian International Development Agency.

After U.S. Marines seized Aristide on Feb. 29, 2004, and flew him to the Central African Republic, the interim government recruited heavily from the U.S./Canadian-financed anti-Aristide opposition movement. This included groups that Arthur supports. For instance, PAPDA leader Yves Andre Wainwright became environment minister.

Furthermore, the British-based organization Christian Aid provides funding to Arthur's Haiti Support Group. Christian Aid receives money from the U.S. government through grants from USAID.

Witnesses in London have also accused Arthur of distributing the telephone numbers and home address of Kolbe, which resulted in numerous death threats and two bomb scares that are under investigation by US and British authorities.

Arthur's efforts to undermine the Lancet report deserves to be firmly rejected.

--Tim Pelzer is a freelance writer whose articles appear in numerous publications.

Help for Haiti
A time for trade, not troops
Washington Post Op-Ed
Monday, November 27, 2006

WHEN IT COMES to Haiti, the hemisphere's poorest country, the United States has a perverse history of being more generous with its troop deployments than its terms of trade. The time is ripe for a new approach.

For the past two years, Congress has turned a deaf ear to pleas that Washington extend trade preferences to Haitian-manufactured T-shirts, hospital scrubs and other apparel. The effect has been devastating for the nation's garment industry, once one of the few bright spots in an otherwise supine economy. Clothing assembly plants, already hit hard by the political violence of recent years, are closing nearly every month as customers move their business to Asia. A sector that once provided 100,000 jobs now employs only 12,000 to 20,000 and stands in peril of disappearing entirely.

**The Clashes in Cité Soleil
The UN Fails Haiti, Again
By KIM IVES
Couterpunch.org
November 24, 2006**

On Friday, November 18, 1803, the decisive battle of the Haitian revolution was fought at Vertières, just outside the northern city of Cap François. There, General Jean-Jacques Dessalines led the revolutionary army of former slaves to rout Napoleon's crack French colonial legions.

Two hundred and three years later, Haitians are again trying to drive out foreign occupation troops, today mostly drawn from an assortment of neo-colonies fighting under the United Nations' flag.

On Friday, November 17, 2006, a major and symbolic confrontation of this struggle unfolded in the dusty, bullet-riddled slum of Cité Soleil, Port-au-Prince's largest.

A demonstration commemorating the Battle of Vertières was planned for 10 a.m. by Cité Soleil residents. But, beginning in the early morning hours, troops of the U.N. Mission to Stabilize Haiti or MINUSTAH surrounded the slum, peppering it with gunfire to intimidate the demonstrators.

"I arrived at the Cité Soleil market in a Haïti Progrès vehicle--clearly marked as press--with three colleagues at about 10 a.m.," explained Berthony Dupont who wrote a moving eye-witness account of the attack in this week's edition of the newspaper, Haïti Progrès. "Immediately, we heard bursts of automatic gunfire, and several U.N. armored vehicles pulled in front of our car, shooting wildly into houses and alleys of the slum. The residents responded with rocks and small-arms fire. The scene reminded me of the televised reports I have seen from the war in Iraq, or even more so, of Israeli attacks on the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank."

The U.N. tanks crashed through a marketplace, destroying small merchants' stalls, Dupont said. He saw a bleeding, wounded market woman whom a UN soldier had shot in the back. Residents told the journalists that the UN troops had shot and killed a child in the Bois-Neuf neighborhood several blocks away.

"I found tears of anger and shame streaming down my face as I impotently watched this scene unfold," Dupont said. "I understood then and there that the people of Cité Soleil are in a state of war with the MINUSTAH and cannot under any circumstances lay down their weapons as the government and UN are asking. That would be suicide."

Despite the machine-gunfire coming from the U.N. tanks, the journalists managed to weave their way into Cité Soleil and interview some of the residents. "I've already lost a sister and a brother to the MINUSTAH's bullets," a man in his twenties explained. "That's why I want the MINUSTAH to leave Haiti immediately."

Some 6,700 U.N. troops and 1,600 U.N. police are deployed throughout Haiti under a Security Council mandate that lasts until February 15, 2007. In June 2004, the MINUSTAH replaced the U.S., French

and Canadian troops which invaded and occupied Haiti after U.S. Special Forces soldiers kidnaped President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from his home on February 29, 2004 and flew him into exile.

President René Prével's government has invited the MINUSTAH to stay in Haiti indefinitely, claiming the 5,300-member Haitian police force cannot maintain order in Haiti. The U.S. Embassy is also pushing for a long-term occupation, portraying Haiti as a state "at risk" of failure. But many Haitians, particularly those in Cité Soleil, respond that the MINUSTAH only creates instability and enforces injustice.

"We spent two years fighting against the de facto government of [Prime Minister Gérard] Latortue and [President Alexandre] Boniface," said a thin man in his thirties. "Now we have elected someone [Prével] to power, but we are ashamed of his conduct."

The MINUSTAH's base in Cité Soleil is a three-story cinder block building whose doors and windows are completely filled with sandbags. Soldiers dash from the hatches of UN tanks to the safety of the base as if they are under attack rather than attacking.

The base dominates Cité Soleil's principal market place, which has been cleared of all commerce. It was renovated only three years ago by President Aristide. One of the residents' principal demands is return of the marketplace to the small merchants, who are now forced to hawk amid the dust, garbage and exhaust fumes of the slum's roadsides.

By around noon, skirmishing had died down enough that word went out for the demonstration to start. Rara bands from three different neighborhoods began playing and marching simultaneously. One passed in front of the MINUSTAH base. Then all three converged with over 1000 demonstrators to march through the streets of the cordoned-off slum.

"Today, on the eve of the anniversary of Vertières, we remember the example of our ancestors who struggled for independence," said Jean-Paul (whose last name is withheld for security reasons), a young popular organization leader in Cité Soleil. "We want to demand our rights, express our discontent with how the foreigners are abusing us. They kill old people and children. They destroy homes, schools, hospitals and churches. They destroy everything. We are demanding that they return our territory to us."

During the interview, automatic weapon fire from the five U.N. tanks in the near-by intersection continued to crackle.

"We are ready to die," Jean-Paul continued. "We call on Jean-Jacques Dessalines to rise, Capois Lamort to rise, Toussaint Louverture to rise from wherever they are to return to Haiti and help us continue this fight so that Haiti can emerge from this situation. We are supposedly independent, but we are not free! We are not independent! Can we Haitians allow the foreigners to bury us? Never! Never!"

As demonstrators poured into the streets for the demonstration, they carried portraits of Aristide, still exiled in South Africa, and chanted slogans: "No matter what, MINUSTAH must leave!"

Other portraits seen on walls around Cité Soleil are of Emmanuel "Dred" Wilmer, a local popular leader killed along with dozens of other slum residents in a murderous MINUSTAH raid on July 6, 2005, and of Che Guevara.

Residents said that people from other rebellious shanty towns like Belair were now moving to Cité Soleil where they feel there is enough organization and will to fight the occupation. In this way, Cité Soleil has become liberated territory, the crucible for resistance in Haiti.

And the movement is spreading. On Saturday, November 18, a few hundred students marched in downtown Port-au-Prince, also calling for an end to the U.N. occupation. Many students, infiltrated and influenced by Haiti's bourgeoisie, remain hostile to Aristide and oblivious that their 2004 demonstrations provided a pretext for Haiti's most recent occupation. Nonetheless, as Haiti's latest occupation approaches the end of its third year, it is engendering frustration and humiliation even among pro-coup sectors.

"We should go find Dessalines' bones then grind them up and sprinkle them on us to give us strength to struggle against these scoundrels," Jean-Paul said. "We can't continue like this."

Kim Ives, until recently a writer and editor at *Haiti Progrès*, is now an independent investigative reporter and documentary filmmaker with a focus on Haiti.

Orphans of AIDS
South Florida Sun-Sentinel Editorial Board
November 26 2006

The AIDS epidemic wreaks havoc on Haiti's most vulnerable -- the young.

Haiti seems far from our shores and consciences, but its ills, as well as those of other nations in the hemisphere, are bound to impact South Florida. One of the greatest tests before the Caribbean basin, and our own community, is the ongoing scourge of AIDS.

Eight million people live in Haiti; half of them are under age 14 and too many of these youngsters are without parents. Due to poverty, disease and violence, 15 percent of Haiti's children are orphans, the highest percentage in the hemisphere and one of the highest in the world. The AIDS virus is a key factor. An estimated 250,000 Haitian youngsters have lost one or both parents to AIDS.

Haiti is at a crossroads, as the South Florida Sun-Sentinel eloquently and dramatically documents in the Aids Orphans series that starts today. Its salvation, of course, will depend upon the resolve of its people. However, engagement from the developed world is crucial, especially from the United States, if our neighboring, fledgling democracy stands any chance at survival and stability.

Unfortunately, Haiti, and its neighbor the Dominican Republic, remains the poster child for a part of the world that has been ravaged by AIDS. The Caribbean region is the second most affected by AIDS, after sub-Saharan Africa, and roughly 80 percent of the HIV cases in the Caribbean can be found on Hispaniola.

While there has been progress in battling the epidemic, the trends for the region remain worrisome.

Imagine a region without its brightest professionals, its best thinkers or its most gifted artists. Think of nations void of able workers, specifically the managers, maids, waiters, bartenders and help-staff that are vital to the Caribbean's economic engine -- tourism.

The potential for continued instability is great, and should be unacceptable so close to our shores.

The AIDS Orphans four-part series describes the epidemic's cruel impact through the eyes of the island nation's most vulnerable group -- Haiti's children. The series is the culmination of a five-year effort by the South Florida Sun-Sentinel to examine the AIDS crisis in South Florida and the Caribbean.

The Kaiser Foundation, a recognized clearinghouse of AIDS research, trends and information, awarded Sun-Sentinel writer Tim Collie and staff photographer Mike Stocker a Kaiser Media Mini-Fellowship in Health to support the project's research.

This installment is poignant. It's not easy reading the stories or viewing the photos of the troubled youngsters who have been ostracized and shunned by society simply because their parents suffered from a devastating disease.

Fitz Junior is a 15-year-old who lives on the streets of Port-au-Prince. By day, he washes cars and makes dice out of dog bones. At night, he says it's worse: "They abuse me, the older kids, the men. They burn you with matches when you sleep, melt plastic containers and pour them on you while you're sleeping."

Still there is hope, thanks largely to a few special good Samaritans and some inspirational kids. Roodine Dieujuste is an 11-year-old who lived on the streets of Lachapelle, Haiti. After sitting in the streets alone for weeks, she caught the eye of a missionary's wife, who took her home and started an orphanage.

There is some good news, some positive developments, in Haiti. For starters, Haitians living with the AIDS virus can now obtain the new generation of medicines to treat the disease. President René Préval and his government are making strides and the nation's economy is showing signs of life. More importantly, the number of AIDS cases has plateaued, giving health officials signs of hope.

Haiti, however, can't do it alone. A renewed effort based on individual giving would help immensely. So will existing initiatives to spur economic development and provide AIDS relief. Having the U.S. Congress approve the so-called Hero Act to bolster manufacturing employment on the island, and granting temporary protected status to thousands of hard-working Haitians in the United States would also help.

The Caribbean can be a model in the battle against AIDS; the opportunity to accomplish that is now.

BOTTOM LINE: Renewed engagement can turn the tide against AIDS in the Caribbean.

Bringing Order And Justice To Haiti
The Bahama Journal
November 24, 2006

We are told that Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, Cynthia Pratt and the Commissioner of Police, Paul Farquharson recently visited Haiti where they met with the Haitian president, Rene Preval, and the Commissioner of Police in Haiti. Their purpose was to set up an exchange programme for police officers in an attempt to assist the Haitian government with strengthening its security forces.

As the Minister of National Security, the Hon. Cynthia Pratt explains, "It was agreed that the police officers will come to The Bahamas for training come January of next year. We will begin with 4 police officers who will be enrolled at the Police College."

This initiative comes at a time when Haiti needs all the help it can get.

We are told of horrific instances where desperate Haitian villagers have resorted to lynching as an antidote to a crime wave of vigilante killings in one Haitian village after the other.

This comes against a security backdrop in Haiti that is comprised of a small and ineffective police force, dysfunctional justice system and decades of political and economic upheavals.

Take for example, the fact that there are roughly some 4000 police officers in Haiti who are faced with the responsibility of maintaining order in a nation of 8 million people.

Compounding the matter is the fact that there is widespread agreement that the Haitian police are under-equipped, poorly trained and often corrupt.

Those who are not so characterized are clearly mired in a mission impossible.

This explains why so very many Haitians are today quite literally taking the law into their own hands. One pathetic instance of this has been reported by Jacqueline Charles. The story is datelined as coming from a town named Pliche, Haiti- "The peasants bound the wrists of the neighbor they suspected of two murders in this remote mountain village, and herded him to the side of a deserted dirt road...

The reporter goes on to note:" As the man wept, they grilled him about his alleged crimes. Then they handed him a shovel, forced him to dig his own grave and hacked him to death with machetes and picks."

"It was a lot of blows," recalled Renold Cherestant, 34, a Pliche resident and radio reporter who witnessed the lynching, one of two in this region in late July of this year.

There is –however- some good news.

We are told that Haitian police have entered previously no-go parts of Cite Soleil, the capital's main slum and stronghold of gangs well armed from the spoils of Haiti's political upheavals.

The perennial question, "What is to be done?" echoes and resonates.

In truth, desperate situations in desperate times –quite evidently- sometimes call for desperate solutions. Today it is absolutely and unequivocally clear that the Haitian people are in a mess. Try as they might to get themselves on the road to national development, truth is that they are failing.

Information reaching us suggests that –despite the odds stacked against him and his government- Rene Garcia Preval is making some progress, albeit at a snail's pace.

One shred of good news has to do with information reaching us to the effect that The Bahamas Government has agreed to help the Haitians with the training of a small number of their police officers.

This is a most welcomed development.

And for sure, we are agreed with the Hon. Cynthia Pratt when she says that: "We believe that if there is a safe Haiti there would be a safe Bahamas. We believe that if we are able to assist them in training they would be better able to police their country, whereby giving us an opportunity to curtail some of the problems we are faced with from Haitian-Bahamians who have come out of that country," said Mrs. Pratt.

As the Minister of National Security further explained, "The police are really concerned about the criminal element emanating out of Haiti coming to The Bahamas. We have agreed that this would be the way forward. We have decided to reach out to assist Haiti with the training of their police officers. And the Haitian government is very excited about this idea."

While we are in agreement with the Minister of National Security, there is a quibble with one element in an otherwise innocuous statement. This has to do with her reference to "Haitian-Bahamians who have come out of that country."

To our knowledge, the so-called 'Haitian-Bahamian' is a Bahamian construct – a person born and bred in The Bahamas to Haitian émigrés and refugees living in The Bahamas.

But that quibble aside, we are in full and absolute agreement with the initiative. It should be strengthened and expanded.

29,000 candidates on Haiti's ballot
Haiti is preparing to hold its long-overdue local elections.
BY JACQUELINE CHARLES
Miami Herald
November 25, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE - If you thought the 2000 Florida presidential election was mind-boggling, imagine this: 29,000 candidates jockeying for 1,420 provincial and municipal positions.

That's the enormous challenge facing Haiti's electoral officials as they prepare to finally hold long-delayed local elections on Dec. 3.

The elections are yet another critical step in putting Haiti's tenuous democracy back on course following the elections earlier this year of President René Préval and the country's first functioning parliament in nearly a decade.

"We've already elected a president and parliament. Now we have to replace the mayors and other local representatives who are not legitimate," said Micha Gaillard, a spokesman for the Fusion Social Democratic Party. In the wake of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's ouster from office in 2004, mayors were appointed by the U.S.-backed interim government.

But many questions remain about the upcoming vote, ranging from concerns about Haiti's ability to pull off a successful ballot to possible violence and doubts on whether the country can continue to afford so many elections.

The elections, whose \$14 million cost is being financed by foreign donors, marks the third time this year that Haitians will head to the polls -- presidential and legislative elections in February and a legislative runoff in April.

WINNER TAKE ALL

The Dec. 3 balloting -- which also includes elections for 14 still undecided national legislative seats -- is winner take all. But to avoid some of the other problems that plagued the February elections, the country's Provisional Electoral Council, known as CEP, is taking several steps. Among them:

- Relocating 30,000 of the 3.5 million registered voters in hopes of avoiding a repeat of chaotic scenes of voters wandering aimlessly in search of their voting spot.

"We feel fairly confident that most people are going to find their names in the . . . list that shows the picture, the names of each voter per voting station," said Jacques Bernard, director general of the CEP.

- Adding 32 new voting centers, bringing the total to 834 encompassing 9,228 polling stations, to lessen complaints by voters that they have to walk too far to vote.

- Keeping a close eye on the security situation. Though the 9,000-strong U.N. peacekeeping mission here has tightened security in the capital, sporadic violence continues to dog densely populated slums.

"There may be areas, a few little areas, where we may not be able to conduct elections," said Bernard, noting that if violence breaks out, the vote will be canceled and rescheduled in those communities only. "We are following the situation and will not make the decision until the day before."

Albert Ramdin, assistant secretary general of the Organization of American States, said that while the security issue remains challenging, he's optimistic it will not "disturb the process."

HIGH HOPES

"The government of Haiti is ready, the electoral commission is ready, and I hope the same atmosphere, which we saw during the presidential elections, we will see again: massive turnout, high degree of discipline and orderly conduct," he told The Miami Herald after a recent visit here.

Edmond Mulet, overall head of the U.N.-mission here, said although the U.N. is less involved in the local balloting preparation than it was in the presidential elections, it stands "ready to provide" security and logistical support.

It's anyone's guess how many voters will actually cast ballots for mayors, vice mayors, town delegates and council seats. Haitians have always put more emphasis on presidential races and this year is no exception, as evidenced by the absence of campaign posters from city streets.

"The candidates are tired with the campaign," Gaillard said, adding they also are broke after two years of campaigning for elections initially set for Oct. 9, 2005.

Still, it doesn't mean the vote is any less important in a country where the majority live in rural communities.

"When you elect these local governments, it allows the country to decentralize power. You don't want a system where the powers are centralized in the capital," said Lesley Richards, a program officer for the Washington-based International Foundation for Election Systems.

Haiti on the mend?

Nov 20th 2006

From the Economist Intelligence Unit

http://www.economist.com/agenda/displaystory.cfm?story_id=8195170

The country is hardly stable, but the president is popular

Despite an overall improvement in security, violent incidents in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, continue to highlight the still-fragile nature of the stability that has largely prevailed since the February 2006 elections. However, the new president, René Prével, who won 51% of the vote in the elections, and his Lespwa (Hope) party enjoy strong support from the foreign governments and multilateral agencies engaged in the country. They also benefit from the goodwill, at least for the time being, of the majority of Haitians.

The small but powerful and wealthy elite remains suspicious of the threat that it believes Mr Prével's government poses to its interests, but the desire for progress on reconciliation and national dialogue, which was one of the most conspicuous failures of the March 2004-May 2006 interim government, is likely to see the majority of the political players willing to co-operate to some degree.

Perhaps the greatest threat to Mr Prével's presidency will present itself not in the form of opposition from the country's elite or the risk of political deadlock, but from the risk that slow movement on improving the living conditions of ordinary Haitians might translate into a sense of disillusionment and a sharp drop in public support for his administration. Efforts would be complicated if this led to increasing demands by supporters of the Fanmi Lavalas (FL, the party of the former president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, ousted in early 2004), many of whom voted for Mr Prével, for the return of the former president from exile. Steps that Mr Prével has already taken to foster support and promote a sense of inclusive government are positive signs.

Hoping to avoid deadlock

Given Lespwa's lack of a majority in the legislature (it has one-fifth of the seats in the House of Deputies and one-third in the Senate), the government will have to forge parliamentary alliances to advance its policy agenda and avoid the political stalemate that beset Mr Prével during much of his previous term as prime minister in 1996-2001. Mr Prével's consciousness of the need to foster a sense of co-operation among other parties is illustrated by the inclusion in his cabinet of representatives of six different parties. The passage, on time, of the budget for fiscal year 2006/07 (October-September), and the government's willingness to incorporate amendments to it by both the House of Assembly and the Senate provide further positive signs of the willingness of the parliament and the executive to work together.

To consolidate improvements in the security situation made since the start of 2006, rapid movement will also be needed in increasing economic opportunity for marginalised groups, disarmament, and the reform and strengthening of the Police Nationale d'Haïti (PNH, the national police force). Strengthening the rule of law will also be a prerequisite for the government's strategy of attracting private investment to foster economic growth, as will reform of the judicial and penal systems to combat corruption and public mistrust of these institutions.

International goodwill is key

Mr Préval has used the period since his election to bolster international support through a series of official foreign visits. He will need to call on the goodwill of the international community to provide backing for the implementation of rapid impact projects that will improve social infrastructure, as well as providing employment.

The support of the governments of the US, France and Canada, Haiti's main trade partners and aid donors, as well as that of multilateral agencies such as the IMF, the UN and the World Bank, will be needed to ensure the continuation of both multilateral and bilateral aid flows in 2007-08. Both Mr Préval and the international players most engaged in Haiti, especially the US, will be keen to avoid the destabilising effect that the possible return of Mr Aristide from exile in South Africa would pose, at least in the short term. The mandate of the Mission des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en Haïti (Minustah, the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti) will face little opposition within the UN Security Council to the extension of its mandate for a further six months before it expires on February 15th 2007.

Assuming the improvements made since the start of 2006 in stabilising the security situation can be consolidated, Minustah's role is likely to be broadened from one principally of peacekeeping to one of offering developmental assistance and training, as well as giving advice and help on reforming the police and the judicial and penal systems. However, the extent to which Minustah is able to change its role will depend on the level of financing made available to enable the mission to implement infrastructure projects in Haiti. A UN presence in the country to help provide security is likely to be necessary for several years.

Haiti qualifies for debt relief, says World Bank
Caribbean Net News
Thursday, November 23, 2006

WASHINGTON, USA: The World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have determined that Haiti qualifies for debt relief under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative by reaching the decision point under the Initiative. Haiti becomes the 30th country to reach its decision point under the Initiative.

Haiti will receive interim debt relief from certain creditors, but in order to qualify for irrevocable debt relief at the completion point, Haiti will be implementing a broad set of reforms. In particular, Haiti has launched and is expected to implement an economic program supported by the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PGRF), prepare and implement a Poverty Reduction Strategy for at least one year, and implement key structural and social reforms, including in the areas of economic governance and debt management.

In addition to HIPC debt relief, the Republic of Haiti will be eligible for Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) assistance when it reaches the HIPC completion point. This will further increase the resources available to the Government in order to reduce poverty.

Takatoshi Kato, Deputy Managing Director of the IMF, said: "Haiti has made good progress in strengthening macroeconomic performance and introducing key structural reforms. Together with the recent successful elections, the progress achieved so far provides an opportunity for a reversal of the trends of the past decades and sustained pro-poor growth. Haiti's external debt situation will remain difficult even after HIPC debt relief, and strong economic policies, prudent debt management, and continued donor support on highly concessional terms will be needed to ensure a sustainable external debt in the medium term."

Caroline Anstey, the World Bank Country Director for the Republic of Haiti, said: "The objective of debt relief is to free up resources to reduce poverty. The Haitian authorities have recently introduced important reforms in economic governance. Sustaining and building on those improvements will be needed to ensure that resources are used effectively, efficiently and transparently to improve the delivery of education, health and basic services for poor people. How donors can support Haiti in these areas will be central themes at the Haiti Donor's Conference to be held in Madrid, Spain on November 30."

Haiti chosen as a European Commission experimental development partner
Wednesday, November 22, 2006
by Vario Sérant
Caribbean Net News Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: The European Commission (EC) has chosen Haiti as an experimental partner to undertake common development programming.

European development official, Louis Michel, made the announcement Sunday at the end of a 24-hour visit to Port-au-Prince. Two meetings are to be held on this proposal on November 20 and 21 "between the Haitian government and the European Commission and all the donors in order to share out the job better, increase our means and be more effective", added Michel.

"The country which one wants to make an experimental country in terms of development is Haiti," asserted Michel, stressing that "in fact, Haiti is the only country that has been selected for that."

The European Commission intends to allocate 233 million euros to Haiti for the five next years within the framework of the European Development Fund (EDF). At the request of the Haitian government, these funds will be invested in the infrastructure sector.

"President Rene Préval shared with me his willingness to continue equipping the country with infrastructure," indicated Michel.

In addition, Michel promised to do the best he could to plead, not only at the level of the European Union (EU), but also at the World Bank level, to find additional means to reinforce education, in particular, schooling in Haiti.

Michel raised the possibility of allocating to Haiti an additional amount of 60 million euros as a bonus for good management, to encourage the reinforcement of public institutions and good management of public finance.

Otherwise, Michel renewed the interest of the European Commission in the municipal and local elections set for December 3. The European Union granted 4 million euros for the upcoming poll, a third of the total financing for these elections.

The decentralisation issue was raised by President Préval during talks with Michel. "It is not only the Haitian capital that has to be developed. The country's regions have to be developed also. The Head (of State) is very concerned about that," said Michel.

Michel declared that the European Commission will help the Haitian government to organise a forum on decentralisation in February or March 2007. "President Préval wishes to mobilise on this occasion the members of Parliament, civil society, the private business sector, the workers, the religious world, and so forth," he announced, asserting "that was part of President Préval's strategy of social appeasement and reinforcement of the country and citizens."

"A series of basic services can be better offered to the population when it is close to the population. The local level, even departmental, is important," concluded Michel.

Along with President Rene Préval, the Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis and other members of the Haitian government, Louis Michel also held discussions, during his short visit to Haiti, with the civil chief of the Mission of Stabilisation of the United Nations in Haiti (MINUSTAH), Edmond Mulet.

OAS Assistant Secretary General visits Haiti
Caribbean Net News
Wednesday, November 22, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: The Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Albert Ramdin, on a working visit to Haiti, reiterated the hemispheric organization's support for the country's electoral process. He also met with the authorities to discuss future cooperation.

Ramdin on Monday led an OAS high-level task force on Haiti that was recently established by Secretary General José Miguel Insulza to coordinate OAS activities in Haiti, in keeping with the priorities of the Haitian government.

The task force will share its findings during a Madrid conference on Haiti that brings together donors and other international partners November 29 and 30. The conclusions will also serve as guidelines for the Organization's long-term engagement in Haiti.

The OAS Assistant Secretary General met with President René Préval, Prime Minister Édouard Alexis and Foreign Affairs Minister Régnal Clérisme, as well as Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Jean Max Bellerive. He also met with staff of the OAS Special Mission during the visit, to refocus their efforts on future projects.

Besides providing technical support to the Provisional Electoral Council for the municipal and local elections on December 3, the OAS Special Mission will focus on projects in three main areas: good governance and the strengthening of democracy; security; and development. A flagship project in the area of governance involves setting up a civil registry to accord all Haitian citizens 18 or older legal and official recognition with a national identification card. The Special Mission will also provide support for the modernization of an election agency that will fall under the purview of a Permanent Electoral Council. It will also continue working on justice system reform and capacity-building for local organizations that promote and protect human rights.

Since its establishment, the Special Mission has been especially active on security matters, and the OAS will intensify its efforts to combat human trafficking as well as illegal drugs and arms trafficking.

The OAS expects to embark on new development-related projects, especially in tourism, agro-tourism, reforestation, trade revitalization and, more generally, in areas that can boost sustainable development in Haiti.

In this regard, the Assistant Secretary General announced plans for stepped-up coordination between the OAS and major inter-American agencies such as the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). Ramdin touched as well on plans to reactivate the group of countries known as Friends of Haiti, which will meet in discussion forums in Haiti and Washington.

Noting they had demonstrated great political maturity during presidential and legislative elections earlier this year, Ambassador Ramdin expressed confidence that Haitians will again go to the polls amidst an atmosphere of calm and a tolerance in the upcoming elections.

UN Haiti mission military chief says troops don't do "tourism"
The Dominican Today
November 22, 2006

SANTO DOMINGO.- The United Nations' Haiti Stabilization Mission's (Minustah) adjutant commander rejected that the foreign troops are doing tourism more than controlling crime and drug trafficking in that neighboring nation, stressing that their presence "has nothing of tourism," and that their work needs to be measured by results.

Major general Raul Gloodtdsky said Minustah, in its 2 years of work "has managed to achieve an entire democratic process and we are now facing a process to formalize the democratic system with municipal elections."

"Haiti to this day has an elected President, has an elected parliament, has local, democratically elected authorities and everything in two years. If this isn't effectiveness...."

The Uruguayan general met yesterday with the Armed Forces minister Ramon Aquino and other Dominican senior officers, to interchange impressions and to inform on Minustah's mission in Haiti.

"Criminality is an endemic problem of Haiti. I would not say endemic, I don't know if endemic, it's an existing problem, but if it were managed to develop all this democratic process is because the security conditions became stabilized," the military leader said.

Different sectors of Haitian society have criticized an alleged tourist penchant of the foreign troops, who the UN pays an average of 10,000 dollars monthly, because they have been incapable of controlling crime, mainly assaults and kidnappings and to restore security in the country.

Gloodtdsky recognized that in Haiti some conflicting regions still remain, which in his opinion, "are small if you compare them with the rest of the country."

One of those areas of turmoil is Citi Soleil, bastion of supporters of the ousted president Jean Bertrand Aristide, gangs and drug trafficking, where the Minustah forces have not been able to penetrate.

Another of those places, according to the Minustah chief, is Martissant, a densely populated zone, further to the South, where most brothels in the Haitian capital operate, home to dozens of Dominican prostitutes. "But in a general sense, he said, the country is calm, with the natural conflicts of any other country."

Regarding demands for Minustah troops to leave Haiti, the Uruguayan officer said that the order comes from those who decided the intervention operation from support of the United Nations. "Then, in that case they are responding to their interests, and they have the right, we are in their country," said.

Haiti slumps on joint commission, Dominican Foreign minister says
The Dominican Today
November 22, 2006

SANTO DOMINGO. - The Dominican Foreign minister Carlos Morales today accused the Haiti authorities of stagnating the work of the Mixed Dominican-Haitian Commission, created in 1996 to bolster economic relations between both countries. "The commission is in the hands of the Haitians," he said before meeting with United Nations Haiti Stabilization Mission (MINUSTAH) leader Edmont Mulet, in this capital.

The Mixed Bilateral Commission's reactivation was one of the topics slated for discussion with Morales' Haitian counterpart Jean Rénaud Clérismé, in a meeting that was scheduled for last August but which was ultimately cancelled, from complications in the latter's agenda.

Morales said that the Haitian official was again invited to the country but has yet to receive a reply. "I am awaiting what (Clérismé) he says to me when he wants to come," Morales added, insisting that the Commission's reactivation is Haiti's "problem" and not his country.

The Haitian authorities have yet to name the neighboring country's official for the Commission.

Venezuela to fund projects in Haiti
El Universal, Venezuela
November 22, 2006

The Government of Venezuela is starting to fund healthcare, food, and education plans in Haiti, as part of the cooperation agreements entered into by the two nations.

Caracas aid comes on top of the programs implemented by other countries such as Chile, Argentina, Brazil and Cuba to support the poorest nation in the region.

Venezuelan aid to Haiti includes loans for USD 57 billion for improvement works in airports, as well as other USD 3 million for solid waste collection in Port-au-Prince.

Rodolfo Sanz, the Venezuelan Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs for Latin America and the Caribbean, told multi-state TV network Venezuela-based Telesur that this aid for Haiti is part of the integration project President Hugo Chávez is boosting in the region.

Dominican President meets with heads of Haiti military mission
The Dominican Today
November 22, 2006

Santo Domingo.- President Leonel Fernandez discussed the plans to increase military patrols throughout the porous Dominican-Haitian border during a meeting on Tuesday with the leader of the United Nations' Haiti Stabilization Mission (MINUSTAH).

The head of MINUSTAH, the Guatemalan Edmond Mulet, went directly from Port-au-Prince to Santo Domingo and arrived Tuesday in the National Palace, accompanied by Dominican Foreign minister Carlos Morales and the Dominican consul in the Haitian capital, Carlos Castillo.

United Nations Haiti mission press attaché, David Winhurst, said that Mulet and Fernandez analyzed the topic of the common 391 kilometer border, which separates these two Caribbean countries that share the island Hispaniola, but did not provide further details.

The National Palace Press Office also did not provide details on the topics addressed and said that it was a "courtesy visit."

The MINUSTAH chief was accompanied by the Mission's adjutant military commandant, general Raul Gloodsky, in a subsequent meeting with the Dominican Armed Forces minister, general Ramon Aquino.

It's estimated that between 500,000 and 1 million descendants of Haitians live in Dominican Republic, many of which have crossed the border illegally, generating tensions between both countries.

Also Tuesday, the Dominican chief executive met with the assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States (O.A.S.), Albert R. Ramdin. At the end of the meeting, the diplomat from Surinam told the press that it was informal and diverse subjects of general interest and the hemisphere were addressed.

"Ramdin stated that with the Dominican chief executive he addressed subjects on development in the hemisphere, the neighboring Republic of Haiti and around the relations in the O.A.S.," said the Palace National.

Guyana and Haiti to benefit from IDB debt relief
Radio Jamaica
November 20, 2006

Guyana is among five countries that will benefit from an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) debt relief package for the most indebted poor countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. According to reports, IDB governors at a meeting held in Washington DC on Sunday, reached an agreement on the framework for a debt relief package, which will result in the debts of Guyana, Bolivia, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua being cancelled.

Guyana's President Bharrat Jagdeo, who left Guyana on Thursday to attend the meeting, had said prior to his departure that Guyana could benefit from as much as US \$400 million in debt relief, should lobbying efforts be successful.

The principles of the framework stipulate that 100 per cent debt relief would be granted, with effect from January 1, 2007, to the five countries eligible for the concessional Fund for Special Operations window of the IDB.

These five countries will continue to have access to concessional loans and technical cooperation grants from the IDB.

Missionary Sees Desperate Need for Gospel Message in Haiti

Allie Martin

AgapePress

Crosswalk.com, Virginia

November 22, 2006

A missionary to one of the poorest countries in the world says he has found that poverty and persecution increase people's hunger for the gospel of Jesus Christ. David Heady, who more than 20 years ago began work as a missionary to Haiti, now serves that needy nation through a Tupelo, Mississippi-based ministry called Global Outreach International.

Heady oversees a conference center, a burn care center, and other ministries on a 66-acre headquarters site near the capital of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. He says the rampant poverty and a culture steeped in voodoo offer a Christian missionary many challenges and opportunities for ministry.

"Nobody in America can ever imagine the poverty that's in Haiti," the Global Outreach missionary observes. "It's literally a bottomless pit of no hope," he says, "and I have been proclaiming that message of 'no hope apart from Jesus Christ' for 23 years."

In late April of 2003, Haiti's President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a former Catholic priest, declared voodoo an officially recognized religion, giving it status equal with Christianity. According to a Compass news report, some Haitians, particularly evangelical Christians, were concerned that official recognition of voodoo would threaten their freedom of worship and even their personal safety, and that rising tensions between the competing beliefs would result in a showdown between voodoo and Christianity.

In August 1998, just such a showdown occurred between Christian missionaries and voodoo leaders over an annual open-air evangelistic crusade in Cap-Haitien, a self-proclaimed "voodoo capital of the world." That year, when local officials learned of plans to hold the Christian meeting, they ordered organizers to cancel the event. The missionaries' lives were even threatened if they proceeded with the crusade. However, the Christians proceeded to hold the event and the main organizer and two associate pastors were arrested by the local authorities.

Such government favoritism toward voodoo and incidents of intimidation by voodoo leaders and supporters are increasingly common challenges faced by believers in Haiti. The nation has suffered under the bondage of that folk religion for more than 200 years, and the ensuing economic and spiritual poverty have, along with prolonged political instability, continued to plague the people of Haiti and increased their suffering.

In a place where human despair can run so deep, Heady notes, people's response to the gospel can be dramatic. "I don't believe I have ever preached a message on the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that there wasn't an open manifestation in the service -- wailing, screaming, contortions, beating their head against the wall," he says. "I find that the greater the persecution, the greater the response."

The United Nations has classified Haiti as a Fifth World nation. Although the majority of Haitians practice the State religion, Roman Catholicism, many Haitians practice voodoo, either exclusively or alongside their Catholic observances. An estimated 20 percent of the population of Haiti is Protestant.

Shots Fired at Anti-U.N. Rally in Haiti

By STEVENSON JACOBS

The Associated Press

Washington Post

Saturday, November 18, 2006

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Gunfire rang out Saturday during a street protest by university students demanding the withdrawal of United Nations peacekeepers from Haiti, and witnesses said two demonstrators were wounded.

About 100 protesters were marching through Port-au-Prince's downtown when gunfire erupted, scattering demonstrators. Witnesses said a security guard at a nearby bank fired the shots and was later arrested by police after protesters threatened to lynch him. It was not clear what prompted the shooting.

Two students were wounded by bullets, one in the leg and the other in the back, witnesses said.

Shortly after the shooting, protesters regrouped and came upon three U.N. civilian police officers. Associated Press journalists saw protesters chase after the Filipino officers and throw rocks. U.N. police spokesman Fred Blaze said one Filipino police officer was slightly injured but could not give details.

Earlier in the day, the students from the Human Sciences Faculty of the state-run University of Haiti marched on a main road, chanting "U.N. get out!" and "Haiti is not your home!"

Demonstrators, some with their faces covered, smashed the windshield of a passing U.N. vehicle and threw rocks at other cars, witnesses said. They later cornered a white SUV and spray painted the words "Down with the U.N." on the side. No injuries were reported.

It followed a series of other demonstrations calling for the exit of U.N. troops, who arrived in June 2004 to quell unrest after rebels forced out former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Protesters accuse the blue-helmeted troops of failing to curb violence and of firing indiscriminately during slum raids, wounding and killing civilians. The U.N. says it only fires when attacked.

The 8,800-strong U.N. mission has beefed up patrols in the capital since two Jordanian peacekeepers were shot to death on Nov. 10. The soldiers were returning to base when they were surprised by unknown gunmen.

Kennedy family honors activist for Dominicans of Haitian origin

The Kennedy family Friday recognized the Dominican Republic's Sonia Pierre for her fight against abuses of Haitian migrants.

BY PABLO BACHELET

Miami Herald

November 18, 2006

WASHINGTON - Sonia Pierre flashed a timid smile to acknowledge the rousing applause. The Haitian rights activist from the Dominican Republic seemed bewildered in the ornate Caucus Room of the Senate Russel Building.

In that room, with its chandeliers and crimson drapes taller than two-storied houses, both Jack and Robert Kennedy launched their presidential candidacies in an era when the country was struggling with Jim Crow laws, Brown vs. Board of Education and a civil rights movement determined to challenge the status quo.

In that very same place, the Kennedy family on Friday honored Pierre with the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award for her fight to end abuses against Dominicans of Haitian origin. She was the 23rd activist to obtain the recognition.

The award was handed to Pierre by Robert's widow Ethel and Massachusetts Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy, who called her a "model for what it takes to make a difference."

With a broken voice, the 43-year-old Pierre recalled Robert Kennedy.

"I find inspiration in the life of Mr. Kennedy," she said, "because I believe that our efforts and his are part of the same fight for equality and justice."

HARSH LIFE

Sonia Pierre was born of Haitian parents and raised in the harshness of the Dominican Republic's sugar cane farms, where hundreds of thousands of people from neighboring Haiti -- both legal and undocumented migrants -- labor the land.

Her childhood innocence, she says, was shattered when she was 11. She and a friend were suspended for two weeks from their rural school for chatting in Creole.

"Children," she told The Miami Herald by phone. "do not practice racism, unlike adults."

She recalled the bitterness of being ordered to leave the classroom on an anniversary of the day when the Dominican Republic ended a long period of Haitian rule, of history lessons that vilified the neighbor.

She asked her mother if any of this was true.

"Whenever there is prejudice," her mother told her, "history is not told as it is."

ACTIVISM BEGAN EARLY

At 13, she spent a night in jail after addressing a protest of sugar-cane growers. In 1983, when she was just 20 years old, she founded the Dominican-Haitian Women's Movement to defend the rights of Dominicans of Haitian descent.

Haiti, the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, and the Dominican Republic find themselves in an uncomfortable embrace, sharing the island of Hispaniola but separated by heritage, language and economic disparities.

Caught in the middle are 650,000 mostly poor Haitians who migrated to the Dominican Republic in search of a better future. Denied Dominican citizenship and even permanent residence, Pierre says thousands live in a situation of precarious, stateless limbo.

After 54 years living in the Dominican Republic, Pierre's mother still does not have a permanent residency.

Pierre's fight took her all the way to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in San José, Costa Rica, where she petitioned on behalf of two Haitian-Dominican girls, Dilicia Jean and Violeta Bosico.

LEGAL VICTORY

She won her case last year, and the court instructed the government to open public schools to all children and give them birth certificates that could entitle them to citizenship. Though the sentence is binding, the government has so far balked at carrying it out.

Her movement has started a campaign to compel the Dominican government to implement the court's decision. The government has been more eager to discuss monetary compensations rather than legal changes, she says.

She notes a new immigration bill also discriminates against Haitians by creating a guest-worker category that includes all Haitian descendants -- even those who have lived in the Dominican Republic for generations.

The court's decision has not stopped the harassment of Haitian descendants. This year, more than 25,000 have been expelled to Haiti, where some have no family and don't speak the language and face abuses.

Rapes and other abuses are commonplace, she says.

