

**Haiti's Préval to undergo cancer tests**

**Haitian President René Préval said that blood tests during his recent visit to Cuba suggested a possible return of prostate cancer and that he will be tested again.**

**BY STEVENSON JACOBS**

**Associated Press**

**Miami Herald**

**Monday December 11, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE - President René Préval, who was diagnosed with prostate cancer five years ago, said Sunday that the disease may have come back and that he would soon leave the country for treatment and more tests.

Speaking to reporters after returning from a four-day trip to Cuba for medical exams, a fit-looking Préval said blood tests in Havana showed possible signs of cancer.

Préval said the tests were inconclusive and he would have to return to Cuba on Dec. 26 for more tests and unspecified treatment. He did not say how long he would be out of the country.

"[Doctors] are unable to say right now at what stage this is," Préval said after arriving at Haiti's international airport. "I have to go back for more tests. If it continues to grow, that will mean the cancer came back."

"The seriousness of it is not known," Préval added, saying he felt "physically and mentally well."

Préval, 63, was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2001, the last year of his first presidential term, and had surgery in Cuba to treat it.

He returned to Havana unexpectedly on Wednesday for what his office described as "medical reasons," setting off rumors in Haiti's capital that he might be gravely ill.

"If you are sick, you should say that you are sick, and I told you at what stage my health is. This is what the doctor told me," Préval said at the airport Sunday, flanked by his prime minister, Jacques Edouard Alexis, and several Cabinet members.

Préval's health adds to the uncertainty already facing his young coalition government, which has struggled to stabilize the divided and impoverished Caribbean nation nearly three years after a bloody rebellion toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Haiti experienced relative calm after Préval's February election victory. Since the new government took power in May, however, dozens of foreigners and Haitians have been kidnapped and gang fighting has forced hundreds to flee their homes in the capital, Port-au-Prince.

An 8,800-strong force of U.N. troops and international police provides the only real security in a country plagued by well-armed gangs. U.N. officials have said some gangs are using violence to

pressure Préval for concessions, but the president has said he doesn't believe the crime is political in nature.

The streets of the capital were mostly quiet Sunday, with little evident reaction to the news of Préval's possible sickness.

A legislator from the opposition FUSION party, Frantz Robert Monde, said Saturday that Préval appeared to be seriously ill and that Alexis might have to go before Parliament to give details on the president's health.

Speaking to private radio broadcaster Caribe FM, Monde said that could help legislators decide whether Préval should transfer powers temporarily to an executive council made up of Cabinet members and led by the prime minister, as outlined in Haiti's constitution.

Préval's office made no immediate comment on the remarks.

## **Delayed Haitian elections are mostly peaceful**

**A low turnout characterized long-delayed local elections in which Haitians had to choose among 29,000 candidates running for 1,420 slots.**

**BY STEVENSON JACOBS**

**Associated Press**

**Miami Herald**

**December 4, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE - AP) -- Haitians cast ballots Sunday in long-awaited municipal and local elections marked by low voter turnout and isolated reports of violence.

Some 29,000 candidates were vying for 1,420 local and municipal posts in Sunday's vote, billed as the final step in the troubled Caribbean country's return to democratic rule following a bloody February 2004 revolt that toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Assailants burned two polling stations and shot and wounded a man in the northern town of Limonade, local media reported. Police later shot and wounded an official of the Fusion party after they found him with two Molotov cocktails.

In the Port-au-Prince slum of Martissant, automatic gunfire rang out after polls opened, but there were no immediate reports of injuries. Rival gangs have been fighting for weeks and had threatened to disrupt the polling, residents said.

United Nations peacekeepers used tear gas to disperse a small crowd that shouted anti-U.N. slogans at a polling station in Cite Soleil, a volatile slum on the edge of Port-au-Prince.

Voter turnout appeared low in most parts of the capital of Port-au-Prince, with many polling stations virtually empty.

Officials had predicted turnout at 40 to 50 percent, well below the massive participation in February's presidential vote won by Rene Preval.

Visiting a polling center in the capital, Preval's prime minister, Jacques Edouard Alexis, praised the organization of the elections but said he had hoped for a higher turnout.

"Citizens must be informed of the importance of local communities," Alexis told local Radio Metropole.

Sunday's election took place more than a year late because of street violence and logistical delays.

Final results aren't expected for at least several days.

**U.S. lawmakers' visit stokes Dominican-Haitian issue**  
**December 11, 2006**  
**The Dominican Today**

SANTO DOMINGO.- The uproar over the controversial visit to the country by a group of U.S. legislators who visited two sugar mill villages (bateyes) in the Dominican eastern region took a new turn today, as two of the most vocal figures on extreme ends of the issue –Sonia Pierre and the deputy Pelegrin Castillo- took the row to new heights, with demands and warnings that the Dominican Government act on their proposals.

For her part, Pierre, president of the Movement of Dominican Women of Haitian Descent, today called for a modification of the Constitution regarding Haitian immigration, to include thousands of children of Haitian parents who lack official documentation.

Pierre said that if in the Dominican Constitution the articles relative to acquiring the nationality are modified and establishes that to be Dominican, the parents must be legally in the country, it would be legalizing a practice that is applied for a long time. "If that reform is done I hope that it's not done retroactively and that first is solved a situation that we have here with a specific population," she said.

Pierre, interviewed by Huchi Lora and Patricia Solano on Telesistema Channel 11, said that it would be lamentable and discriminatory for that reform to be applied retroactively, leaving thousands of Dominicans in limbo.

The human rights activist stressed that it's preferable to solve the situation of thousands of undocumented Dominicans first, before approving the reform to the Constitution with respect to immigration.

She said that the children of illegal Haitians are the ones who suffer the greatest discrimination, "who in fact are Dominican culturally and legally, according to our laws."

Pierre said that no other minority group of immigrants suffers the discrimination and exclusion that children of illegal Haitians are subjected to, adding that in the country there's enough manual labor for Haitian workers, but that it's necessary to improve the living and work condition in the bateyes.

The other side

But the deputy Pelegrin Castillo, whose position has always been to denounce possible "meddling" by foreign powers in the Dominican Republic's policy towards Haitian immigration, today warned that Saturday's visit to two sugar bateyes in San Pedro by the members of the U.S. Congress are part of a plan of "extortion and pressure" against the country, so that it accepts a fusion with Haiti.

He views with suspicion the fact that the U.S. commission of lawmakers legislators are only from the Democratic Party, "which everybody knows that they voted against the Free Trade Agreement," with Dominican Republic, he said.

Castillo pointed out that in a meeting with deputies and senators, the ex-under secretary of Commerce, Robert Zoellick, told him that the United States had signed the Dr-Cafta trusting that Dominican Republic would assist Haiti with its economic, political and social problems.

"What the United States seeks is for the country to bear the weight of the Haitian crisis alone, because the intention of the large powers is to fuse Dominican Republic with Haiti, intention that they will not obtain," he said.

The U.S. congressional delegation was headed by Eliot Engel, president of the House Committee for the Western Hemisphere; Donald Payne, Kendrick Meeks, Maxine Waters, Barbara Lee and Lynn Woolsey.

The legislator (FNP-National District) stated that the large powers don't have a serious commitment with Haiti's destiny, and are therefore "looking for an alternative that for them is cheap, easy, which is to try to pressure, blackmail, to force Dominican Republic so that it assumes the Haitian problems."

"It's for that reason that the great powers, specifically Europe and the United States, are using the pretext that there is slavery in the country, a situation of discrimination against Haitians, among others," he said, adding that as a State, the country will not succumb.

"They are pressures that seek not only to eliminate the sugar quota, and boycott the Dr-Cafta from taking effect, but that we bear with the Haitian problems, so in the end struggle for the fusion of both countries," said Castillo.

## **Leader to Leave Haiti for Cancer Tests**

**By STEVENSON JACOBS**

**Associate Press**

**San Francisco Chronicle**

**Sunday, December 10, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) --

President Rene Preval, who was diagnosed with prostate cancer five years ago, said Sunday the disease may have come back and that he would soon leave the country for treatment and more tests.

Speaking to reporters after returning from a four-day trip to Cuba for medical exams, a fit-looking Preval said blood tests in Havana showed possible signs of cancer.

Preval said the tests were inconclusive and that he would have to return to Cuba on Dec. 26 for more tests and unspecified treatment. He did not say how long he would be out of the country.

"They (doctors) are unable to say right now at what stage this is," Preval said after arriving at Haiti's international airport. "I have to go back for more tests. If it continues to grow, that will mean the cancer came back."

"The seriousness of it is not known," Preval added, saying he felt "physically and mentally well."

Preval, 63, was first diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2001, the last year of his first presidential term, and had surgery in Cuba to treat it.

He returned unexpectedly to Havana on Wednesday for what his office described as "medical reasons," setting off rumors in Haiti's capital that he might be gravely ill.

"If you are sick, you should say that you are sick, and I told you at what stage my health is. This is what the doctor told me," Preval said at the airport Sunday, flanked by his prime minister, Jacques Edouard Alexis, and several Cabinet members.

Preval's health adds to the uncertainty already facing his young coalition government, which has struggled to stabilize the divided and impoverished Caribbean nation nearly three years after a bloody rebellion toppled former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Haiti experienced relative calm after Preval's February election victory. Since the new government took power in May, however, dozens of foreigners and Haitians have been kidnapped and gang fighting has forced hundreds to flee their homes in the capital of Port-au-Prince.

An 8,800-strong force of U.N. troops and international police provides the only real security in a country plagued with well-armed gangs. U.N. officials have said some gangs are using violence to pressure Preval for concessions, but the president has said he doesn't believe the crime is political in nature.

The streets of the capital were mostly quiet Sunday, with little evident reaction to the news of Preval's possible sickness.

A legislator from the opposition FUSION party, Frantz Robert Monde, said Saturday that Preval appeared to be seriously ill and that Alexis may have to go before Parliament to give details on the president's health.

Speaking to private radio broadcaster Caribe FM, Monde said that could help legislators decide whether Preval should temporarily transfer powers to an executive council made up by Cabinet members and led by the prime minister, as outlined in Haiti's constitution.

Preval's office made no immediate comment on the remarks.

**Equality for Dominican bateyes**  
**The Dominican Today**  
**December 11, 2006**

TRANSLATION BY DOMINICAN TODAY

"The negligence'

The delegation of legislators from the United States that visits us, has said with reason, that the Dominican government has neglected the bateyes.

It's necessary to recognize from the onset, that the government has been very democratic in this point, because it has neglected not just the bateyes but has also neglected the cities, the countryside, the streets, the alleys, the environment, the rivers, the streams, the natural resources, the sewers, the sanitary systems, the mountains, the beaches, the valleys, agriculture, the livestock, the health, the hospitals, the education, the alphabetization, the citizen security, the border with Haiti, our borders and coasts, the compliance of the law, the Armed Forces, the traffic, the electrical energy, and the list becomes unending.

Fortunately the bateyes have those who defend them.

Author:  
Adriano Miguel Tejada

**In Haiti, number of children orphaned by AIDS grows**  
**By TIM COLLIE**  
**South Florida Sun-Sentinel**  
**December 11, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti

Charline might become a poet.

Maybe a teacher or a diplomat.

She might become a voice for all the children here who live alone or afraid in the city and in villages where people seem to die a lot.

But Charline is just 16.

She takes pride in her role as surrogate mother to the other children.

Her story begins with a song that she and the others sing:

"Let us, the children, live because we are the hope of the country.

We are like a spring that bubbles forth but never runs dry.

Children of Saline ...

of Haiti ...

of Miami ...

Let the children live in peace."

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Here is the first thing to know about Haiti, the bare and brown western claw of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola: It is a nation of children.

Gray hair is getting harder and harder to find. Eight million people live here; four million are under age 14.

Too many of them are children without parents.

Today, a large slice of their generation - by some official accounts, 250,000 - has lost one parent or both to AIDS.

The global epidemic, now in its 25th year, has killed more than 400,000 people in Haiti. It has killed tens of thousands more throughout the Caribbean, steppingstone islands in Florida's backyard and one of the largest tourist playgrounds on Earth.

The number of children orphaned by AIDS will likely continue to grow. Experts see no end in sight. They voice concern: If things don't veer from their current path, Caribbean society, and the Caribbean economy that relies heavily on tourism, will suffer more.

Haiti, the poorest country in the hemisphere and sixth-poorest on Earth, has by far the region's highest rate of baby and child deaths, the highest rate of AIDS deaths, and the highest number of children orphaned by AIDS.

This year, for the first time, anyone living with HIV/AIDS in Haiti can get the new generation of drugs that turns a killer disease into a manageable condition.

But there are hurdles to getting the drugs: bad roads, distant villages, scant information, fear.

At the same time, of the thousands and thousands of young people left, a handful will be nurtured in places where they learn about the disease that killed their parents. Where they will learn about acceptance over stigma, facts over fear. Where, in turn, they will learn to teach others who still fear and shun anyone connected to AIDS.

Charline is one whose life hangs in the balance. She was just 4 when her mother got sick with the wasting disease that the child knew only as tuberculosis. A father died before Charline knew him and an older brother left for the Dominican Republic, as thousands of Haitians do each year, looking for work.

Charline and another brother took care of their mother the only way they could.

They went into the streets to beg.

Charline:

"Every day, I put on my clothes and went to the street ...

Me and my brother, we each took a different route ...

In the middle of the day, I'd come home to my mother.

I'd cook for her. I'd braid her hair, and I'd make sure she drank her medicine ... Sometimes when I didn't get any money to go home, I would send a message to my mother that I wasn't coming home that night."

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Charline came to the street when the AIDS epidemic was in its 12th year. The disease had claimed thousands of lives. About that time, doctors, missionaries and others who worked with children saw something different: more kids in the street.

It soon became clear: Hundreds were orphans who had lost one parent or both to AIDS. The children often didn't know what killed their mothers or fathers. If others knew, those children were treated like walking dead. No orphanages would take them.

Something else they didn't know: They could well be carrying the virus, too, because roughly one-fourth of children born to HIV/AIDS-infected mothers are carriers themselves.

On the streets, children look for a new family, people who look out for one another, called a "cartel."

Charline found hers among the older kids who slept under the benches in front of Haiti's National Palace, in Champs de Mars park.

She stood out. For one thing, she was a girl.

Ten years ago, street kids were mostly boys. The girls came later, as the epidemic killed more mothers.

Charline showed up in clean clothes and then went home most nights to a mom. She was on the street, but not yet of the street, a big difference in Haiti. She was not a kokorat, the name for kids who live on the street full time.

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Charline:

"A man came ... and asked what was happening to me.

I told him how the other kokorat attacked me ...

He told me I should go talk to this woman in the car.

I did not want to go ...

Very often people wanted to steal me because I was a nice girl.

People would always tell me that they wanted to take me to foreign lands ...

I was afraid that this woman was going to take me away, and I'd never see my mother again."

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Charline at age 7 could have been a restavek, a child sold or sent off to relatives to work as a household slave.

She could have stayed on the street, become a prostitute, or maybe been sold and shipped over the border to the Dominican Republic.

Instead, she went to the woman in the car, a well-connected advocate for women and children, one of those unexplained angels sent to save lives.

Charline:

"I mustered my strength and walked over to the car and the woman ...

She picked me up and sat me on her lap.

She asked me why I was in the street, and I was telling her all about my mother ...

I told her that I hadn't brought my mother anything to eat for a while, that I had to go and see her.

And she bought clothes for me.

She bought me sandals."

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Nearly a mile above the city is La Maison l'Arc en Ciel, Rainbow House, the first orphanage in the country, and still one of only a few, built for children of AIDS dead.

It is here that Charline arrived nine years ago.

The sanctuary was founded in 1996 by a French Canadian lawyer and her Haitian husband in response to a gaping national need. Haiti had orphanages, dozens in every major city, some run by churches, some by the government. But none, not one, would knowingly take a child orphaned by AIDS.

Danielle and Robert Penette hoped to change that. They found a home on a choice plot of mountain land - a mansion once owned by the family of the wife of Haiti's former dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier.

Within the year, Rainbow House had 17 children, the youngest 14 months old.

The Penettes had one rule: No child older than 6, because after that, children are too tough to reach, too far gone.

But something about Charline touched them. They gave her a home.

Charline is luckier than most, living in the protective fold of Rainbow House. Twice she tried to escape over the compound walls, to go back to the city to beg, to bring help for her mother, maybe to keep her live a bit longer.

Her mother died one month after Charline arrived.

Charline:

"When my mother died I wasn't sad at all because I saw that she was suffering so much ...

After her death, I became very mean ...

When I realized I didn't have a mother or a father anymore, I started crying.

I did not sleep. I could not eat.

But you know, it was Mrs. Penette who gave me strength.

She always told me that if I was here today in this orphanage it was because I had enough strength to take care of my mother."

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As part of their social education, the children at Rainbow House who were old enough to understand heard the question: What would they do if they found out a friend, a teacher or a roommate had HIV, the virus that causes AIDS?

The questions are the underpinning of the Rainbow House philosophy: The only right way to live is to embrace anyone who is infected.

After the deaths of some of the younger children, Charline's emotions softened.

She opened her arms when the younger girls, some frail and sick, climbed into her lap wanting to play and be held, wanting her to love them back.

They were her new family, and they needed her, just as her mother had.

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Charline is a young woman now.

She attends eighth grade at a school near Rainbow House.

She will leave in a few years to start a new phase of her life.

Right now, she is a teenage girl much like teenage girls everywhere.

She thinks about her future, about where her path will lead outside the compound walls. She imagines becoming a poet, a teacher, a diplomat, a doctor. But wherever she goes, she says, her true mission will be this:

To speak for children who are affected by HIV/AIDS.

It is, she explains, her calling.

Her mission from God.

Charline:

"If God did not see that I can stand up and fight against this disease, he'd never give it to me ...

I praise God that he chose me to be sero-positive ...

It's because God sees me as a special person that he makes me sick."

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In the Caribbean, as in the United States, being infected with HIV/AIDS no longer means certain death.

Powerful drugs that control symptoms and slow the path of the virus have poured into the Caribbean nations that need them most, including Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Guyana.

Medicine that prevents pregnant women from passing the virus on to their babies is there for the asking as well.

These medicines hold half the key to this generation's future.

The other half: bravery, as Charline and the children at Rainbow House so well know.

Because, to get to the medicine, you have to step forward. And that means telling someone - doctors, family, friends - that you, or maybe your loved one ones, are infected.

## **Leader to leave Haiti for cancer tests**

**By STEVENSON JACOBS**

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**

**Miami Herald**

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## **US House narrowly passes trade bill for Haiti**

**Monday, December 11, 2006**

**by Missy Ryan**

**Caribbean Net News**

WASHINGTON, USA (Reuters): US Lawmakers narrowly approved a raft of trade legislation on Friday, including the expansion of trade preferences for dirt-poor Haiti.

The House of Representatives voted 212 to 184 for the trade package, which is expected to go to the Senate this weekend as part of a larger tax and energy package in an 11th-hour push to close the current Republican-led Congress.

The legislation broadens textile preferences for Haiti, allowing it to increase duty-free exports to the United States of clothes that aren't made with US yarn and fabric.

"We hope that ... we can send a signal to other countries to come to the aid of this poor nation," New York's Charles Rangel, a Democrat poised to head the influential House Ways and Means Committee next year, said in a statement.

But sharp opposition from southern-state Senators, like Elizabeth Dole of North Carolina, to the proposed changes to Haiti trade could slow down the vote in the Senate.

"It's a job-destroying bill," said Cass Johnson, president of the National Council of Textile Organisations. The textile industry fears the rules will allow China to replace domestic producers of yarn and fabric in Haiti's apparel industry, costing US firms \$200 million a year.

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## **Meek, lawmakers monitor Haitian treatment in Dominican Republic**

**By JONATHAN M. KATZ**

**Associated Press**

**The Gainesville Sun**

**December 09, 2006**

A Florida congressman and five other U.S. lawmakers visited two Dominican villages and a sugar refinery Saturday to observe the treatment of Haitian migrants who seek better-paying jobs here but often face discrimination.

Haiti and the Dominican Republic share the island of Hispaniola, and while Haiti has been plagued by poverty, violence and political instability, the Dominican Republic emerged from early struggles to be seen as a comparative land of opportunity by Haitians.

The Democratic congressional lawmakers - Reps. Eliot Engel, of New York; Donald Payne, of New Jersey; Kendrick Meek, of Florida; and Barbara Lee, Maxine Waters and Lynn Woolsey, all of California - wore hard hats and safety goggles while they watched Haitian workers loading sugar cane at the refinery about 40 miles east of the capital.

"I think it's the United States' responsibility to monitor the condition of workers in an economy such as this one that we're supporting through our trade efforts," said Meek, whose district is home to many Haitians. "Many of my constituents tell me about concerns about the conditions of their families" in the Dominican Republic.

The trip - focusing on trade issues, port security and human rights - was meant to set the tone for Engel's chairmanship of the U.S. House International Relations subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, expected to begin in January when the Democrats take control of the U.S. Congress.

They were also expected to discuss with Dominican leaders a U.S.-sponsored regional free trade agreement and visit a port before leaving for Haiti on Sunday. The final requirements to bring the Central American Free Trade Agreement into effect here should be met by the end of the year, officials have said.

Haitians, many of whom cross the border illegally to work on sugar plantations and in construction in the Dominican Republic, are often victims of discrimination and sometimes violence and death.

Dominicans, who measure their national independence from the 1844 end of a Haitian occupation, say the illegal migrants violate their sovereignty. Word that the delegation would be visiting Haitian workers' villages drew fire from many Dominicans, for whom the status of 500,000 to 1 million ethnic Haitians is a matter of fierce debate.

Children born to Haitian workers are often denied citizenship, although Dominican law mandates that any child born on Dominican soil receive it. U.S. Ambassador Hans Hertell recently rebuked the Dominican government for not giving birth certificates to the children of foreigners.

The visit comes shortly after a Dominican-Haitian activist received an award on Capitol Hill, reigniting debate over the issue.

The congressional delegation visited two villages located 15 miles north of the refinery where many Haitian migrant workers and a few Dominicans live in tin or concrete shacks without running water or electricity, and the streets have holes filled with trash.

Many people have injuries that go untreated and most have to grow food to feed their families. Children also work in the sugar cane fields.

"This is an example of government not caring about its people - looking for continuous investment - but abandoning its people," Payne said. "If you want to abandon your people then don't do it with our money."

It wasn't clear what the delegation would do with its findings. They were scheduled to meet with the Dominican foreign minister late Saturday. A meeting with President Leonel Fernandez was canceled when voting in the U.S. Congress ran late Friday, delaying travel to the Dominican Republic.

## **Dominican Republic rejects criticism of migrant treatment**

**Monday, December 11, 2006**

**by Manuel Jimenez**

**Caribbean Net News**

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (Reuters): The Dominican Republic government on Sunday said it would not tolerate foreign interference in its affairs after a group of visiting US lawmakers criticised the treatment of Haitians on Dominican sugar plantations.

Foreign Minister Carlos Morales Troncoso, who met on Saturday evening with the US congressional delegation, said a visit the American politicians paid to cane fields and sugar factories in the east of the country was a "sham."

"I would like them to come for a few more days to see the reality in the Dominican Republic but not a sham like this," the foreign minister said.

"As I understand it the mission was practically kidnapped inside the church of San Pedro de Macoris, by a group of nongovernmental organisations that defend Haitians and who told them their version of the truth," he said.

Faced with grinding poverty, environmental devastation and widespread unemployment, up to a million Haitians are believed to have crossed illicitly into the neighboring and far more prosperous Dominican Republic in search of work. The two countries share the Caribbean island of Hispaniola.

Many Haitian illegal immigrants are employed in sugar fields, factories or on cattle ranches in conditions that human rights groups say often are not far removed from slavery.

Relations between the two countries have long been strained by racism and mistrust, and scarred by the 1937 massacre of up to 30,000 Haitian migrants in a campaign ordered by then Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo. Many were marched off cliffs at gunpoint to die in the sea.

Last year, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ordered the Dominican Republic to give birth certificates to Haitians born in its territory, even if their parents are illegal immigrants, provoking protests from Dominican officials.

The US congressional delegation included Democratic Reps. Eliot Engel of New York, Donald Payne of New Jersey, Maxine Waters of California and Kendrick Meek of Florida.

Speaking for the group, Engel said the US lawmakers were convinced the Dominican government had abandoned Haitians to their fate in the cane fields.

He said the group intended to return and to learn more about the reality of the country.

"We spoke about a wide range of topics and the sugar cane factories were one of those topics. We all agreed that we would like to see improved conditions, both us and the Dominicans," Engel said after talks with the foreign minister.

Morales Troncoso said the US delegation was in no position to offer opinions after a visit of only a few hours.

## **Congress increases duty-free access for Haitian textiles**

**By Forrest Laws**

**Farm Press Editorial Staff**

**Western Farm Press**

**Dec 11, 2006**

Ignoring complaints the United States has already lost 100,000 textile jobs to similar trade legislation, the House and Senate voted to approve a tax and trade bill that grants almost unlimited access to the U.S. market for apparel products assembled in Haiti from yarn and fabric made elsewhere.

The Haiti measure was one of a handful of tax and trade bills adopted literally at the 11th hour by House and Senate leaders anxious to have something to show for the 109th Congress. The others extended or modified tax breaks that had already or were scheduled to expire at the end of 2006 and authorized oil and gas exploration in the Gulf of Mexico.

Farm groups such as the National Cotton Council and National Corn Growers Association supported many of those, although the NCC joined with the National Council of Textile Organizations in opposing the bill's provisions giving preferential treatment to textile products assembled in Haiti.

The NCC and the NCTO argued the Haitian provision would result in the displacement of U.S. cotton and yarn exports to Haiti by Chinese products since it contained no preferential treatment for U.S.-manufactured yarn and fabrics.

"We continue to urge the congressional leadership to reject any backroom deal that will send U.S. jobs to foreign countries like China," said NCTO President Cass Johnson. "When China wins and U.S. workers lose because of a backroom deal made at 2:00 a.m. in the halls of Congress, then that is a sad day.

"The ultimate irony deal is that in its eagerness to sacrifice U.S. jobs to help Haiti, all the U.S. Congress has accomplished is to make Haiti a transshipment point for apparel from China at the expense of the entire Western Hemisphere."

The approval of the Haiti measure came despite a letter written by eight Republican senators from North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Kentucky urging the Senate leadership to drop it and new tariff preference levels for products made by African countries.

In the letter, the senators said 100,000 textile jobs in their region had already been lost due to trade agreements, and they would oppose "as forcefully as possible" the Haiti measure.

"No hearings have been held on these measures," said Auggie Tantillo, executive director of the American Manufacturing Trade Action Coalition, which also lobbied against the provisions. "No vetting has been done. No formal debate has occurred. All that is going on is a blatant attempt to ramrod ill-advised legislation through Congress to favor foreign special interests in countries like China at the expense of the U.S. textile industry and its workers."

Johnson said the Haiti legislation contained in H.R. 6406 could eliminate most or all U.S. exports textile and apparel exports to Haiti and harm U.S. exports to Mexico and the CAFTA countries. U.S. textile and apparel exports to Haiti totaled \$220 million in 2005.

Haiti is the lowest-wage apparel producer in the Western Hemisphere, he said. "As a result, its apparel exports to the United States have grown by 29 percent during the last year to 240 million square meters equivalent. By value, Haiti's exports are up 11 percent and now total \$432 million. This is in sharp contrast to the CAFTA countries which have seen their apparel exports to the United States fall by 10 percent."

The African Growth and Opportunity Act provisions also passed by the House and Senate includes a tariff preference level for African countries equal to 775 million SME beginning in year one, with future increases tied to the growth of U.S. apparel imports. "The TPL will enable African producers to use inputs from third-party countries like China and still export apparel to the United States duty-free," Johnson noted.

According to Cotton Council officials, the legislation also establishes a value-added rule of origin that, according to Customs, is unenforceable. The industry offered alternative measures, which would assist Haiti, but they were not considered.

The tax bill passed by both Houses would extend through 2007 or 2008 and, in some cases, modify tax cuts that expired at the end of last year or are scheduled to expire at the end of this year.

The package also includes about \$1.5 billion in energy tax breaks and extensions of provisions due to expire at the end of 2007. The package's major tax provisions extend the research and development tax credit; deduction for state and local sales taxes in lieu of state and local income taxes; deduction for tuition and related expenses; and, shorter depreciation periods for leasehold improvements.

The energy tax provisions in the legislation will extend renewable-electricity production credit, clean renewable-energy bonds, the deduction for energy-efficient commercial buildings, the credit for energy-efficient homes and the credit for business installation of alternative energy equipment and the excise tax break for methanol and ethanol produced from coal; new special depreciation allowance for cellulosic biomass ethanol plants; modification of the tax credit for coke and coke gas production.

Besides the duty-free trade benefits for Haiti the expanded TPL for African countries, the legislation establishes permanent normal trade relations for Vietnam and extends for one year the duty-free treatment of some products from Andean countries, including Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru; and amends the U.S. Harmonized Tariff Schedule to suspend or reduce the tariff rate on more than 500 products unavailable in the United States.

The last-minutes legislation also protected doctors from a 5 percent cut in Medicare payments that would have taken effect Jan. 1.

The flurry of activity as the House and Senate prepared to leave Washington belied what has become known as one of the least effective sessions of Congress in recent memory.

The 109th Congress adjourned after passing only two of 11 appropriations bills, instead passing a continuing resolution that allows the government to continue operating with the fiscal year 2006 budget until Feb. 15.

Republican leaders, in effect, left the unfinished budget work to the Democrats who will assume a leadership role when the 110th Congress gets down to business in January.

“They are leaving us with a tremendous mess,” said Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, who will take over the reins of the Senate next month. “We do have alternatives, none of which are very good.”

The House and Senate did approve legislative language that provides for Outer Continental Shelf oil and natural gas exploration and development that includes new fields in the Gulf of Mexico.

The Corn Growers Association hailed the vote as a victory that will ensure domestic development of natural gas and lead to increased supplies of feedstocks for nitrogen fertilizers.

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## **House passes trade bill for Vietnam, Haiti**

**Fri Dec 8, 2006**

**By Missy Ryan**

**Reuters**

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Lawmakers narrowly approved a raft of trade legislation on Friday to normalize trade ties with former enemy Vietnam, expand trade preferences for dirt-poor Haiti, and renew duty reductions for the Andean region and over 100 developing nations.

The House of Representatives voted 212 to 184 for the trade package, which is expected to go to the Senate this weekend as part of a larger tax and energy package in an 11th-hour push to close the current Republican-led Congress.

"This legislation will help to create stronger trading partners for the future, while also recognizing our responsibility ... to help developing countries grow," Republican Rep. Bill Thomas, outgoing chairman of the influential Ways and Means Committee, said in a statement.

The measure grants Permanent Normal Trade Relations to fast-growing Vietnam, 30 years after its war with the United States, but it comes late for President George W. Bush, who arrived empty-handed at a Hanoi summit last month after an initial PNTR vote failed.

The legislation also broadens textile preferences for Haiti, allowing it to increase duty-free exports to the United States of clothes that aren't made with U.S. yarn and fabric.

"We hope that ... we can send a signal to other countries to come to the aid of this poor nation," said New York's Charles Rangel, a Democrat who will head the Ways and Means Committee when Democrats take control of Congress next year.

But sharp opposition from southern-state Senators, like Elizabeth Dole of North Carolina, to the proposed changes to Haiti trade threaten to slow down the vote in the Senate.

"It's a job-destroying bill," said Cass Johnson, president of the National Council of Textile Organizations. The textile industry fears the rules will squeeze out U.S. producers of yarn and fabric who supply Haiti's apparel industry. Continued...

U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab hailed Friday's vote, saying increased trade had not only helped workers in poor countries but lowered priced for U.S consumers.

### **PREFERENCE EXTENSION FOR ANDES**

Many Democrats usually take a harder line on trade than their peers across the aisle, and some U.S. industries hope Congress' new Democratic leaders will be on their side, blocking deals some here fear will cost American jobs.

That could bode poorly for developing countries like Peru and Colombia, which both signed bilateral trade pacts this year with Washington. Approving those deals could be more difficult with Democrats like Rangel insisting they be renegotiated to include stronger protection for workers.

Friday's package renews duty preferences for six months for four Andean nations under the Andean Trade Preference and Drug Eradication Act, or ATPDEA, which is due to expire this month. It grants another six months only to countries with bilateral trade deals in place with Washington.

The House also extended for two years the Generalized System of Preferences, another duty program that expires this month. Some lawmakers had argued it was time to cut off more prosperous countries from a program created to help the world's poorest countries. Nations like Brazil and India have also emerged as opponents to the United States in trade talks.

The bill also extends preferences to African nations.

(Additional reporting by Thomas Ferraro and Donna Smith)

**Tax, trade bills passed**  
**Package overcomes Senate wrangling**  
**By William L. Watts,**  
**MarketWatch**  
**Dec 9, 2006**

WASHINGTON (MarketWatch) - A massive legislative package that ranged from tax breaks to offshore oil drilling to trade with Vietnam passed Senate early Saturday, and is on its way to President Bush.

The pre-Christmas package came in two parts -- one that included the tax breaks, health-related measures and the Gulf drilling provisions. The second part includes language that grants permanent normal trade-relations status to Vietnam and extends controversial trade preferences to Haiti. The House Friday afternoon voted 367-45 to pass the tax-related package and passed it to the Senate late Friday.

The package's energy provisions include language that would open 8.3 million acres off the Gulf Coast to oil and gas exploration while protecting Florida's coast from drilling rigs. The measure funnels 37.5% of future royalties from the leases to Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., praised the package. "Just when everyone bets against us, Republicans put together a broad package of energy, tax, trade and health care measures," he said in a statement on Saturday.

"I am also pleased that this package will open more than 8 million acres in the Gulf of Mexico to energy production, which will help to make America more energy independent and will lower energy costs for consumers," Frist said.

The House turned back a proposed amendment by Democratic Rep. Edward Markey of Massachusetts that sought to force oil companies to renegotiate existing leases that omitted royalty thresholds due to a mistake by the Interior Department. The amendment also included language to extend a "patch" designed to shield middle-class taxpayers from the alternative minimum tax, or AMT.

The tax bill retroactively revives measures that expired at the end of 2005, including the research-and-development tax credit, a deduction for tuition and other college expenses, and a deduction for teachers who spend money out of their own pockets for classroom supplies.

"This critical bill stops tax hikes on millions of Americans. House Republicans believe in letting Americans keep more of their hard-earned money, and this legislation does just that," said House Majority Whip Roy Blunt, R-Mo.

Democrats said the bill's noncontroversial tax provisions and other measures made passage crucial, but said they would revisit the AMT and other issues when they take control of the House in January.

"Passage of this bill is necessary, but by no means comprehensive," said Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., who will chair the House Ways and Means Committee next year. "I welcome the opportunity to work

with my colleagues in the next Congress to revisit the issues we've discussed today and move forward to correct and improve on today's legislation to better serve the American people."

Later, the House voted 212-184 to clear wide-ranging trade legislation, which includes provisions to improve trade relations with Vietnam and extends trade preferences to a host of countries, including Haiti and Andean nations.

Specifically, the trade package makes normal trade relations with Vietnam permanent and extends trade benefits with a number of countries, including Haiti.

Permanent normal trade relations, or PNTR, would exempt Vietnam from annual trade reviews based on human rights and other criteria.

Critics of the provision charged that Vietnam has failed to make adequate progress on human-rights issues. Also, a number of textile-state senators have raised concerns about the impact of the bill's Haiti provisions, charging that it would cause further job losses in the textile industry.

Concerns also remain about the scope of the tax package.

Senate Budget Committee Chairman Judd Gregg, R-N.H., has complained about the tax package's price tag, particularly a provision that boosts the Abandoned Mine Land fund to shore up health benefits to some retired coal workers.

Gregg charges that the provision shifts costs from coal companies to taxpayers, increasing the deficit by \$4 billion over 10 years.

The bill, in a bid to appease conservative House Republicans upset over the coal provisions, also included language designed to make health savings accounts more palatable. The HSA-related tax breaks total \$1.035 billion over 10 years.

The package also includes a provision that prevents the administration from imposing a 5% cut in Medicare payments to doctors.

William L. Watts covers Congress and politics for MarketWatch.

**US Congress backs Vietnam trade**  
**BBC News**  
**December 9, 2006**

The United States Congress has passed landmark legislation normalising trade ties with Vietnam. The legislation sweeps aside trade curbs in place since the Vietnam War.

The bill had suffered a defeat last month in the House of Representatives ahead of President George W Bush's first visit to Vietnam.

The vote was one of several which the outgoing Republican-controlled Congress has been trying to pass before the Democratic Party takes over in January.

The trade vote package also expanded trade relations with Haiti, and tweaked Washington's trade preferences with several states in Latin America and beyond.

Senators sceptical

The failure of Congress to pass the bill normalising trade relations with Hanoi was seen as an embarrassment for Mr Bush before he visited Vietnam for an economic summit in November.

This legislation is about working together with Vietnam to heal the wounds of the war

Rob Simmons  
Congressman

Max Baucus, the top Democrat senator on the Senate Finance Committee, told Reuters news agency the bill "makes certain that more US-made goods will get into Vietnam's markets".

"This legislation is about more than economics," Republican Rob Simmons, a Vietnam veteran, said during the debate in the House of Representatives on Friday.

"This legislation is about working together with Vietnam to heal the wounds of the war."

The trade package also allows the conflict-ridden Caribbean island nation of Haiti to increase duty-free exports of clothing and textiles to the US, with some conditions.

Representatives said this should serve as a signal to other nations to trade with Haiti.

But there is opposition to the bill from some senators fearful that the textile deal with Haiti might cost American jobs.

The trade legislation also renews trade preferences with the Andean Community of Nations, namely Peru, Colombia, Bolivia and Ecuador.

But the deal, which is linked to the fight against drugs, will be replaced by bilateral agreements from next year. Peru and Colombia have signed bilateral trade deals with the US, but Bolivia and Ecuador have not.

Correspondents say Democrats may take a tough line in the new year on ratifying pending bilateral deals with Colombia and Peru.

**Congress's Last Acts Include Tax Breaks  
Postal, Trade Bills Wrap Up Session  
By Jonathan Weisman and Stephen Barr  
Washington Post  
Sunday, December 10, 2006**

The rancorous 109th Congress adjourned yesterday morning with final passage of measures to expand civilian nuclear trade with India, establish permanent trade relations with Vietnam and extend a bevy of expiring business tax breaks.

Legislation that would overhaul the U.S. Postal Service for the first time since 1970 and could hold down the cost of mailing letters also cleared the Congress and was sent to the president. A presidential commission and the Government Accountability Office had called for changes in how the Postal Service operates as Americans increasingly communicate and do business through e-mail and the Internet.

But last-minute Republican budget squabbles marred the final hours of a Congress already tainted by scandal, indictments and resignations, and ushered out Republican control on a discordant note. The 109th Congress ended having logged fewer days of legislative activity than even the infamous "Do-Nothing Congress" of 1948.

"You know, it's sort of that old Pogo line, 'We've met the enemy, and he is us,' " fumed Senate Budget Committee Chairman Judd Gregg (R-N.H.), as the Republican-controlled Congress moved toward final passage of tax cuts and spending measures that would expand the budget deficit.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) ended his own Senate career and called the Congress adjourned at 4:35 a.m., telling a near-empty Capitol, "I will truly miss each and every one of you."

The centerpiece of the closing hours' work was a tax-and-trade bill. The measure temporarily extended expiring tax breaks for business research and development and for hiring people off the welfare rolls, a partial college tuition deduction, and energy conservation incentives. It extended a generous deduction for state and local sales taxes that was slipped into a business tax law in 2004 as a temporary measure to win votes in states without income taxes but is taking on an air of permanence.

The huge package also contained measures to permanently normalize trade with Vietnam and extend trade benefits for four Andean nations, sub-Saharan African countries and Haiti. The Haiti provision was strongly challenged by some Southern lawmakers, who said it would further erode jobs in their states' textile industries.

The U.S.-India nuclear cooperation deal set aside years of U.S. nonproliferation policy that forbids the trade of nuclear-reactor technologies to nations that refused to sign the international nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, such as India. A strong bipartisan majority argued that the policy was an impediment to improved relations between the world's largest democracies. President Bush hailed the action as a means of enabling India and the United States to work together to promote energy production without polluting the atmosphere or contributing to global warming.

Democrats secured a provision blocking an automatic pay raise for Congress until Feb. 16, when a stopgap spending measure to keep the government operating is set to expire. Democratic leaders had argued that Congress should not get a pay hike until lawmakers approve the first increase in the minimum wage since 1997, a measure they hope to pass well before mid-February.

But debate that stretched into the morning yesterday centered on the fiscal stewardship of a Republican Congress that saw record budget surpluses turn into record deficits. Gregg and a handful of other Republican budget hawks held up passage of the tax-and-trade bill because the measure's 10-year, \$50 billion price tag would void deficit-control measures. Ultimately, the Senate overrode those objections.

The Postal Service measure has been in negotiation for the past three years. The Postal Service is a linchpin of the economy, touching more than 9 million jobs and about \$900 billion in commerce.

Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), a chief sponsor, called the bill "great news for the future of an institution that is critical to our economy and will ensure the continuation of universal postal service at an affordable rate."

The legislation would replace the lengthy and litigious process used to raise the price of stamps and some other postal rates with a price cap, limiting rate increases to the rate of inflation for a 10-year period. The change would inject more predictability into postal increases, especially for the magazine industry and other large mailers. It also would permit the Postal Service to more quickly offer discounts for its services, such as promotional rates to attract business in holiday seasons.

The Postal Service also gets billions of dollars in financial relief under the bill. Costs for military pensions earned by postal workers during their time in the armed forces would be shifted from the Postal Service to the Treasury, the practice for most federal agencies. The bill also would release money from an escrow fund to cover postal retiree health-care liabilities.

The legislation would replace a rate-review commission with a more powerful Postal Regulatory Commission, which could set some postal rates and examine postal financial management practices.

Postmaster General John E. Potter congratulated House and Senate negotiators "for making reform a reality" and said the agency looks forward to implementing the changes.

"Over the long run, the whole postal system will, I believe, experience higher-quality service and lower cost than it would have," said Michael J. Critelli, chairman of the Mailing Industry CEO Council.

## **U.S. and Haiti at odds over deported criminals**

**Fri 8 Dec 2006**

**By Joseph Guylor Delva**

**Reuters**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Dec 8 - (Reuters) - Washington has threatened to punish Haiti if the troubled Caribbean country refuses to accept criminals deported from the United States, Haiti's prime minister said on Friday.

A U.S. embassy spokeswoman denied Washington had threatened to cut aid to its impoverished hemispheric neighbor.

Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis said he had discussed on several occasions with U.S. officials the threat that deported criminals posed to Haiti's fragile security. But instead of being inclined to reduce the number of deportations, the U.S. government told him it intends to increase them.

"The U.S. told us the number of deportees will rise from 25 to 100 per month," Alexis told Reuters.

"The U.S. administration has threatened to cut its assistance to the country and to revoke Haitian officials' visas if we refuse to receive those deportees," said Alexis.

Like other Caribbean countries struggling with rampant crime, such as Jamaica, Haitian authorities say criminals deported from the United States after serving prison sentences fuel violence and gang activity.

Many joined gangs as youths and their criminal experience and connections are highly valued by criminal organizations back home.

A spokeswoman for the U.S. embassy in Port-au-Prince said the two governments were in constant talks about deportees.

"At no time in these discussions did U.S. officials suggest that U.S. aid to Haiti was in jeopardy," she said. "The United States continues to be supportive of Haiti's efforts to address the security situation through a broad-based judicial and police reform."

Alexis and police chief Mario Andresol said deportees were heavily involved in a wave of kidnappings that has afflicted the capital Port-au-Prince.

Alexis said his government was not categorically opposed to accepting Haitians deported from the United States. But he said the deportations should be carried out with some care.

"Many of those deportees left Haiti when they were 3 or 5 years old. So they have learned to become criminals in the United States," said Alexis.

"We have asked the U.S. to help us build a high security prison to hold those deportees and we have asked them to send us the deportees before the end of their prison time," Alexis added, arguing that would improve the Haitian government's chances of controlling their activities.

The number of kidnappings has risen alarmingly in the Haitian capital in recent weeks.

The crime wave has largely ended a lull in violence which followed elections in February that brought President Rene Preval to power and ended the controversial rule of a nonelected interim administration appointed after ex-president Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in an rebellion in 2004.

## **U.S. denies threat on Haitian aid, visas in deportation dispute**

**The Associated Press**

**December 8, 2006**

**International Herald Tribune**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: The U.S. Embassy on Friday denied that Haiti's government was threatened with the suspension aid and travel visas if they tried to block the United States from deporting convicted Haitian criminals back to their homeland.

U.S. Embassy spokeswoman Shaila B. Manyam told The Associated Press that Haitian officials were only informed that American law allows the blocking of visas for officials from any country that refuses to accept its citizens after they have been convicted of crimes.

But Manyam, denying an assertion by Haitian Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis, said the U.S. did not warn Haitian officials that would be subject to the penalty.

"At no time in these discussions did U.S. officials suggest that U.S. aid to Haiti was in jeopardy," Manyam said.

Alexis, in an appearance before the Haitian legislature Thursday, criticized long-standing U.S. policy of deporting newly released Haitian convicts, blaming them for killings and kidnappings in the impoverished Caribbean nation.

He also said the U.S. planned to increase the number of criminals deported back to Haiti each month from 25 to 100.

Alexis said the move "would complicate the (security) situation" but told legislators he was warned that Haitians officials who don't cooperate risked a suspension in U.S. aid and loss of travel privileges to the United States.

Haiti and other nations have long complained that convicts deported from the U.S. fuel violent crime at home, a claim disputed by Washington.

Alexis told legislators that the kidnappers of former Haitian Finance Minister Fred Joseph, who was freed unharmed last week after three days in captivity, spoke English to one another.

Haiti's government doesn't track how many crimes are committed by people who have been deported, and no hard evidence exists to suggest they significantly affect crime in Haiti — which has a police force of 4,000 to patrol a country of 8 million.

More than 720 people have been slain in the former French colony this year, including 28 Haitian police officers, according to the Port-au-Prince-based National Defense Network for Human Rights.

## **Press Release**

### **PAHO and the European Commission launch partnership to aid Haiti, Guyana**

#### **Pan American Health Organization**

**December 7, 2006**

Washington, D.C., —The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) today launched a partnership to help alleviate poverty in Haiti and Guyana, as part of a partnership between the European Commission and the World Health Organization aimed at achieving Millennium Development Goals in health.

From the left: Angelos Pangratis, Deputy Head of Delegation of the European Commission in Washington, PAHO Director Dr. Mirta Roses, and Haiti's Ambassador to the OAS, Duly Brutus. Dr. Mirta Roses, Director of PAHO, said "This initiative will focus on making pregnancy safer, reducing the major burden of diseases like HIV and malaria, and working together as part of the poverty reduction strategy. It will be also a great opportunity for sharing experiences and developing mutual support between all countries benefited from this partnership."

Angelos Pangratis, Deputy Head of Delegation of the European Commission in Washington, said the commission "is extremely happy to see the development of this very important project for Haiti and Guyana. There is an important commitment in Brussels to develop this cooperation and the assistance of PAHO and WHO is a strategic issue for our institution. We see it as a first step of a longer commitment to work together."

The partnership includes 6 African countries in addition to Haiti and Guyana, and totals 23.9 million Euros over 4 years. For Guyana, the amount set aside is \$1.9 million, and for Haiti it is \$1 million.

Haiti's Ambassador to the OAS, Duly Brutus, said, "I want to thank the EU for this initiative. We have a government of consensus and we will be able to use this to fight poverty."

From Haiti, where PAHO's Assistant Director, Dr. Carissa Etienne, is leading a mission of the managers of the technical areas as part of PAHO intensified cooperation with Haiti, PAHO/WHO Representative Beatrice Bonnevaux also thanked the European Commission, saying this is a very positive development, given the tremendous needs and opportunities in Haiti.

WHO Assistant Director-General Dr. Joy Phumaphi, who participated from Geneva via teleconference, said "We look forward to making this very important project a success, and ensuring that we engage these communities fully."

Expected results of the partnership in the eight countries include ministries of health and finance jointly working on the role of health in development and poverty reduction, increases availability of skilled care for mothers and newborns, and better coordination on epidemic outbreaks through strengthened disease surveillance systems. The countries will also improve their health information systems, and some activities will be carried out at WHO headquarters in Geneva, PAHO headquarters in Washington, and the African regional office in Brazzaville.

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) was established in 1902 and is the world's oldest public health organization. It serves as the regional office of the World Health Organization, and works with all the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of their peoples.

**The Struggle for Decentralization in Rural Haiti**  
**Haiti Action Committee**  
**December 8, 2006**

IJDH — Fond des Blancs, Haiti - When the international media chose to bypass reporting on Haiti's municipal elections this past Sunday, it may have suited those responsible for organizing the election perfectly well.

After two years of mismanaged election funds, logistical failures, and technical problems that characterized much of the process to replace the extra-constitutionally selected Interim Government of Haiti (IGH), the Provisional Electoral Council, the U.N.'s peacekeeping and stabilization mission in Haiti, MINUSTAH, the European Union, the governments of the United States and Canada, and the IGH itself may have felt more relief than satisfaction when the polls closed finally closed Sunday evening.

In this third and final stage of voting, Haitians voted 1,420 candidates into offices at the level of local government. In each of Haiti's ten departments, voters cast ballots for cartels of three commune magistrates that will govern each municipality for the next four years along with cartels of three commune section administrators, known as CASECS, and their parliamentary counterparts, the Communal Section Assembly members, known as ASECS. In theory, the CASECS play an administrative roll in each communal section while the ASECS undertake the dual responsibility of counseling the CASECS and acting as their budget watchdogs during the same four years.

But in rural Fond des Blancs, an area ninety kilometers southwest of Port-au-Prince that occupies the four western-most sections of the commune of Aquin, the voters did not move on so quickly. In fact, a significant representation of the 45,000 predominately illiterate peasants that call Fond des Blancs home stood surrounding the makeshift voting center long after many of them had voted, as if watching the event unfold meant just as much to them as casting a ballot.

Among those present outside the small courthouse was Briel Levielle, a longtime leader of his community and the current director of Fond des Blancs' largest peasant cooperative. To Briel, watching his community participate in electing their neighbors to local government posts, the day was a quiet commemorative to Fond des Blancs' two-decade struggle to move from its dictatorial past to a fully functional component of a decentralized Haitian state.

Sunday's municipal elections were another delayed attempt to respect Haiti's 1987 constitution that affords communities like Fond des Blancs the right to have representation in the national decision making process. While the constitution now supports government-recognized and financed administration positions at the commune section level, the real hope of this years election is that Preval's government can finally bring to fruition Haiti's ASEC system, an advisory structure that, in theory, should form a pyramid of parliamentary counterparts to every level of executive power from the local CASECS in each commune section to President Preval himself. Essentially, each commune section sends one ASEC to the commune's Municipal Assembly. Each Municipal Assembly then sends one ASEC to the commune's Department Assembly, each of which sends one representative to the Interdepartmental Assembly. Along the way, the ASECS are empowered to nominate judges for peace courts at the municipal level and nominate members of Haiti's Permanent Election Council (CEP).

Should the system function as proposed, these responsibilities would be of particular importance to communities like Fond des Blancs, which have suffered a repeated history of neglect by Haiti's government.

Briel Levielle remembers when Fond des Blancs was considered a "Komin Riral," or a rural commune, run by the repressive "Kod Riral," the rural code of Francois Duvalier, which placed Section Chiefs at the head of each commune section. At this time in Fond des Blancs, Tonton Macoutes, the feared paramilitary thugs of the Duvalier dictatorship, filled the role of Section Chiefs, using terror tactics to keep the community quiet, fearful, and powerless.

Only with courageous participation in community mobilization projects, such as "Ti Legliz," Haiti's liberation theology movement, were these rural communities able to begin instigating changes in their local power structures. In Fond des Blancs, Briel became involved with a branch of "Ti Legliz" called "Fraternité Le Engaje," or The Fraternity of Engaged Laypersons. The group used religious-based arguments for taking progressive action against the rural code of Francois Duvalier that eventually led to the creation of a provisional form of CASEC after the departure of Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1986. The three community members nominated to "KAZEK Pwoviswa" - provisional section councils - immediately began working to reform the local administrative position so that Fond des Blancs' local government, in Briel's words, "would not beat people down, but instead, help them to develop each commune section."

After two more years of mobilization that included the bloodied, failed elections of 1987, critical changes made to Haiti's constitution the same year would allow Briel and two other community members to beat out a cartel of Tonton Macoutes that had stayed on in the commune to become the community's first official CASECS in January of 1988.

However, despite the constitutional support for the office of CASEK, the governments of Aristide and Preval working successively to pay back the international community for debts accrued primarily under the Duvalier family dictatorship, could not finance the positions. For twelve years, Briel tended to the administrative responsibilities of Fond des Blancs as CASEC entirely voluntarily, while the ASEC system, though on the 1995 presidential ballot, would never function at all.

The financial problems persisted when Briel stepped down in the 2000 presidential election. Though the office of CASEC did appear on the presidential ballot, a continued lack of funding for the position would force all elected CASECS in Fond des Blancs to quit their posts or continue on a volunteer basis in 2003, preceding the ousting of President Aristide by ex-military officers in 2004.

In last Sunday's election, the parties responsible for organizing the municipal elections again dishonored the hard-won progress by Haitians to decentralize Haiti's government by failing to provide adequate funding for both the election and the candidates' campaigns leading up to it. On the day of the election, the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP), the Interim Government of Haiti, and MINUSTAH used for the third time this year a scattering voting centers that differed little from what the government had use when Fond des Blancs was still considered a rural commune under the rural code of Francois Duvalier. Specifically, the organizers spread a total of five voting centers across ten square miles of mountainous terrain to serve Fond des Blancs' roughly 21,000 eligible voters, the majority of

whom can only travel by animal or foot. This, despite the CEP's boasting to the media that it had opened 32 new voting centers across the country to assure the election's "success."

Then, having already spent all municipal election funds on the year's previous two elections, no candidates in Fond des Blancs receive any financial aid for their campaigns as promised, even after the candidates had paid the fees to register their candidacies. The community also received no explanation of the complex CASEC and ASEC system beyond what members of the community more familiar with the system could offer.

People like Frékel Georges, a candidate for CASEC in the central-most section of Fond des Blancs, said he was left to speak at several churches and social organization meetings to both introduce his platform to voters as well as explain the role of the office for which he was running. In keeping with his own desire to participate in the decentralization of Haiti's government, his cartel wants create committees in each neighborhood of his commune section that would meet with the CASECS to both advise the CASECS and distribute administrative duties across the section.

As surely as the organizers have already moved past Sunday's election, Frékel and his fellow newly-elected CASECS and ASECS are now left to wonder about the future of their offices. Although the U.S. State Department has praised Haiti's 2007 fiscal budget as "demonstrating sound fiscal policy," is the United States ready to support Haiti in its efforts to finance a decentralized Haitian government? Will the U.S. Congress and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) move quickly enough to relieve Haiti of its onerous debt, a burden that has repeatedly contributed to hampering Haiti's full realization of the ASEC system? Will the International Monetary Fund, which has finally approved Haiti for its Heavily-Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative, similarly allow President Preval to begin spending funds from Haiti's modest fiscal budget on the local posts in a timely manner, even in rural areas of the country? If not, how long will Haitians living in communities like Fond des Blancs have to wait until their poverty no longer overrules their constitution?

J.P. Shuster is a volunteer for the St. Boniface Haiti Foundation. He lives and works in Fond des Blancs, Haiti.

**IDB Debt Cancellation for Haiti**  
**Debayani Kar and Tom Ricker**  
**December 7, 2006**  
**Editor: Emily Schwartz Greco, IPS**  
**Foreign Policy In Focus [www.fpif.org](http://www.fpif.org)**

Members of the international community got a tongue lashing at a recent donors conference on Haiti, attended by more than 90 delegations of countries and international organizations.

After numerous press announcements and pledges of assistance, totaling nearly \$1.8 billion over the past two years, promises “have not been kept,” according to Dominican Republic foreign minister Carlos Morales Troncoso. Morales further criticized participants from the U.S. and other rich country governments for blaming Haiti for this failure, rather than their own practices.

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), with a newly announced, but ill-defined plan to cancel Haiti’s debt may well become one of those donors who fail to deliver.

IDB President Luis Alberto Moreno trumpeted the new debt initiative, which also includes Honduras, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Guyana, saying: “This is great news for the more than 30 million people in these five countries.” Yet, since the November 17 announcement, campaigners have been scrambling to determine just what this “news” will mean for impoverished peoples in the five countries.

**The IDB “Plan”**

The IDB announced that its Board of Governors had agreed to a “framework for debt relief,” and that the Governors will meet again in January to hammer out details in Amsterdam, hopefully announcing a final decision at the IDB’s March annual meeting in Guatemala. The IDB hasn’t yet disclosed details of the framework under consideration.

However, several news reports circulating the next day indicated a more substantial decision. Apparently quoting from a draft agreement, Heartbeat News from Jamaica reported “The principles of the framework stipulate that 100 percent debt relief be granted, with effect from January 1, 2007, to the five countries, which will continue to have access to concessional loans and technical cooperation grants from the IDB.”

The persistence of poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean has been an important campaign issue in numerous presidential elections this year, especially in Haiti and Nicaragua. The debt burdens in these five eligible countries combined with harmful economic policies imposed on them through loan and debt relief programs by rich country creditors, severely limit resources available to governments to invest in basic services such as health care and education.

Thus the IDB announcement was welcome news. In Haiti, impoverished people cannot afford to continue to service this debt burden. In 2005, the Haitian government spent more than \$70 million on debt payments, a significant portion of its budget. Yet less than half of the population has access to basic rights such as healthcare, education, and potable water. The World Bank estimates that three-quarters of Haiti’s 8 million people live in poverty; half the population lives on less than \$1 per day.

Officials close to the debt negotiations have not confirmed the January implementation date, and this will be under discussion in Amsterdam. The stipulation of 100% debt cancellation is technically accurate, but highly misleading.

What will be cancelled is 100% of debts accrued prior to a yet to be established date, possibly debts accrued before the end of 2004. For months, IDB board members and officials have discussed this “cut-off date” with an eye towards canceling a total of \$3.5 billion in debt for all five eligible countries. However, a leaked November IDB staff paper suggested reducing the proposed amount of debt cancellation by almost \$2 billion from \$3.5 billion to \$1.6. Such a steep reduction in the benefits from this debt deal to these impoverished countries is unacceptable.

### Odious Debt

Many of these IDB debts were initially contracted during the 1960s and 1970s. The high interest rates that prevailed in the 1980s resulted in ever-increasing debts. Much of this debt is also “odious” under international legal precedent, meaning creditors knowingly lent to undemocratic or illegitimate regimes, and the funds did not benefit the population in these impoverished countries. This provides a compelling argument for immediate and broad cancellation.

In Haiti, more than half the country’s debt was contracted by the Duvalier family dictatorship (1957-1986). Harvard economist Michael Kremer reports that Jean-Claude Duvalier stole \$900 million from the Haitian people. According to a 2006 UN sponsored census, half of Haiti’s population was born after the Duvalier era and forced to carry this debt burden from birth. The Haitian people were not consulted about these loans, and received little benefit from them. But now they are forced to repay them. It is unjust that Haiti is being asked to comply with economic policies such as privatization of basic services or increased trade liberalization before obtaining full debt cancellation.

Guyana, Honduras, Bolivia, and Nicaragua each have a history of odious and illegitimate debt as well. Though specifics vary, the general pattern of international financial institutions, including the IDB, issuing loans to dictatorial regimes holds true. In Nicaragua under Somoza, loans were readily given including a last minute loan from the International Monetary Fund for \$65 million nine weeks before the collapse of the regime in 1979. Somoza left an international debt of \$1.6 billion—the highest ratio of debt to GDP in Latin America at the time. In Bolivia support for military governments during the period 1965-1978 was constant, including General Hugo Banzer (1971-1978) who waged a campaign of murder against priests of liberation theology. By the end of that period Bolivia’s international debt was \$3 billion. Guyana under Forbes Burnham’s government (1964-1985) was increasingly the site of numerous human rights violations, including the assassinations of scholar and political leader Walter Rodney in 1980 and the Jesuit Priest Bernard Drake in 1979. Yet the country was still able to receive loans for most of this period.

### Haiti’s Special Case

Because ultimately it is the people, not the government, that pays these debt burdens, justice requires immediate cancellation for all of these countries. However, in Haiti’s case, justice will likely be delayed even further. Indeed, whatever is ultimately decided on both the date of implementation and the “cut-off”, Haiti will face a delay of at least two years before obtaining 100% cancellation. Unlike the other four countries in the IDB plan, Haiti has yet to complete the International Monetary Fund

(IMF) and World Bank's debt relief program, which is required for Haiti to see its debt cancelled to any international financial institution including the IDB.

The IMF and World Bank's debt relief program requires countries to first implement a series of harmful economic reforms such as privatization of basic services before obtaining debt cancellation. Haiti was admitted into the IMF and World Bank's program (or HIPC, Heavily Indebted Poor Countries, Initiative) in April. The government is now committed to undergo a minimum of two years of structural reform before reaching "completion point" in the program and being granted debt relief.

Providing for immediate debt cancellation, without forcing Haiti to go through the IMF and World Bank's HIPC program, is quite manageable. The government has already submitted an interim poverty reduction strategy that could easily be extended, and thus provide the basis for accountability into the future. Haiti is facing an institutional crisis more extreme than any other country in the region.

Haiti has one of the lowest public employment rates in the world; the impact of this is seen in the lack of public schools and public health services. Savings from debt cancellation would have an immediate impact on the capacity of the state to enhance desperately needed services. It would also save lives.

On December 5 Jubilee South called for an International Day of Solidarity with Haiti, with the principle demand being immediate cancellation of debts. We would encourage the IDB to listen. A debt relief program that extends into two or three years risks missing an opportunity to have an impact on the current crisis. Indeed, delays coupled with intrusive policy conditions could make things worse.

The international community has made many promises to Haiti over the last two years and has mostly failed to deliver. We hope the IDB chooses a different road.

Debayani Kar is Communications and Advocacy Coordinator at Jubilee USA Network and Tom Ricker is Co-Director of Haiti Reborn/Quixote Center. They are contributors to Foreign Policy In Focus.

**DeWine's enduring interest in Haiti**  
**The Cincinnati Post**  
**December 9, 2006**

<http://news.cincypost.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20061209/EDIT/612090302/1003>

WASHINGTON - It is fitting that in one of his final acts as a lawmaker, Sen. Mike DeWine returned to a tiny, impoverished land that he has visited often during his congressional career.

The Cedarville Republican spent three days last week going back over familiar ground in Haiti.

DeWine did the things a U.S. senator usually does when he steps onto foreign soil. He met with the Haitian leader - President Rene Preval - to talk about security and about a trade bill that officials hope will boost the economy of the poor Caribbean nation.

He also got a briefing from U.S. ambassador Janet Sanderson and checked in with the United Nations, which updated him on what its peacekeeping forces in Haiti are doing and about the overall security of the country.

But DeWine's interest in Haiti has gone far beyond his official duties as a senator. The senator and his wife, Fran, have raised thousands of dollars over the years to help provide food and medical supplies to the inhabitants of Cite Soleil, a slum in Port-au-Prince that is home to the poorest of the poor.

So, on DeWine's last trip as a senator, they met up again with Father Tom Hagan, a Catholic priest who runs an agency that provides aid to the inhabitants of Port-au-Prince and Haiti in general. Hagan also runs a school in Cite Soleil that was named a few years back after the DeWines' daughter, Becky, who died in a car crash in 1993.

On this trip, the DeWines (who paid for the trip themselves, according to the senator) were accompanied by another daughter - Alice, a 23-year-old law student.

The threesome came bearing gifts for children at the school.

Fran DeWine and other members of the family had collected toys - everything from soccer balls to Beanie Babies. So many people donated toys that every one of the 4,500 children at the school ended up with a gift.

For the senator, whose congressional career officially ends at the close of the year, the trip may have been his last while in office.

But it won't be his last.

DeWine, who lost his re-election bid last month to Democrat Sherrod Brown, said his interest in the island nation won't go away just because he is no longer in the Senate. He expects to return to Haiti again as a private citizen. How could he not, when there is still so much sickness and poverty to overcome?

"We have an interest in what's going on in Haiti, and there are people that we are trying to help down there," he said. "Basically, we are helping people who are helping other people. That's the way it works."

DeWine was struck by the human suffering when he first set foot on the island as a freshman senator a decade ago. At the time, not many Republicans had taken much interest in Haiti and its people.

The Clinton administration had just returned Jean-Bertrand Aristide to the presidency, and Haiti had become a divisive issue in American politics

DeWine, a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, felt that a bipartisan approach was needed on foreign policy. So off he went to Haiti. He would return 15 more times over the next decade.

To those who may question why the United States should care about what goes on in a small, dirt-poor country, DeWine offers a couple of reasons:

One, Haiti is literally in America's back yard and is where many illegal drugs pass through on their way to the United States. "It's a country that clearly concerns us, if for nothing more than selfish reasons and if for nothing more than our own national interests," DeWine said.

Two, the misery there is so overwhelming that to do nothing would be inconceivable. "It's a place where you see unbelievable poverty, which manifests itself in children dying because they don't have enough to eat and they don't have enough medical care," DeWine said.

You might think that knowing this was his last trip as a senator would've made it a particularly emotional experience. Not so, DeWine said.

"What's emotional about going to a place like Haiti is to see the kids who are dying," he said. "That's what's emotional about it."

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## **Wyclef Jean Hopes for a New Haiti**

**E-Z Tracks**

**Lisa Rogers**

**12.09.2006**

Actually, Wyclef Jean is doing much more than hoping. Recently, Wyclef performed for more than 20,000 fans at a Haitian resort town – this was Wyclef’s first musical performance in Haiti in close to 10 years. Wyclef urged his fellow Haitians to reject the violence that has plagued their island nation; he urged them to work towards stability.

Wyclef’s show was a free one – the hope was simply to promote development. And, if that was his goal, it appears it was achieved. However, how long before real changes are made? No one knows. One thing to remember though is that Haiti’s inhabitants allegedly live on less than two bucks a day meaning that development would be relatively inexpensive; not only that, but the dollar would go a long way to making a big difference.

Wyclef also explained to the concert goers that if the kidnappings and violence doesn’t stop, then the country will be unable to move forwards and beyond.

**Haiti Election Victors this Weekend**  
**Prensa Latina**  
**December 9, 2006**

Port-au-Prince, The first results of the municipal legislative and local elections held in Haiti on December 3 will be known this weekend, authorities said here Friday.

Provisional Electoral Commission (CEP) director Jacques Bernard revealed most of the information is available at the voting center, with 280,000 technicians.

These working teams have the experience of the two first elections held this year, the parliamentary and presidential ones.

The electoral cycle will be completed after these results, and besides, completion of the Parliament, the judicial system and the Electoral Permanent Council.

Jurisdiction of some of the 1,420 posts in dispute was in the hands of representatives of the provisional government led by Gerard Latortue, chosen in the two years before.

Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis was satisfied with the organization of these elections, and said "the process for local development is now beginning."

## **Wyclef Jean Wants 'To Build a New Haiti'**

**The Associated Press**

**The Washington Post**

**Sunday, December 3, 2006**

JACMEL, Haiti -- Wyclef Jean called on his Haitian countrymen to reject violence and work for a stable future during a free concert aimed at promoting development in the impoverished nation.

"It's time to build a new Haiti," the Grammy-winning artist told more than 20,000 cheering fans Friday night at the waterfront pier of this resort town. It was his first concert in Haiti in eight years.

The concert capped off a weeklong film and culture festival organized by Jean's Yele Haiti charity, which promotes music and the arts as a way to reduce poverty, create jobs and improve Haiti's image.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and most of its 8 million people live on less than \$2 per day. The Caribbean country is struggling to recover from a bloody 2004 revolt that toppled former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Jean, a Haitian citizen who lives in the United States, condemned the ongoing street violence that has followed the revolt, especially a wave of kidnappings for ransom that have plagued the capital, Port-au-Prince.

"If we don't stop kidnappings, the country can't develop," Jean said.

Jean was born in Haiti but left for the United States with his family at age 9. He later achieved world fame through his hip-hop band, The Fugees.

**Haiti Floods Kill 3, Wash Away Roads**  
**By Associated Press**  
**The Los Angeles Times**  
**December 5, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Floods triggered by nearly two weeks of heavy rain have washed away roads and bridges, wiped out crops and killed at least three people in western Haiti, the International Red Cross said Tuesday.

The destruction has been most severe in the rural departments of Grande Anse and Nippes, along the impoverished Caribbean nation's vulnerable southwestern peninsula. Flooding has also affected the northwestern town of Port-de-Paix.

Haitian Red Cross workers have been providing first aid to injured residents and moving flood-stricken villagers to temporary shelters, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said.

The Geneva-based group said it has asked donors for \$522,800 to buy hygiene kits, water, blankets and mosquito nets for 17,500 people affected by flooding.

The rain began Nov. 22, unleashing flash floods that killed livestock, damaged two hospitals and isolated many remote villages in the heavily deforested country.

In August, Hurricane Ernesto washed away wooden shacks and killed at least two people along Haiti's peninsula.

**AP Interview: Leaving Senate, senator keeps Haiti as his private aid project**  
**The Associated Press**  
**December 5, 2006**  
**International Herald Tribune**

WASHINGTON: Sen. Mike DeWine is leaving the Senate after 12 years, but he says he will keep working as a private citizen to help the fight against AIDS and poverty in Haiti, an interest he developed during his two terms.

DeWine, a Republican, has been to the Caribbean country about 16 times. On his latest trip, DeWine met with Haitian President Rene Preval and checked on projects he has helped finance over the years as a member of the Senate committee in charge of spending. Principal among them were AIDS treatment by Harvard University medical anthropologist Paul Farmer and Haitian infectious disease specialist Jean William Pape and an orphanage for HIV-infected children.

Some politicians, such as former President Bill Clinton, have said they found ways to be more effective once they left public office. DeWine said he does not know if that will be the case for him, but he is eager to use his personal fortune to help with projects in Haiti, Guatemala and elsewhere.

"Even if we can't save the whole country, we can save one child at a time," DeWine said.

Financial statements gathered by the Center for Responsive Politics show his net worth in 2005 was between \$11.5 million (€3.6 million) and \$47.5 million (€15.6 million), which made him the 13th richest senator.

DeWine's support for much of President George W. Bush's Iraq policies and a longstanding association with the Ohio Republican Party made him a victim of voters' anti-Republican fervor in the Nov. 7 elections. After cruising to two previous Senate wins, he lost to Democrat Sherrod Brown by 12 percentage points as Democrats swept to power in both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

"If he wants to do humanitarian projects, he could write his own ticket on that, and it certainly would be welcome," said Rocky Saxbe, a former Ohio state legislator who has known DeWine for three decades and served as the senator's campaign attorney.

As optimistic as he is about his long-term, private humanitarian work, DeWine is pessimistic about what he can do for Haiti in his remaining few days in the Senate. He had hoped his colleagues would pass his bill to offer trade incentives to Haiti to encourage governmental reforms but said he would be surprised if it should get a vote.

His amendment to increase the Global Fund to Fight AIDS by \$100 million (€35 million) also probably will be left on the table when the Senate cuts the session short.

**8 People Die During Gang Feud in Haiti**  
**Thursday, December 07, 2006**  
**Fox News**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — At least eight people were killed in a Haitian slum during a gang feud set off by the weekend murder of a police officer, a U.N. official said.

A former rebel leader who helped topple Haiti's first freely elected president criticized its newest one, accusing President Rene Preval's government of being soft on armed gangs and failing to stem a bloody tide of street violence.

Breaking a long silence, Guy Philippe said efforts by Preval and Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis to negotiate a peace agreement with the gangs has not reduced killings and kidnappings in the capital of Port-au-Prince.

"The Alexis-Preval government hasn't done anything to stop the insecurity," Philippe said in an interview Tuesday with Haitian broadcaster Radio Metropole. "The prime minister is still negotiating with gangs ... and there have been no results."

Philippe's remarks, his first in months, add to growing calls by Haitian legislators and business leaders for a tougher stance against the gangs, which clash frequently with each other, and with U.N. peacekeepers in Port-au-Prince's slums.

The latest to fall appeared to be gang members shot to death between Sunday and Tuesday, U.N. police spokesman Fred Blaze said Wednesday.

The violence in the Martissant slum erupted Sunday after unknown attackers shot and killed an off-duty police officer who had just voted in local and municipal elections.

The officer's killing reignited an ongoing battle between the rival Grand Ravine and Ti Manchet gangs, which are blamed for a wave of shootings and killings in recent months, Blaze said. The link between the officer's death and the gang killings was not immediately clear.

Haitian television showed images Tuesday night of victims laying face down in the street, their arms and legs bound. The bodies of two victims were found burned inside a car.

Barricades of flaming tires went up around the slum Wednesday morning as residents fled, traumatized by three days of shooting, local media reported.

U.N. peacekeepers have increased patrols in the area but were limited in how much they could do, Blaze said.

"Whenever they want to fight, they wait for our patrols to leave and start fighting. That's why it's been so hard" to prevent attacks, he said.

An 8,800-strong U.N. peacekeeping force arrived in Haiti in June 2004 to stabilize the impoverished Caribbean nation.

Philippe, an ex-police chief, was the main leader of a 2004 rebel uprising that ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. He retreated from the spotlight after losing his bid for the presidency in February elections to Preval, Aristide's former ally.

## **Violence mars Haiti's local elections, one killed**

**04 Dec 2006**

**Reuters**

**By Joseph Guyler Delva**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti- An off-duty police officer was killed and several people were wounded on Sunday during local elections in Haiti, police said.

The officer was shot in the head by gunmen near the slum of Martissant in the capital, Port-au-Prince, police Inspector General Jean Saint-Fleur said.

"We have opened an investigation into the murder of the policeman and other acts of violence while we try to keep the situation under control," said Saint-Fleur.

The motive for the killing was not immediately clear but a witness said the police officer was killed after a dispute with two people linked with a political party.

Haitians were choosing more than 1,000 mayors and other local officials out of more than 29,000 candidates.

The winners of the elections will control the nomination process for an electoral council that will organize elections for the next decade. Victory also gives the winning party authority over the nomination process of judges and executive powers for local administrations.

Two people were injured by gunfire during incidents resulting from a conflict among rival candidates in the northern city of Gonaives, while two other people who possessed handmade bombs were wounded by police in the town of Limonade.

Heavy gunfire was heard through the weekend in several slum areas in the capital such as Martissant and Fontamara.

Police said they had arrested several people who tried to enter polling centers with guns or were involved in electoral fraud.

Witnesses reported a series of electoral frauds in the capital, Gonaives, Hinche and Jeremie.

"I saw with my own eyes a poll worker fraudulently inserting ballots into the box," said Maxon Maurice, who complained he couldn't find his name on the voters' list in a polling center in the capital. Officials at the polling center denied the allegation.

Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, held a presidential election in February, its first election since then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted by a bloody rebellion two years earlier. In that vote, Rene Preval was declared the winner after he alleged massive fraud at polling stations.

**Canadian election observer shot and wounded in Haiti**  
**Canadian Press**  
**Thursday, December 07, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - A Canadian election observer was shot and slightly wounded by a stray bullet while driving in Haiti's capital, an election watchdog said Wednesday.

Cheickh Bangoura, an observer with the Canadian Mission for Accompanying Haitian Elections, or CMAHE, was driving to his Port-au-Prince hotel Monday night when a man began firing wildly from the back of a pickup truck taxi, or tap-tap, the group said in a statement.

A bullet pierced the windshield of Bangoura's car and lodged in his arm. He was treated at a UN military hospital and had surgery Tuesday to have the bullet removed.

There is no indication Bangoura was targeted in the shooting and no other injuries were reported, CMAHE said.

The shooting happened a day after Bangoura, an Ottawa resident, helped observe Haiti's local and municipal elections. Officials said the vote went well, despite isolated violence that left at least four people dead throughout the Caribbean country.

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**Inmates flee through wall of infamous Haiti prison**  
**The Associated Press**  
**International Herald Tribune**  
**December 5, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti: As many as 30 inmates burrowed through a prison wall and escaped in the latest in a string of breakouts from Haiti's largest penitentiary, police said Tuesday.

Describing Monday's daylight breakout, witnesses told local media that prisoners waited for a police patrol to pass before slipping through the 50-centimeter (20-inch) hole and fleeing the overcrowded National Penitentiary, just blocks from Haiti's National Palace.

Police quickly cordoned off the area and searched houses for the inmates. It wasn't immediately clear how many escaped, but officials said up to 30 prisoners may be missing.

Police Inspector General Fritz Jean told reporters the escape was under investigation, and private radio Kiskeya reported that four prison guards had been arrested on suspicion of involvement.

In July, 26 Haitian convicts deported from the United States escaped from a holding cell at the National Penitentiary.

In Feb. 2005, nearly 500 prisoners escaped from the National Penitentiary in a jail break allegedly aided by corrupt guards who unlocked the doors and allowed inmates to flee.

A year earlier, hundreds of prisoners escaped amid the chaos of a revolt that toppled former president Jean Bertrand Aristide on Feb. 29, 2004.

The prison was built nearly 100 years ago to house 800 prisoners but reportedly holds twice that number, many of whom have languished in squalor for years while awaiting resolution of their case.

When President Rene Preval took the oath of office in May, inmates rioted and gathered on the prison roof where they held aloft signs demanding their freedom.

## **Canadian election observer shot in Haiti**

**James Gordon,  
CanWest News Service;**

**Ottawa Citizen**

**Wednesday, December 06, 2006**

OTTAWA - An Ottawa man working as an election observer in Haiti was recovering in hospital Tuesday after being shot in the arm.

Canadian officials say Cheickh Bangoura was wounded when a passenger in a Haitian taxi, also called a taptap, began randomly firing a gun in all directions Monday night.

One bullet penetrated the windshield of Bangoura's vehicle and lodged in the arm he lifted to protect himself.

Bangoura is currently working for the Canadian Mission for Accompanying Haitian Elections. It is slated to leave the country Dec. 13 following the final vote of a three-part electoral process that ended last Sunday.

Robert Lussier, an analyst and spokesman for the mission, said Bangoura underwent successful surgery Tuesday morning to remove the bullet.

"He's recovering extremely well and he will probably be out of the hospital tomorrow morning," Lussier said in a telephone interview from Port-au-Prince.

According to officials, Bangoura respected security guidelines leading up to the incident and was in an authorized area that was considered safe. They do not believe election observers were the target of the shooting.

It is not yet known whether anyone else was hurt during the incident.

Jean-Pierre Kingsley, Canada's chief electoral officer and head of the Canadian mission in Haiti, said in a written statement the incident "reminds us that the safety of our observers is paramount and that we will continue to scrupulously respect the safety instructions and security advisories issued daily by (the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti)."

Four Haitians were killed during Sunday's municipal elections and tear gas had to be fired once to break up a disturbance at a polling station. Despite the incidents, United Nations officials have said they were satisfied with the process.

Ottawa Citizen

**Ex-rebel: Haiti failed to stem violence**  
**THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
**Seattle Post Intelligencer**  
**December 7, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- A former rebel leader who helped topple Haiti's first freely elected president criticized its newest one, accusing President Rene Preval's government of being soft on armed gangs and failing to stem a bloody tide of street violence.

Breaking a long silence, Guy Philippe said efforts by Preval and Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis to negotiate a peace agreement with the gangs has not reduced killings and kidnappings in the capital of Port-au-Prince.

"The Alexis-Preval government hasn't done anything to stop the insecurity," Philippe said in an interview Tuesday with Haitian broadcaster Radio Metropole. "The prime minister is still negotiating with gangs ... and there have been no results."

Philippe's remarks, his first in months, add to growing calls by Haitian legislators and business leaders for a tougher stance against the gangs, which clash frequently with U.N. peacekeepers in Port-au-Prince's slums.

The ex-police chief was the main leader of a 2004 rebel uprising that ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. He retreated from the spotlight after losing his bid for the presidency in February elections to Preval, Aristide's former ally.

**8 People Die During Gang Feud in Haiti**  
**At least 8 people killed during a gang feud in a Haitian slum**  
**CBS News**  
**December 7, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti

(AP) At least eight people were killed in a Haitian slum during a gang feud set off by the weekend murder of a police officer, a U.N. official said.

A former rebel leader who helped topple Haiti's first freely elected president criticized its newest one, accusing President Rene Preval's government of being soft on armed gangs and failing to stem a bloody tide of street violence.

Breaking a long silence, Guy Philippe said efforts by Preval and Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis to negotiate a peace agreement with the gangs has not reduced killings and kidnappings in the capital of Port-au-Prince.

"The Alexis-Preval government hasn't done anything to stop the insecurity," Philippe said in an interview Tuesday with Haitian broadcaster Radio Metropole. "The prime minister is still negotiating with gangs ... and there have been no results."

Philippe's remarks, his first in months, add to growing calls by Haitian legislators and business leaders for a tougher stance against the gangs, which clash frequently with each other, and with U.N. peacekeepers in Port-au-Prince's slums.

The latest to fall appeared to be gang members shot to death between Sunday and Tuesday, U.N. police spokesman Fred Blaze said Wednesday.

The violence in the Martissant slum erupted Sunday after unknown attackers shot and killed an off-duty police officer who had just voted in local and municipal elections.

The officer's killing reignited an ongoing battle between the rival Grand Ravine and Ti Manchet gangs, which are blamed for a wave of shootings and killings in recent months, Blaze said. The link between the officer's death and the gang killings was not immediately clear.

Haitian television showed images Tuesday night of victims laying face down in the street, their arms and legs bound. The bodies of two victims were found burned inside a car.

Barricades of flaming tires went up around the slum Wednesday morning as residents fled, traumatized by three days of shooting, local media reported.

U.N. peacekeepers have increased patrols in the area but were limited in how much they could do, Blaze said.

"Whenever they want to fight, they wait for our patrols to leave and start fighting. That's why it's been so hard" to prevent attacks, he said.

An 8,800-strong U.N. peacekeeping force arrived in Haiti in June 2004 to stabilize the impoverished Caribbean nation.

Philippe, an ex-police chief, was the main leader of a 2004 rebel uprising that ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. He retreated from the spotlight after losing his bid for the presidency in February elections to Preval, Aristide's former ally.

**Canadian recovering after shooting in Haiti**  
**Wednesday, December 6, 2006**  
**CBC News**

An Ottawa man who was shot in the arm in Haiti while working for Elections Canada is expected to be released from a military hospital on Wednesday.

Cheick Bangoura had been on an international mission to supervise elections in the Caribbean nation.

Bangoura was wounded after he raised his arm to protect himself from bullets fired in all directions by the passenger of a taxi around 7 p.m. Monday, when he was returning to his hotel after work on Delmas Road in Pétionville.

He was taken to the hospital by United Nations Assistance Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and doctors removed the bullet on Tuesday. His wounds are considered minor.

Foreign Affairs Canada describes the security situation in Haiti as uncertain, and has advised Canadians not to be in the country unless it is necessary.

"Criminal activity, police reprisals and lawlessness remains persistent throughout the country," warns the department's Haiti travel report.

**U.S. charity opens children's hospital in Haiti**  
**ABC7 Chicago News**  
**December 5, 2006**

(PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti) - A U.S.-based charity opened a 200-bed children's hospital in this Caribbean capital providing free dental and medical care to the poor.

St. Damien Hospital was built by Friends of the Orphans, an Arlington Heights, Ill.-based nonprofit group that supports nine orphanages throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

John C. Smith, interim chief executive of Friends of the Orphans, called the hospital in Port-au-Prince's Tabarre neighborhood "one more step toward helping the people of Haiti end the cycle of poverty in which they find themselves."

Friends of the Orphans didn't disclose the cost of the hospital, which will benefit residents of Port-au-Prince and nearby communities.

The group says it supports 3,000 orphans in Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Peru.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and most of its 8 million people live on less than \$2 per day.

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**UN Backs Local Elections in Haiti**  
**Prensa Latina**  
**December 4, 2006**

United Nations, United Nations expressed on Monday its satisfaction with the result of the local elections held the day before in Haiti, although regretted the reported incidents of isolated violence.

The process allowed the Haitians to choose their representatives and complete the legislative elections according to a pronouncement of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) released on Monday in this headquarters.

However, UN special representative in Haiti Edmon Mulet, was worried about the isolated incidents of violence on Sunday.

The 6,500 Blue Helmets and 1 700 MINUSTAH policemen were in charge of logistics and security support in the whole Caribbean country in this phase of the elections.

**Haiti: UN satisfied at voting process despite isolated violence**  
**UN News Centre**  
**3 December 2006**

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) today expressed satisfaction with the conduct of elections in the country while voicing concern at isolated outbreaks of violence.

In a statement released in Port-au-Prince, the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Edmond Mulet, said the start of the process allowing Haitians to elect representatives and finish a number of legislative run-off elections had been good.

But MINUSTAH said it nevertheless regretted the isolated incidents of violence which upset the balloting, even if these affected only a small percentage of the electorate.

The Mission's 6,500-plus troops and 1,700 police were tasked with providing security and logistic support throughout the country, including distributing election material to some 9,200 polling stations.

**Red Cross: Haiti floods kills three**  
**Earth Times.org**  
**December 5, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Dec. 5 At least three people have been killed in western Haiti during the last two weeks of heavy rains and flooding, the Red Cross said in a statement Tuesday.

The international aid organization said it has aided hundreds of Haitians affected by the flooding.

In recent years heavy rains and hurricanes have soaked the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation, killing hundreds of people and destroying thousands of homes.

Haiti is particularly susceptible to flooding due rampant deforestation throughout the country.

**Haiti Looks at Ending Violence**  
**Prensa Latina**  
**December 5, 2006**

Puerto Principe, Dec 5 (Prensa Latina) Haiti Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis and Superior Police Board members will appear Thursday at the House Security Committee, where some resignations will be requested.

The resignations are necessary for some people responsible for public security as "it would be helpful for Haitians to learn they must resign when they don't do their job," legislator Steven Benoit declared.

The legislator said the kidnappings in the metropolitan region are worsening the insecurity of the citizenry.

The House Committee will meet in January 2007 with President Rene Preval, who considers the wave of violence is due to mismanagement of justice, police inability to act and the arrival of thousands of prisoners deported from the United States.

**30 prisoners escape from Haiti's largest jail**  
**Radio Jamaica**  
**December 6, 2006**

Haitian authorities are searching for as many as 30 prisoners who escaped from the country's largest jail earlier this week.

Police confirmed that the prisoners fled the over crowded National Penitentiary on Monday.

Police Inspector General Fritz Jean said the matter was being investigated and one radio station said at least four guards had been arrested in connection with the prisoners escape.

The National Penitentiary has become notorious for jail breaks in recent months.

Earlier this year 26 Haitians deported from the United States escaped from a holding cell, while in February last year, 500 prisoners escaped after being aided by corrupt security guards.

In 2004, hundreds of prisoners escaped from the century old prison amid the chaos that led to the removal of then President Jean Bertrand Aristide from office.

**Press Release Source: U.S. Agency for International Development  
U.S. Provides Emergency Flood Assistance to Haiti  
Friday December 8, 2006**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 8 -- The U.S. Government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), announced that it will provide \$50,000 through the USAID mission in Haiti to local organizations in response to the significant damage caused by recent flooding. The funds will be utilized for the local procurement and distribution of relief commodities and to support the clearance of roads blocked by mud and landslides.

On November 24 and 25, unusually heavy rainfall led to flooding in Haiti's Northwest, Nippes, and Grand-Anse departments. According to preliminary assessments by the Haitian Ministry of Interior, various non-governmental organizations and UN agencies, including the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti, 6 people have died and several others remain missing or injured. Flooding also destroyed over 600 houses, washed away bridges, and damaged additional infrastructure. As of December 7, a number of roads remained impassible.

USAID regional advisors will continue to monitor conditions in affected areas in consultation with USAID/Haiti.

For more information about our emergency humanitarian assistance programs, please visit:  
[http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/humanitarian\\_assistance/](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/).

Public Information: 202-712-4810

[www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)

**US Accused of Intervention in Haiti**  
**Prensa Latina**  
**December 7, 2006**

Bolivia, Camilla Chalmers, Haitian delegate to the Social Summit for the Integration of the Peoples that opened in this city, requested solidarity with her people, which are victims of a kind of US intervention, she denounced.

During her speech in the Defense and Militarization Workshop, Chalmers said that the CIA has used the excuse of a concept of "failed State" to maintain its elite troops in the country.

"The peoples of Latin America have the right to define our own hypothesis of security against the position of the Pentagon and the George W. Bush administration," she pointed out. She also noted that the poverty in Haiti is the result of adjustment measures and total liberalization of its economy.

Chalmers added that Washington monopolizes the concept of security and democracy according to its interests and in the sphere of security defines, at will, potential spaces for intervention in "territories without government."

"The concept of failed States is part of an interventionist strategy of our countries," she explained.

She commented that even the World Bank has recently published a list of what it considers "fragile States" that could deserve "cooperation" of multinational forces to solve internal conflicts, and Haiti is on that list.

She explained that multinational intervention forces are allowed in situations of internal war and genocide, which in the case of Haiti has been stimulated and magnified by the United States.

These forces are headed by military forces from France, Canada and Italy and about 10 thousand soldiers from the armies of Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Guatemala. Theoretically their mission is to assure political stability, human rights and promote a climate for national elections, but none of these objectives have been fulfilled, she considered.

In Haiti, where unemployment reaches 70 percent, 92 percent of the population works in informal markets. She also explained that 66 percent live on less than two dollars a day.

Haiti now needs support from peoples of the South, she added.

The workshop became a scenario to call for an International Conference on Foreign Military Bases scheduled for March 2007 in Quito, Ecuador.

## **Violence and rape common in Haiti**

**by Orla Fagan**

**Source: Trócaire**

**Press Release: Relief Web**

**Date: 05 Dec 2006**

Haiti gained its freedom in 1804 from the French, who had brought African slaves from central Africa to the Caribbean island. However, it has had a succession of tyrant rulers including Papa Doc Duvalier, his son Baby Doc and until 2004 Jean-Baptiste Aristide, who was eventually forced out by the United States and now lives in exile.

This long turbulent history has contributed to a lawlessness that is ubiquitous in Haiti today. The UN has been present since Aristide's forced exile, trying to enforce peace. But as there is almost no employment in Haiti, gangs roam and terrorise ordinary, defenceless citizens. Many of the gangsters are on drugs and roam the cities and countryside seeking thrills, often targeting women who live alone.

Trócaire's partner, SOFA, is a women's organisation tackling violent crimes committed against young girls and women. It is an uphill battle, with gang rape more common because of the proliferation of arms and drugs. SOFA sees two main issues: the incidence of domestic violence and incest and the increase in gang rapes. In a recent report published by SOFA it was estimated that eight out of every ten women suffer domestic violence and the incidence of rape is increasing.

"We provide a counselling service for the women and often we have to provide financial assistance because the victims have broken the silence and have been cast out by family members," Olga Benoit, co-ordinator of SOFA told Trócaire. "Within the family, cases of rape are often left unreported because of the shame brought on to the family." Unlike Ireland, the names of the victims of rape are freely reported and anonymity is not a luxury. It was only in 2005 that a new law was brought in making it illegal for rape within a marriage.

"Once drugs and guns are involved, violence becomes out of hand," Olga said. "If we can get the women to report these acts of rape and violence then it is a huge step forward." The culture of silence has prevented women from reporting rape cases, especially when it is a family member who has committed the crime.

When women take their aggressors to court they make huge sacrifices, often having to separate from their children and move to another town or village to avoid reprisals from other gang members. There are times when only one member of SOFA staff would know the whereabouts of one of its clients. "Trócaire's support has been invaluable in helping these victims of domestic violence and rape," Olga continued. "We may not be able to solve the violence that is omnipresent in Haiti but at least if some of these men think they will be brought to justice, it may make them think twice before committing such acts of violence against women."

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**IDB to grant total debt relief to Haiti and Guyana**  
**Radio Jamaica**  
**December 5, 2006**

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) announced on Monday that it had reached an agreement to grant complete debt relief to Haiti and Guyana.

Speaking at the Caribbean-Central American Action's 30th Miami Conference on the Caribbean Basin, IDB president Luis Alberto Moreno said that the two CARICOM countries were among five nations in the Caribbean and Central America to benefit from the accord.

The other countries are Bolivia, Honduras and Nicaragua.

The IDB president said that the bank would also be financing projects to expand urban property markets and accelerate gradual home improvements in low-income areas.

Meanwhile in Haiti, the IDB plans to double lending for social infrastructure such as water and sanitation amounting to over one billion US dollars by 2011.

**Haiti: Local elections denounced by some officials  
by Wadner Pierre  
for Bureau des Avocats Internationaux  
Haiti Action Committee**

BAI — Sunday, December 3 2006 was the day the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) selected to call the Haitian people from throughout the country to vote.

The population did not come massively to the voting centers as on February 7, 2006. There were irregularities on the part of the CEP, ballot problems for mayoral, ASEC and CASEC races, in some cases the political parties' representatives or "mandataires" outnumbered the voters. Some opined that it was the mandataires, not the voters, who were voting, which were noticed at several polling places we visited.

Those who did vote told us that they were voting for change, and to fulfill their civic duty. They did not want to be photographed or to give their names. Voters did not come to the voting places en masse. The candidates, who have continuously denounced the fraud and poor organization of the elections since this morning, have severely criticized the CEP.

Cite Soleil voters must choose a member of the House of Deputies as well as slates for Mayor, ASEC and CASEC. They voted in the "2004 Building" at the former military aviation facility, at SONAPI and in a police substation at Carrefour Aviation.. Unlike at other polling spots, the population of Cite Soleil voted in crowds, but not as large crowds as for the February 7, 2006 elections..

If, for some CEP members election day was a success, for others there were too many irregularities for a real election According to Counsellor Patrick Fequière, who had previously criticized his colleagues for misappropriating the \$16 million U.S. allocated for these elections, the day was proof of the misappropriations. He made that declaration in an interview he granted to Tropic FM, on the morning of December 4, 2006. Mr. Fequière also denounced the misuse of funds in the Presidential and legislative elections of February 7, 2006.

From a security standpoint, a strong presence of Haitian police, UN soldiers with MINUSTAH and UN police with UNPOL were in every electoral center we visited, especially in the centers where people from poor neighborhoods were voting. The Haitian police and MINUSTAH appeared to have things under their control.

## **Haiti's Stealth Elections: What's At Stake?**

**by Brian Concannon Jr.**

**Haiti Action Committee**

**December 2, 2006**

Tomorrow Haitians will vote in historic elections that are as ignored as they are important. Although they are receiving little attention in the foreign, and even Haitian press, the elections will establish, for the first time in nineteen years, the radically democratic and decentralized foundation of Haiti's 1987 Constitution.

The International attention available for elections in poor countries is focused on Venezuela's Presidential race the same day. Haiti's President, René Préval, is in Havana today, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. Even the members of the Haitian politics listserv have other things on their mind: today's postings include analyses of politics in Venezuela, Cuba, Lebanon and France, but no mention of tomorrow's voting in Haiti.

Haiti's elections are for municipal and local posts, which attract less attention in any country. They are also a year late- they were originally scheduled for November 2005 by the dictatorial Interim Government of Haiti (IGH), but postponed several times, even as Haiti elected a President and Parliament last spring.

More important, many popular candidates are not running. Although the IGH is gone- Prime Minister Gérard Latortue fled to the U.S. to avoid prosecution for fraud and murder- the Provisional Electoral Council it appointed is still running the voting. The Council declined to re-open candidate registration, which excluded candidates who feared to register under the IGH, but were willing to participate under the democratic Préval government. The exclusion particularly impacted Haiti's largest political party, Fanmi Lavalas, which boycotted the 2005 registration because the IGH was routinely arresting and/or killing its leaders and grassroots activists. Although some local candidates registered under the party's banner anyway, they did so in less than half the races, and those candidates were not vetted or approved by the national organization.

On the ground in Haiti, people do care about the elections, because they know what is at stake. Over 29,000 candidates are running for 1,420 positions. Grassroots activists are organizing an aggressive get-out-the-vote campaign, spreading the word through informal networks and progressive radio stations. They are predicting a decent turnout, albeit below the levels seen for Presidential elections.

### **THE CONSTITUTION'S SOUL**

What is at stake Sunday is the "soul" of Haiti's government established by the 1987 Constitution: a pyramid structure based on 4-6 person local assemblies, called "ASECS" (Assemblés des Sections Communales). The ASEC system is designed to radically decentralize political power and ensure grassroots participation at the highest levels of government. It is so radical that the powers-that-be, including a broad spectrum of Haitian governments and members of the International Community- the United Nations, the Organization of American States and the United States, all of which have played an active role in the details of Haiti's elections- have ignored this foundation of Haiti's constitutional system for nineteen years. Haiti has had seven election cycles since 1987, electing five Presidents and

several legislatures. ASECS have been on the ballot less than half the time, and the system has not been fully implemented once.

ASEC candidates run as a slate (from a political party or group of independents) and are chosen by voters in each communal section. Haiti is divided into ten Departments, each Department is divided into municipalities, or communes, and each municipality is split into communal sections. A dense urban communal section could have more than 100,000 voters, a remote rural section as few as a few hundred. ASEC members wield little direct power themselves, but they are the soul of the constitutional system because they oversee and advise other government officials, from local administrators to the National Palace, and play a key role in selecting judges and electoral council members.

Within the communal section, the ASECS advise and supervise the local Sectional Council, which administers the section. Each ASEC sends one representative to the Municipal Assembly, which plays a similar watchdog/advisor role at the municipal level. The mayor is supposed to report to it on the use of municipal resources, and cannot sell state lands without the Assembly's approval. The Municipal Assembly also makes the initial list from which local justices of the peace are chosen.

Each Municipal Assembly sends a representative to the Departmental Assembly, where the power starts to accumulate. The Departmental Assembly chooses the members of the Departmental Council, which administers the Department. The Departmental Assembly plays a similar watchdog/advisor role at the Departmental level, and the Departmental Council reports to it. The Departmental Assembly also draws up a list of nominees for trial and appellate judgeships in the Department. Each Departmental Assembly nominates three people to serve on the national Permanent Electoral Council (CEP), ceating a list of 30 nominees. The Supreme Court, the executive and the legislature each pick three names from that list for the CEP.

Each Departmental Assembly sends a representative to the Interdepartmental Assembly. The Interdepartmental Assembly helps the executive branch, and is involved in policy planning. The Interdepartmental Assembly is entitled to attend and vote at Ministerial Council meetings that deal with issues within its domain.

This system ensures that non-professional politicians, elected by their neighbors, have a say at every level of Haitian government. The system is insulated from centralized money and other forces because it is impossible to predict which ASEC candidates are likely to make it to the Departmental Assemblies, where power starts to accumulate.

For example, in the 3rd Section of Croix-des-Bouquets, outside Haiti's capitol, there are seven ASEC slates of six candidates each. If a candidate's slate prevails, he has a one-in-six chance of being chosen for the Croix-des-Bouquets Municipal Assembly. That Assembly has ten members, one of which is chosen for the Departmental Assembly for the West Department. So any one ASEC candidate has a 1-in-420 chance of reaching the Departmental Assembly, and a 1-in-4,200 chance of reaching the Interdepartmental Assembly.

**A HISTORIC STEP FORWARD**

Implementing the ASEC system will bring some much-needed stability to future elections, by establishing a Permanent Electoral Council. The 1987 Constitution created a formula for choosing a Provisional Council that would run a single election that would set the ASEC system in motion to choose a Permanent Council. Because the ASEC system was never implemented, every one of Haiti's elections over the last nineteen years has been run by a Provisional Council. All but the first of those Councils was chosen through a formula not recognized by the Constitution. And all but the first of the elections they ran was contested by the losing parties, who challenged (with good reason) the Provisional Council's legitimacy.

Nineteen years is a long time to lay the Constitution's foundation stone, but it is better late than never. Sunday's voting is a strong first step, but it must be followed up with diligent implementation of the entire ASEC system. By doing so, President Préval could help end the incessant series of electoral crises in Haiti, which keep spiraling into political instability and twice have led to the overthrow of the Constitutional government. In the long run, Sunday's ignored elections could be the most important accomplishment of President Préval's administration.

Brian Concannon Jr. directs the Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti, [www.HaitiJustice.org](http://www.HaitiJustice.org)

## **WFP supporting Wyclef Jean festival to promote development in Haiti**

**29 Nov 2006**

**Source: WFP**

**Reuters**

Location: Jacmel, Haiti

With the support of WFP, the internationally renowned hip-hop artist Wyclef Jean is this week convening the Yéle Fest – a one-week event that will use culture and the arts to engage Haitian youth in exploring ways to boost sustainable development in Haiti.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, and one of the most disadvantaged countries in the developing world. It ranks 153 out of 177 countries on the UNDP Human Development Index (2005).

The Yéle Fest takes place at the same time and place as another important cultural event in Haiti – the Jacmel Film Festival.

Social entrepreneur

The two events will culminate in Wyclef Jean's first concert in his native Haiti for eight years, which will take place on 1 December on a waterfront pier.

Through his organisation Yéle Haiti, multiple Grammy Award-winning artist and producer Wyclef Jean has redefined the term social entrepreneur.

His view is that Yéle is more than just another NGO, but a movement combining the power of music with the tools of development in the areas of education, health, environment and community development.

Haitian youth identity

“When I started this foundation, I said that it was not a charity foundation. It is a movement and I am happy to see that Haitian youth identify itself with this movement,” says Wyclef Jean.

Yéle Haiti and WFP started their still growing partnership in June 2005 by undertaking joint food distributions in two of the Port-au-Prince's most violent and vulnerable neighbourhoods – Cite Soleil and Bel Air.

At that time, large scale food distributions had come to a complete halt due to the prevailing level of danger and violence.

Vulnerable people

Teaming up with Yéle Haiti, who enlisted local hip hop musicians to deliver rice, beans and vegetable oil to the neediest families, allowed WFP to reach out to some of the most vulnerable people in Haiti at a time of very difficult access.

The Yéle Haiti/WFP food distributions were one of the first projects of Yele Haiti.

Since the launch of the cooperation, food distributions have been carried out twice a month, assuring an average of 8,000 families a month a much needed nutritious food ration.

According to the WFP Representative in Haiti, Mamadou Mbaye, the partnership between WFP and Wyclef has helped WFP give voice to the millions of Haitians marred by poverty malnutrition and lack of education and healthcare.

## Culture

But for WFP, the cooperation with Wyclef Jean is also an important lesson learned in how a country's natural capacities can be used to contribute to fighting its vulnerabilities, such as using culture and art as a channel to involve people in improving their lives.

"Wyclef Jean very cleverly uses culture as a means of addressing contemporary social issues, for he has seen the importance of art and culture in enhancing and changing people's lives in all areas of society", said Mbaye.

In Haiti, WFP is currently assisting 850,000 people with targeted distributions to malnourished children, pregnant and nursing mothers, and people affected by HIV/AIDS, as well as providing food to primary school children under its school feeding program.

More than 75 percent of Haitians live on less than US\$2 per day, while 55 percent live on less than US\$1 per day.

## Stunting

Chronic malnutrition is widespread among the most vulnerable, with severe or moderate stunting affecting up to 42 percent of children under five.

Easily preventable illnesses like malnutrition and diarrhoea account respectively for 28 percent and 20 percent of all under-five deaths.

Food supply covers only 55 percent of the population and daily food insecurity affects 40 percent of Haitian homes.

Haiti ranks along with Afghanistan and Somalia as one of the three countries of the world with the worst daily caloric deficit per inhabitant (460 kcal/day) and 2.4 million Haitians cannot afford the minimum 2,240 daily calories recommended by the World Health Organization.

## Contact us

## **Haiti Donors Link Aid To Fight Against Corruption**

**Playfuls.com**

**November 30th 2006**

Donor countries and organizations Thursday urged Haiti to step up the fight against corruption as one of the key measures to raise the country from poverty and violence.

Haitian President Rene Preval had shown "firmness to consolidate strong and independent democratic institutions," Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos said on inaugurating an International Conference for the Economic and Social Development of Haiti in Madrid.

The event attended by more than 90 delegations of countries and international organizations followed a string of similar events held in several countries since 2004.

Haitian Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis said his country had adopted "draconian measures" which had eliminated or reduced corruption cases.

The conference was also to examine to what extent donors had complied with pledges to donate a billion dollars to Haiti between 2004 and 2006.

In July, the international community also agreed to add 750 million dollars at a conference in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince.

The Haitian government has requested more independence in managing the funds, a large part of which it wants to channel into ministries rather than into specific development projects.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas. Nearly 80 per cent of the population lives on less than 2 dollars a day, while the richest 20 per cent possesses 68 per cent of the national wealth.

Even with the presence of an 8,300-strong United Nations peacekeeping force, Haiti has suffered from political violence since president Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in a rebellion in 2004.

**Haiti donors in efficiency pledge**  
**BBC News**  
**Thursday, 30 November 2006**

Mr Alexis wants a fast-track mechanism to channel the aid

Haiti and delegates at a donors conference in Madrid have agreed to operate with greater efficiency in the use of funds in the Caribbean nation.

The commitment came after Haiti's prime minister said that 99% of the \$750m (£382m) pledged in July had not reached their intended destinations in Haiti.

Since 2004, foreign governments have promised more than \$1.5bn (£763m) to the poorest country in the Americas.

Teams from 30 nations and aid agencies attended the forum in Spain's capital.

The conference was called to examine how much money Haiti had received since the aid pledge was made at a similar gathering in July in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince.

It also aimed to discuss how the country's new elected government planned to carry out reforms to fight rampant corruption, violence and poverty.

Addressing the forum, Haitian Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis said: "So far, 99% of this money has not really been disbursed."

Mr Alexis said he had held talks with the donors how to devise a fast-track mechanism to channel the money for urgent aid projects.

The conference's participants also agreed that they needed to operate and with greater transparency in the use of pledged funds.

Mr Alexis also urged the delegates to continue to support Haiti during what he called a turning point in its development.

A Brazilian-led UN peacekeeping force has been deployed in Haiti since 2004, after a revolt that ousted then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

**Spain To Stage Haiti Aid Conference**  
**November 29th 2006**  
**by Playfuls Team, Romania**

Spain and Haiti signed a cooperation agreement Wednesday ahead of an international conference dealing with aid to the Caribbean nation in Madrid on Thursday. Spanish secretary of state Leire Pajin and Haitian External Cooperation Minister Jean-Max Bellerive signed the document summarizing the Spanish contribution to the development of Haiti.

It amounts to some 38 million euros (50 million dollars) in education and other areas until 2008.

Haitian Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis was received by King Juan Carlos ahead of the Conference for the Social Development of Haiti, which was to bring together donor countries and international organizations.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas and one of the poorest in the world. Nearly 80 per cent of the population lives on less than 2 dollars a day.

**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**

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.

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.

**Fears over Haiti child 'abuse'**  
**BBC News**  
**November 30, 2006**

A BBC investigation commissioned as part of Generation Next - a week of programmes focusing on people under 18 - has uncovered fresh allegations of the sexual abuse of children by United Nations peacekeepers. Mike Williams reports from Port au Prince, Haiti.

This 16-year-old tells Mike Williams about the alleged rape by a Brazilian serviceman

The heavily armoured United Nations patrol rolls through the dusty streets of Cite Soleil - the most dangerous and deprived part of a very dangerous and deprived country.

UN peacekeepers crouch low in the turrets of the armoured cars, their rifles tracking the rooftops and alleyways. They come under fire every day in this part of the capital, Port au Prince.

The week before I arrived, two of the peacekeepers were killed there.

#### Exploitation

There are about 9000 peacekeepers in the UN mission to Haiti, most of them soldiers who come from 19 different nations. Most of them have come to help. They work hard in dangerous conditions to bring security and aid to the desperate people.

"He held me down by the arms and held both my wrists, twisting them back and we struggled together

16-year-old girl

#### UN troops face abuse claims

But there are some peacekeepers who are willing to use their advantages to exploit some of the most vulnerable people in this troubled society.

I spoke to a 14-year-old girl who told of the peacekeeper who offered her jelly, sweets and a few dollars for sex with her and her friend - a child of just 11 years.

Half of the population of Haiti struggle to survive on just a dollar a day and the streets are filled with people selling whatever they can to raise a little cash. At nighttime, those who have nothing to sell, sell themselves.

Among the UN soldiers and civilians, they can find willing buyers. One UN official told me that a great many of the girls who work the streets are children and, in the dark streets of the capital Port-au-Prince, we watched UN officials picking up young prostitutes and driving off with them.

'Betrayal'

Sarah Martin, of Refugees International, has studied the problem in UN missions across the world.

Mike Williams talks to a 14-year-old who was offered food and \$20 in return for sex (face blurred) "To prey upon the very populations that you are sent to protect is one of the worst forms of violation and betrayal that there is," she says.

Sarah (not her real name) is a fragile looking girl of 16. She says that two years ago, she was raped by a Brazilian soldier serving with the UN mission there.

She stared at the ground while we talked and, almost in a whisper, she explained what happened: "He held me down by the arms and held both my wrists, twisting them back and we struggled together. And then he raped me."

Her mother cried while she recalled that day: "When I found her I didn't recognise my own child," she says. "She had the face of a dead person - I started to cry out, she couldn't tell me what had happened."

The family have been seeking justice from the United Nations but officials at the local UN mission say that justice was done. Three internal inquiries found there was insufficient evidence against the man and he was sent back to his unit in Brazil.

## Immunity

Soldiers serving with the UN have immunity from local laws and it's up to their home countries to discipline them. More often than not, they're simply repatriated and the UN has little information about what, if anything, happens to them then.

All of our missions are in areas that are economically deprived... where habits like prostitution of very young children is seen as a matter of course

Jane Holl Lute, assistant secretary-general for peacekeeping operations

"The UN has to be absolutely vigilant that those troops that are conducting these practices are dismissed," says Anna Jefferys of Save The Children. "It has to ensure that those member states that are deploying these troops are somehow shamed within the UN system so that the stigma becomes too big to do it again."

The UN is holding a conference in New York on Monday 4 December, at which officials will hear from victims, NGO workers and researchers in the field.

The assistant secretary-general for peacekeeping operations, Jane Holl Lute, says they need find ways to control the exploitation and she admits that the organisation has a very serious problem.

"My operating presumption that this is either an ongoing or potential problem in every single one of our missions," she says.

"All of our missions are in areas that are economically deprived, where societies have been torn by conflict and war, where habits like prostitution of very young children is seen as a matter of course.

"We need to bring every resource we can to bear to make that not the case when a peacekeeping mission is in place."

Ms Lute said the UN's inability to impose punishments was a shortcoming in the system and she admitted that the organisation does not have a system of justice that everyone would recognise as fair and equitable.

Sarah, the girl who claims she was raped by a peacekeeper would probably agree.

You can listen to this programme on the World Service on Thursday 30 November at 20.05 GMT.

**State Department Official Sees “Positive Developments” in Haiti  
State’s Shannon praises Haiti’s fiscal, monetary policies closing of deficit  
By Eric Green  
USINFO Staff Writer  
State Department  
December 1, 2006**

Thomas Shannon, the U.S. State Department's assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere Affairs. (US Embassy photo) Washington -- The United States sees a number of “positive developments” in Haiti, even though the country remains the least-developed nation in the Americas and one of the poorest in the world, says Thomas Shannon, U.S. assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs.

In remarks prepared for an international conference of donors for Haiti held in Madrid, Spain, Shannon said November 30 that the United States welcomes the Haitian government’s continued “sound fiscal and monetary policies and its efforts to increase revenues.” He said the country successfully closed its fiscal year 2006 budget deficit.

In addition, Shannon said Haiti’s recently adopted fiscal year 2007 budget also “demonstrates sound fiscal policy.”

The United States, said Shannon, also welcomes the results of a recent review by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank of Haiti’s participation in the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) debt initiative, and another program called the “Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility.”

Shannon said both programs are moving forward and that adhering to targets within the poverty reduction facility “will be critical for Haiti’s macroeconomic stability and full debt relief under HIPC.”

The HIPC establishes a process that allows the world's poorest countries that are saddled with exceptionally high debt burdens to negotiate reductions in loan payments and in their total debt stocks, while the poverty reduction program is the IMF's low-interest lending facility for low-income countries. The IMF announced September 18 that Haiti was eligible for assistance under the HIPC.

#### **EFFECTIVE USE OF AID**

The November 29-30 meeting in Madrid, organized by the Spanish government, was designed to ensure that the aid Haiti previously received from the international community is being used “effectively and efficiently,” an official from the State Department’s Office of Caribbean Affairs told USINFO in a November 29 interview.

Shannon, the State Department’s top policymaker for the Americas, headed the U.S. delegation in Madrid. Also attending the meeting from the State Department was Brian Nichols, director of the Office of Caribbean Affairs.

Other U.S. officials at the Madrid conference included Adolfo Franco, assistant administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); Paul Tuebner, USAID's mission director for Haiti; and Anna Jewell, deputy director of the Western Hemisphere Office at the U.S. Treasury Department.

## SECURE ENVIRONMENT FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

The agenda for the Madrid meeting, coming at a time when Haiti has been described as “at a crucial moment in its history,” included discussions on creating conditions for political stability and “economic relaunching” in the country. This subject included analyzing the country's difficult security situation, reforming the country's justice sector and national police and the Haitian government's strategy for poverty reduction.

Shannon also emphasized in his remarks the importance of the U.S.-backed U.N. stabilization mission in Haiti, known by the acronym MINUSTAH. Shannon said that when the U.N. mission first was established in Haiti in 2004, its purpose was to maintain order and create an environment for holding elections in the country. The United States and the international community hailed the February 7 election of Haiti's new president, René Préval, and his subsequent inauguration May 14.

MINUSTAH succeeded in its initial task, said Shannon, but now its purpose “must be to facilitate a secure environment for good governance and economic development” in Haiti. (See related article.)

Some 37 countries, including the United States, are providing personnel to MINUSTAH.

## ATTRACTING INVESTMENT, CREATING JOBS

Shannon said international donors also can help Haiti by looking for ways for its financial aid to “accelerate disbursement and achieve short-term impact,” especially “to ensure the success of local and municipal governance.”

“We cannot treat Haiti in a ‘business as usual’ way,” said Shannon.

Haiti's government and international donors for Haiti also should look for “creative ways” to attract private investment and create jobs in the country, said Shannon.

Shannon said the United States, as Haiti's largest single-country donor, provided the Caribbean nation more than \$600 million in assistance from 2004-2006. The Bush administration, he said, has asked the U.S. Congress for \$198 million for Haiti in 2007.

Among the 85 participants at the Madrid meeting were representatives from the 15-nation bloc of Caribbean nations called Caricom, the European Union, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Organization of American States (OAS), who all are helping to provide funding and logistical support for strengthening Haiti's institutions. (See related article.)

## LONG-TERM INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT TO HAITIAN DEMOCRACY

OAS Secretary-General José Miguel Insulza told the Madrid conference November 30 that supporting the process of rebuilding democracy in Haiti is “a long-term effort.” The election of a democratic government in Haiti is not an end in itself, he said, “but rather serves as further encouragement for us to honor our commitment to Haiti.”

Insulza added that regional elections to be held in Haiti December 3 will “complete the installation of full democracy in Haiti.” Some 3.5 million Haitian voters are registered to vote in the election, the OAS said.

A joint communiqué released at the conference said the participants in Madrid expressed their wish that Haiti’s December 3 elections take place “in the best possible conditions,” and would contribute to promoting democracy in Haiti. The communiqué also expressed the international community’s desire that Haiti’s government, in close cooperation with MINUSTAH, continue working toward political stability and an “economic rebirth” in Haiti.

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

The full text of the IMF September statement on Haiti’s HIPC eligibility is available on the fund’s Web site.

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## **Violence: an Ever-Present Threat**

### **HIV in Haiti is spread by violence — and little is done to prevent the attacks**

**By Sarah Fort**

**The Center for Public Integrity**

**November 30, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Dieula sits in a circle of women on the tiled floor of a dimly lit room here, discussing the sexual violence that makes HIV infection an ever-present danger for Haitian women. "The woman in Haiti doesn't have rights," she says. "Only men have rights to decide." The rest of the women in the group agree. She adds, quietly: "Our misery increases every day."

The women, all of them rape survivors, belong to the Commission of Women Victims for Victims, or KOFAVIV, a community rape-crisis organization trying to call attention to the plight that too many Haitian women face. In September 2006, 150 members of the group marched through the streets of the Haitian capital, black masks representing the silencing they feel and the anonymity of their masked attackers.

Since KOFAVIV began in 2004, the organization has counseled more than 1,000 rape victims in Port-au-Prince. That's only a fraction of the Haitian women who have been victimized. According to a survey reported in the August 2006 issue of *The Lancet*, an estimated 35,000 women and girls were sexually assaulted in Port-au-Prince during the 22 months of the interim government that followed the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in early 2004. Three percent of all female survey respondents reported sexual violence; half of the victims were minors. Haitian women's rights activists say that many of the women they counsel have been left to cope not only with physical and psychological scars, but also with HIV infections transmitted by their attackers.

Haiti's HIV/AIDS infection rate of 3.8 percent among people ages 15 to 49 is already the highest in the Western Hemisphere, and public health experts and human rights activists warn that rape is threatening to spread HIV even more virulently.

In a country where poverty and political instability allow rapists to escape punishment, sexual assault has long been not just a random crime but also a deliberate weapon of political and social oppression. Yet now, according to KOFAVIV activist Malya Villard, Haitian women's knowledge of contracting HIV through consensual sex actually has put them at even greater risk, because if they attempt to refuse sex, they might be raped. "In the working-class areas, women have learned about HIV, so men are forcing them," she says. "The guys have in their mind that they are the commander of the woman. That's why they force."

#### **Scant funding for women's security**

The link that can be made between HIV/AIDS and sexual assault in Haiti is a difficult problem for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Bush administration's five-year, \$15 billion effort to combat HIV/AIDS in developing countries. As one of PEPFAR's 15 "focus countries," Haiti received more than \$28 million in U.S. aid in 2004, \$51.8 million in 2005 and \$55.6 million in 2006.

But of the \$13.8 million that PEPFAR spent on HIV/AIDS prevention in 2005, the biggest portion — \$3.6 million, or more than a quarter of the money — went to fund programs that promote abstinence and faithfulness within marriage. In comparison, little PEPFAR money has been spent protecting women from being forced to have sex against their will. There are no programs funded that improve women's security or highlight the need for economic opportunities. Unless those priorities are changed, critics in the U.S. and Haiti say, the U.S.-funded effort to fight the disease's spread in Haiti may fail.

Debate in the United States has zeroed in on the sexual prevention plan that PEPFAR endorses. The Abstinence, Be Faithful, and correct and consistent Condom use, or so-called ABC, approach is derided by those who promote the use of condoms for catering to faith-based interests and by supporters of abstinence and fidelity approaches for promoting sexual activity through condom distribution.

One particularly controversial component of the ABC approach is the earmark that Congress passed in 2003 requiring that at least two-thirds of sexual transmission prevention funds support abstinence until marriage and fidelity programs in each of the focus countries.

Women's rights advocates in Haiti say none of the three prevention approaches— abstinence, fidelity or condom use — is sufficient. No matter how persuasive the messages are, they aren't going to help Haitian women who are forced to have sex against their will, they say.

As KOFAVIV project coordinator Anne Sosin said, "ABC works in a context where women are able to exercise their sexual rights, but women in Haiti are victims of a wide range of violations. Many of the victims of KOFAVIV who are HIV-positive contracted the virus through rape."

Violence against women is endemic in Haitian culture. For generations, Haitian law was a carryover from the Napoleonic Code, which defined rape not as a crime but as a transgression against morals — in other words, an attack on a woman's honor more than her body. The effect of the Napoleonic Code meant that women who alleged rape endured public scrutiny of their "morality" and that the rape of a non-virgin was considered a less serious offense.

The stigma attached to rape means that it's rarely reported. When it is, too often nothing is done. According to Sosin, there has been only one successful prosecution of a rape case in Haiti in 2006.

In recent years, in the absence of law and order in Haiti, women and girls have become easy targets for the gangs that rule the streets. "They are terrorizing the population, using rape as a way of regulating communities," said Nadine Puechguirbal, the U.N.'s senior gender adviser to its stabilization mission in Haiti. Gangs have moved into female-headed households where they won't be challenged.

"Police aren't able to protect civilians against gangs," an officer in CIMO, Haiti's special police, admitted to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ). He said security has always been used as a political tool in Haiti, and that most police stations don't even have a patrol car, or gas for one. The gangs are better equipped, he said, and have more firepower.

Catherine Maternowska, a professor of anthropology and social medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, who has conducted research in the country over the past two decades, says

the street violence in Haiti has increased since 1986 with the unraveling of the brutal Duvalier dictatorship. The more efforts there were to enforce democracy and the people's movement, she said, the more repression there was and rape began to be used politically. Rape continues to be used by gangs to claim turf or to repress certain populations.

For Haitian males, whose opportunities in life often are starkly limited, "one of their last sources of power is through sexual transactions," Maternowska said. Unfortunately, men's frustration often turns to violence. Gang rapes are a common factor in the disintegration of society in Haiti, she said, and "there's nothing to protect [women] when something does happen. ... Rapes are likely to happen every evening, all over the town of Port-au-Prince."

Maternowska knows that violence firsthand. In April 2005, she and two other women were kidnapped and terrorized by four gunmen until they managed to persuade the captors to let them go unharmed. "At that point, when the four of them [had] the guns ... on my body and they were kidnapping me and taking me away and fighting about how to rape me and execute me — and that was sort of a turning point personally. And I haven't been back since."

Most Haitian women don't have the option to leave.

Violent attacks leave long-lasting effects

Yvette Jeanty is the director of Kay Fanm, a Haitian group that works with women who are victims of domestic violence.

Behind the high walls of the shelter where she works, Jeanty says she tries to refer women infected with HIV to clinics or hospitals for medical services. Medical care is necessary, she says, because more cases are very violent. Many times, rapists use sharp metal instruments attached to themselves to assault women. Most victims of those kinds of attacks can't bear children and "usually have long-term hemorrhaging," she said.

Violent attacks put Haitian women at much greater danger of HIV infection than consensual sex. According to Dr. Paul Zeitz, executive director of the Global AIDS Alliance, "There are biological, cultural and economic factors that make women more susceptible. Women are biologically at risk because the HIV virus can more easily penetrate vaginal mucus during intercourse. The cells are fragile and brittle. In addition, ulcerative STDs [sexually transmitted diseases] are an important co-factor in facilitating the spread of the virus."

Also, gang members committing these crimes are more likely to be infected. Rapists are part of a high-risk group in Haiti that is ill-informed about HIV and has no incentive to get tested. They don't know their HIV status, and, according to Sosin, they are often discriminated against by social services for being young men from poor neighborhoods.

PEPFAR's prevention spending in Haiti — \$3.6 million in 2005 — goes, in large part, to programs that promote abstinence and being faithful within relationships (the "A" and "B" components of the ABC approach). The funding, for example, is underwriting development of a radio soap opera "focused upon

a family situation in which children/adolescents face hard questions of peer pressure and personal desire that relate to abstinence and fidelity issues."

Other faith-based groups from the United States, including World Vision and World Concern, are receiving funds to disseminate the abstinence and be faithful messages to youth through church and community groups.

Given those priorities, community leaders are concerned that the Bush administration's global effort to fight HIV/AIDS, through its PEPFAR program, is not doing enough to confront the problem of rape. KOFAVIV's Sosin said that outside of GHESKIO (Le Group Haitien d'Etude du Sarcome de Kaposi et des Infections Opportunistes), the nation's leading HIV/AIDS research organization and clinic, she's not aware of other programs that receive PEPFAR funding. She doesn't know of other U.S. initiatives that address the link between sexual assault, forms of violence against women, gender inequality and HIV/AIDS. "Most of the money spent has very little impact at the community level," she said.

Repeated requests to the U.S. government for an interview to respond to these concerns were denied.

The start of several abstinence and fidelity programs in Haiti were delayed as a result of security concerns. World Vision and World Concern held off initiating their programs because of inadequate security. PEPFAR staff even moved from their U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) offices here to a hotel in Miami for several meetings. Other meetings with outside partners were held in Hotel Montana, high up in the hills of Port-au-Prince and far from the communities being discussed.

Nongovernmental organizations receiving U.S. funding are still sorting through the grants' restrictions. The American Red Cross receives more than \$7 million in PEPFAR funding for its HIV prevention program in Haiti, Tanzania and Guyana. Judi Harris, the health delegate for the Red Cross in Haiti, isn't sure whether abstinence and fidelity prevention teachings alone are appropriate for the youth her program addresses. The Red Cross works with numerous neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince, including the desperately poor community of Cité Soleil.

Harris' program teaches a curriculum called "Together We Can". Although the contract American Red Cross signed specifies that the 10- to 14-year-olds they work with be taught the "Abstinence" and "Be Faithful" components of the ABC approach, and that abstinence is the key message, Harris said the curriculum is being adapted for the younger population to fit the Haitian context.

Michelle Moloney-Kitts, chief of the program services division at the U.S Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC), which oversees PEPFAR, says that the U.S. has its priorities straight. Because the age of sex initiation is so young in Haiti — often 12 or 13 — and because Haiti's epidemic involves a significant transmission within high-risk populations, abstinence is the correct approach for Haitian youth and young couples, she says. In addition, the "B" and "C" teachings — "Be Faithful" and "correct and consistent Condom use — are appropriate for the high-risk populations, she says.

Yet, according to a recent article in *Social Science and Medicine*, some U.S. and Haitian doctors have expressed concern about the way HIV/AIDS prevention is being taught. "The standard format for prevention education for HIV infection and other STDs may have very limited utility in settings where forced sex and severe economic vulnerability are so frequent as to be ordinary. For example, a woman

who is trying to practice 'safe sex,' or abstinence, may actually place herself at greater risk of physical and/or sexual violence," it says.

### Some signs of progress

Across the road from Cite de Dieu is GHESKIO (Le Group Haitien d'Etude du Sarcome de Kaposi et des Infections Opportunistes), the nation's leading HIV/AIDS research organization and clinic. Behind a wall and past a security guard who serves primarily as a director of traffic is a large open building and a long line of people waiting for services in the hot sun. Inside, Dr. Jean William Pape, the amiable director and founder, says that GHESKIO centers see many victims of rape and that he recognizes that abstinence as a prevention strategy is not possible in most cases.

GHESKIO, which received a \$2 million U.S. grant for HIV/AIDS treatment and laboratory infrastructure in 2005, is one of the few PEPFAR-funded organizations in Haiti that treats women who have been raped. The organization works in conjunction with the Haitian Ministry of Public Health and Population and provides post-exposure prophylaxis, a powerful dose of antiretroviral drugs that may prevent a rape victim from developing an HIV infection.

In addition, as of August 2006, along with the Minister for Women's Affairs, GHESKIO planned to launch the country's first 24-hour hotline for victims of sexual violence and to staff several centers where women could come for help. Pape hopes to link GHESKIO's rape patients with advocates who will help the patients get government services and advise them on navigating the Haitian court system.

Carolle Charles, a sociology professor at Baruch College in New York and a board member of Dwa Fanm, a Haitian-American women's rights group, says that these kinds of services are desperately needed. Creating rape crisis centers provides a tangible, concrete role for outside funders. "There is no rape crisis facility," she said. "That's one of the problems that women have been complaining about — there's no place to go" for help.

And there are other ways that U.S. funding could help Haiti deal with its problems.

Farah Tanis, the co-founder of Dwa Fanm, says that the country needs help in strengthening its law enforcement and justice systems, so that police and courts would prosecute the offenders.

Fifty-five million dollars in U.S. aid money has been appropriated for women's justice and empowerment programs in several African countries, including South Africa, Kenya, Zambia and Benin. Money has yet to be appropriated for this purpose in Haiti. PEPFAR's Moloney-Kitts says it's true that staff members were forced to move from their USAID offices to a hotel in Miami for several meetings due to security, and she recognizes that, "[In Haiti], we need an effective department of justice and some rule of law,"

But Puechguirbal, from the U.N. mission, says an additional problem in Haiti is that "women don't trust the police because sometimes they are the abusers."

There are some signs of progress. In 2005, Haiti finally changed its archaic rape law, at least temporarily, when a presidential decree ordered that sexual assault be recognized as a crime and not

only as an assault against honor. But to become permanent, the law needs to be passed by the newly elected Haitian Parliament.

Brian Concannon, director of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, says that René Prével, who was elected president in May 2006, had good programs for judicial reform in Haiti the last time he was in power. "Of course there's hope" that Prével will change the justice system, Concannon said. "There is huge support for judicial reform by the Haitian people." But he predicted that it will take several years until the justice system has changed significantly.

Although PEPFAR hasn't sufficiently addressed the issue of rape in Haiti through its prevention programs, the U.S. government recognizes a major problem. As a USAID Haiti Transition Initiative field report noted in March 2006, "Gangs in Port-au-Prince have been using rape as a conscious tool to terrorize citizens and increase their influence and power."

A separate USAID gender assessment that was published in June 2006 describes a total breakdown of the social order in poor urban communities and says, "The single gender issue most often cited and emphasized by women's advocacy groups is violence against women. ...The worst violence against women is occurring in urban areas and appears to be related to gangs. Efforts to reduce this violence should be a priority."

The link between violence against women and the transmission of HIV seems to have not yet been incorporated into the U.S. government-funded HIV prevention programs. But bipartisan legislation that is making its way through Congress could change that.

The Protection Against Transmission of HIV for Women and Youth Act, also known as the PATHWAY Act, introduced by Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif., with 85 co-sponsors, would require that PEPFAR create a prevention strategy that addresses female vulnerability to HIV, including taking action to protect women and girls from violence.

"Women and girls are increasingly bearing the brunt of the HIV/AIDS pandemic," Lee said. "But our current HIV prevention policy is not effectively addressing the key social, economic and cultural factors that put them at risk of contracting HIV. My bill lays out a comprehensive and integrated HIV prevention strategy that recognizes the realities that women face and empowers them to take control of their own lives, so that sound public health policy and the needs of people on the ground can dictate how we spend our money."

Meanwhile, KOFAVIV's support group for women victims of rape continues to meet weekly. Eramithe, another victim of violence sitting in the circle on the floor, tells the story of a woman who came in the day before. "A woman's husband was out of the house for a couple days, [she asked him to take an] HIV test and he beat her badly." Eramithe tucks her legs under her pink dress as she continues. "Countries have to take real action in providing support to women and children who have survived political violence."

## **WORLD AIDS DAY**

### **How the U.S. can help Haiti**

**BY VINCENT DEGENNARO**

**Miami Herald**

**Friday December 1, 2006**

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/opinion/16136847.htm>

On this World AIDS Day, my thoughts are with my friends and colleagues in rural Haiti who I know are working tirelessly to treat their AIDS patients. I was recently privileged to work there with the destitute sick as part of my medical studies. During my six-week stay, I saw the obstacles that the U.S. global AIDS program has encountered -- and sometimes exacerbated -- as it seeks to dramatically ramp up access to life-saving health services.

In rural parts of Haiti, the lack of healthcare workers leads to the inability to test, diagnose and treat AIDS patients. There are only five doctors for every 100,000 people in the country.

In the hospitals where I worked, I saw children dying of dehydration because there were not enough nurses available to give them intravenous fluids. There are almost no doctors living in the rural central plateau, and the few that are there are commuting three hours from Port-au-Prince. Physicians told me of their frustration at the lack of nurses and community healthcare workers to help care for their patients on a more consistent basis.

Dr. Renard Cruff, the director of HIV/AIDS for the government clinic in the city of Thomonde told me, "Because patients live so far from a doctor, they either wait until they are very sick to come to the clinic or go to see the traditional healers who are closer to them." Adding to the problem is that salaries are low. Several doctors spoke to me about their intention to leave Haiti for the United States where they could better provide for their families.

In the United States, modern treatment has transformed AIDS from a death sentence into a chronic disease like diabetes. However, in places like Haiti, people living with AIDS often suffer without treatment. While some progress has been made in making treatment more accessible, only 12 percent of those Haitians who need it are receiving the drugs. So far, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief is taking only limited steps to address this problem. The United States just increased its budget to hire local health workers to provide treatment and care whenever possible.

However, the United States is actually weakening the primary-care systems of recipient countries and draining professional staff from the public sector by hiring from the same pool with no efforts to increase the overall supply of doctors and nurses. Many more doctors and nurses will need to be trained through the opening of new professional schools in developing countries, coupled with substantial new efforts to retain the struggling health workers who are already in place.

Fortunately, there are steps the United States can take to address the severe lack of healthcare workers:

- The United States can provide its fair share to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, whose grants can be used to bolster retention of healthcare workers in Haiti. While support for the Global Fund in the U.S. Congress has been strong, each year President Bush has proposed a large

cut in the U.S. contribution. For the United States to meet its goals in Haiti, Bush should begin backing the fund wholeheartedly, and the full Congress should pass what the Senate has already approved: \$866 million for fiscal year 2007.

- Congress should pass and fully fund the New Partnership for Haiti Act of 2005, which would help Haiti improve basic healthcare infrastructure and sanitation. This bill has lacked the support of such key Republicans as Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Miami, who sits on the Foreign Relations Committee, but it is not too late for her to fight AIDS and other diseases by co-sponsoring this bill. Florida's senators, too, should take the lead in making sure that companion legislation gets through the Senate.
- Congress must look broadly at the problem, since Haiti is only one of 57 countries that the World Health Organization has identified as facing a severe healthcare worker shortage. A bill sponsored by Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill., would support training and retention of a capable, indigenous healthcare workforce in Africa, and Congress should pass and fund this critical legislation.

To fully fund a healthcare workforce to treat AIDS and other diseases in developing countries, \$8 billion over five years is needed from the United States alone. To some, this may sound like a lot. But unless we fully fund the workers that are on the frontlines of the battle against disease, our efforts for stability and prosperity in countries like Haiti could be as much a hindrance as a help.

Vincent DeGennaro is a University of Miami medical student and an advocacy fellow at the Global AIDS Alliance.

## **International donors urge Haiti to press on with reforms**

**Friday, December 1, 2006**

**by Gabriela Calotti**

**Caribbean Net News, AFP**

MADRID, Spain (AFP): An international donor conference on Thursday welcomed reforms in Haiti which delegates said had cleared the path to debt relief, though they urged the impoverished Caribbean state to push ahead with further changes.

The conference, attended by 85 delegations including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, noted a "shared responsibility between Haiti and the international community to tackle the challenge of the effectiveness of aid" to the poorest country in the Americas.

Haitian Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis hailed the progress his government had been able to make to date and welcomed the international community's willingness to recognise as much, while accepting more had to be done.

"This is why we are committed to maintaining the course we have set regarding economic management ... to continue the programme of public modernisation, the fight against corruption," Alexis told the closing press conference.

Two thirds of the Haitian population of 8.3 million lives on less than a dollar a day and average gross domestic product per person measures just 346 dollars.

After Transparency International dubbed Haiti the country with the most endemic corruption in the world, delegates were anxious to highlight last week's IMF and World Bank judgement that the country had reached stage two of three towards qualifying for debt relief through its reform programme.

The IMF last week noted "good progress in strengthening macroeconomic performance and introducing key structural reforms."

Debt relief, with the country's external debt topping a billion dollars, is crucial and the IMF and World Bank assessment was seen as a major step forward as it can now begin paying off the sum under the terms of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative.

In a final conference statement, delegates said that "participants welcome the decision" of the two financial bodies, seen as "opening the way to an annulling of Haiti's debts in the coming years."

Under the HIPC initiative Haiti can pay off a 212.9 million dollar tranche of its debt before moving to the next stage which would permit multilateral debt relief of another 464.4 million dollars.

Earlier, Alexis had told delegates that his country was at a crossroads in its development.

"Haiti finds itself at a historical turning point ... in which it needs - more than ever - assistance from its partners," he told the opening session of the conference.

Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Moratinos, who earlier had told the gathering that donors would tie their aid to Haitian efforts to ensure "good governance", hailed the efforts of President Rene Preval, elected last February, to "consolidate strong and independent democratic institutions".

"The cornerstone is good government," the Spanish minister said, adding that the priority for donors was to support "the modernisation of the state and the development of private initiative."

Foreign governments have pledged to provide Haiti with 1.75 billion dollars (1.3 billion euros) since the ousting of President Jean Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

Alexis said he wanted a part of the aid to be reserved for the budgets of different Haitian ministries rather than for specific projects.

The cash raised will be ploughed into areas including the organisation of upcoming municipal and local elections, the development of a professional police force, reform of the judicial system and the disarmament and reinsertion of armed militia groups.

## **Haiti rejects depiction as world's most corrupt**

**AP**

**The Jamaica Observer**

**Saturday, December 02, 2006**

MADRID, Spain (AP)- Haiti's prime minister has railed against a study ranking his impoverished Caribbean nation as the world's most corrupt country, saying the figures were outdated and didn't reflect his administration's performance.

"The figures used for that report were from 2004 and 2005 and didn't result from the government over which I preside," said Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis, who was in Madrid for a Haiti international donors conference.

Of 163 countries surveyed for Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index, which was released this month, Haiti received the lowest marks. Alexis said the report relied on perception rather than hard facts.

"I think their methodology should be questioned," Alexis said, without giving details. "It doesn't appear to be very transparent," he added with a smile.

Home to some eight million people, Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Corruption flourished amid frequent political turmoil over the last 20 years that crippled the economy, scared off investors and destroyed vital state institutions.

A violent and deadly revolt forced the ouster of then president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004.

President Rene Preval, who took power this year after elections were held, has pledged to fight graft, tighten customs controls on importers and brand Haitians who don't pay taxes as "traitors".

"Democracy can't be instituted like a royal decree- it is a process," Alexis said at a news conference after meeting with the Spanish Foreign Ministry's top development aid official, Leire Pajin. "Our government is committed to working to fight corruption, even though it is not as bad as the report would have us believe."

More than 30 countries and international institutions are attending the aid conference, which is designed to be a follow-up to a July meeting in Haiti at which US\$750 million were pledged. The idea is to review how those promises are being implemented and coordinated with Haiti, rather than seek more money.

**Haiti and donors make efficiency pledge**  
**United Press International**  
**November 30, 2006**

Updated: 11 days ago

Haiti and 30 nations Thursday promised greater efficiency in the handling of money pledged for rebuilding the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation.

During a donors' conference in the Spanish capital, Haitian Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis said 99 percent of the \$750 million promised since July has failed to reach those groups to which it was pledged, the BBC reported.

Haiti elected a new president and other lawmakers earlier this year, following more than two years of interim rule by leaders who were installed after former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide left the country in February 2004.

Aristide left Haiti amid an armed uprising by former soldiers who pledged to overthrow the president.

**Ahead of Haiti's elections, UN mission pledges help to ensure peaceful process**  
**UN News Centre**  
**29 November 2006**

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) will assist the country's authorities to ensure peaceful run of municipal and local elections slated to start this Sunday, when Haitians go to polls to elect representatives and finish a number of legislative run-off elections.

"The Mission's principal tasks on this occasion are to provide security and logistic support throughout the country, including distributing election material to some 9,200 polling stations," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told the press in New York.

A joint-security plan is being implemented, involving the Haitian Police, the UN Police and the Mission's military force. The Mission's 6,500- plus troops and 1,700 police will be out in force on election day, according to the spokesman.

"In spite of the recent upsurge in violence – which is a phenomenon that preceded the successful elections held earlier this year – and aware that anti-democratic forces may try to disturb the coming elections, the Mission remains confident that it has taken all necessary steps, in conjunction with the Government of Haiti, to ensure the vote is held in a secure environment," Mr. Dujarric said.

Meanwhile in Geneva, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour voiced "serious concern" about abuses in Haiti. "Though more is being said about civil and political rights, such as arbitrary detention and extrajudicial executions, the general population suffers from violations of their economic and social rights in an equally severe way," she said, noting that most people live in extreme poverty without basic goods and services.

"The situation of children in the country is particularly dire," she warned in an address to the Human Rights Council. "Children are often targets of violence, and their access to adequate education and health care is severely lacking."

Minors in conflict with the law "are most harshly affected by the dysfunction and the many weaknesses of the judicial and detention systems," said Ms. Arbour, who recently visited the Caribbean country.

"The Government expressed its commitment to solving pressing human rights problems and to put an end to abuses and violations originating from violence, impunity and the absence of the rule of law. A lack of resources hampers the achievement of these goals and the support of the international community is, therefore, indispensable."

**Cuba-Haiti Pen Cooperation Program**  
**Prensa Latina**  
**December 1, 2006**

Havana, Haiti and Cuba signed today a Cooperation Program for 2006-2007 to serve as basis to the Joint Commission meeting of both countries.

Haitian president Rene Preval and Esteban Lazo, Vice President of Cuban Council of State, penned the documents of the meeting that includes cooperation in 14 sectors and the continuation of Cuban medical aid.

It's an honor to be here with you in the 80th anniversary of Fidel Castro and the 50th anniversary of the Granma yacht expedition that eventually achieved Cuban liberation, to hold talks for cooperation between our two nations, said Preval.

This gathering is possible due to the personality of Fidel Castro and his contribution to unity among our countries, stressed Haiti's president.

In the name of my people, he added, I thank you for the aid given by hundreds of Cuban technicians supporting Haiti and the over 800 students that learn and get to know the fraternity of this generous nation.

On the Cuban part, Lazo described the meeting and talks as fruitful and said the results could be examined later in the Joint Commission for cooperation in 2007.

Marta Lomas, Minister for Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation, explained that health aid will be completed in 2006 to 34 communities and a literacy program will be restarted.

The document signed today covers the fields of agriculture, fisheries, sports, communications, food production, the sugar industry, culture, steel and mechanic industry and energy.

## **Paying Respect to Traditional Medicine**

**Modern health care groups collaborate with voodoo priests in Haiti to help identify people who are HIV-positive**

**By Sarah Fort**

**The Center for Public Integrity**

**November 30, 2006**

THOMONDE, Haiti — Bresa Belizaire works out of a wood hut with a raked-dirt floor. Under a wooden chair in the corner are bottles of medicine and human bones.

Belizaire is a voodoo priest, or "houngan" in Creole, in Thomonde, Haiti, an impoverished area in the center of the country. He works and lives just off one of the main dirt roads, near a health clinic run by Project Medishare, a U.S. nonprofit group that is working on improving the health infrastructure of Haiti.

Voodoo is a national religion, says Dr. Serge Pinto, a consultant to Project Medishare in Thomonde and a former division director at the Ministry of Health in Haiti. The voodoo priest or priestess is not only a healing doctor, he says, but also a religious figure, which makes it difficult for people not to believe.

Belizaire and his colleague, Pierre Marie-Chantal, a voodoo priestess, or "mambo," are two of the traditional healers that Project Medishare and Partners in Health, another nonprofit health care organization, work with in Thomonde. The organizations collaborate with the healers to help identify patients who are infected with HIV.

As in many countries, traditional medicine plays an important role in Haitian society. According to the U.S. government's HIV/AIDS Country Operational Plan 2006 for Haiti, nearly one out of every three households, urban and rural, consults a traditional healer when a family member becomes sick. People often seek out healers as a first option. By the time they turn to modern medicine it may be too late.

Carolle Charles, a Haitian-American professor of sociology at Baruch College in New York, says that few people in Haiti have access to formal medicine and that they rely on traditional medicine. There is a cultural conception in Haiti of disease and illness, she says. "And it's very close to the way people see the world, the way people see relationships, their position in the world and their relationship to nature."

"There's a whole culture of illness that I'm sure must influence the way people will get access or look for health care," she says. "A lot of people do not believe that they can have AIDS. A lot of people think that AIDS is a disease sent on you, a bad thing that people do on you. It's not something that you can get."

Recognizing the significance of traditional healers to the local communities, the U.S. government has incorporated them into HIV/AIDS programs. The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is training traditional healers on HIV/AIDS counseling and testing and prevention messages in several African countries, and it is beginning to formally collaborate with traditional healers in Haiti.

That's a good thing, says Catherine Maternowska, an assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of California, San Francisco, and the author of an upcoming book on Haiti. One of the reasons traditional healers are popular in Haiti, she says, is that they are able to provide both the time to listen and the quality of care that people in the community need and crave.

#### Mambo Faura

Pierre Marie-Chantal, also known as Mambo Faura, greets patients in her yard under the shaded canopy of banana and palm leaves on a circle drawn on the ground in chalk. Mambo Faura sits on a handmade chair while several assistants seated on the ground tend a fire nearby. She is a solid woman and is wearing a purple and blue traditional African dress. Townspeople drop by while she describes her work.

"I have been a priestess since I was 10," she says. "The spirit entered me then. ... The spirit is from my mother, and they have chosen to work through me."

Mambo Faura started her own traditional medicine practice when she was 17. "When a person comes to me because a spirit hurt her, I can see from the physical being of the spirit what kind of illness they have," she says.

To foreign visitors, Mambo Faura smiles and says that there is nothing to fear. "Voodoo is a sacred religion. ... I don't want you to think that I do bad. In short, I am part of the voodoo priests that are healers and give people good luck, not evil."

Sometimes, she says, she will see medically related cases that she can't treat. In those instances, she says, "I will assess the ailment and then give the appropriate medicines. And if there is no result, I will bring them to the hospital. Sometimes the person could have TB [tuberculosis] or HIV."

Dr. Louise Ivers, who works with Partners in Health (PIH) in the Central Plateau, says that sometimes a family may want to take a patient to a houngan from the hospital if, after a couple of days, the patient isn't visibly recovering. PIH will instead suggest that the houngan come to the hospital to treat the patient there, although the houngan is not encouraged to administer his own medicines in a hospital setting.

Because the houngan are leaders in the community, she says, PIH, which receives PEPFAR funding, has specific projects that engage the healers and train them to recognize the symptoms of TB and HIV/AIDS.

#### Bresa Belizaire

The wood hut where Voodoo priest Bresa Belizaire serves the townspeople of Thomonde is filled with the tools of his trade. (Photo by Guy-Claude Jean-Baptiste Jr.).

Thomonde is Belizaire's home, but it's also a city with many health problems. In addition to chronic malnutrition, HIV/AIDS and TB are widespread.

Thomonde was green in April — it hasn't been for months, but the rainy season has just begun. The rain has filled the potholes in the road with water. Trucks drive through slowly and children run alongside them, showing the drivers a path that is clear and not too deep.

Belizaire, 42, and the father of nine, has an intense gaze and an alert manner. Some of his children crowd around while he leads the way on the muddy path from his home to the hut where he works.

"Here we do a lot of work," he says. "There are a lot of health issues here. If there is no result from the voodoo [work], then we send people to the hospital and continue to work with them. Sometimes people go to the hospital and they don't get better so they return and are healed here."

"I see people from all religions," Belizaire says. "They might go to church too, but all the townspeople come to voodoo doctors."

Belizaire is familiar with HIV/AIDS in a city where up to one-tenth of the population is infected with the virus. He offers rum to the friends and patients in his hut as he explains how spirits tell him the composition of the herbal medicines he prepares.

If those medicines don't work, or if he's concerned that someone who comes to see him may have HIV or TB, Belizaire will refer that person to Medishare's clinic down the road.

At the end of the interview, Belizaire was asked if he had any questions for his guest. After pausing a moment, he says he has only one. "Could you tell me how to cure HIV/AIDS?"

**Haiti gets reassurance that OAS commitment is long-term**  
**Caribbean Net News**  
**Saturday, December 2, 2006**

MADRID, Spain: The Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary General, José Miguel Insulza, said Friday that supporting the process of rebuilding democracy in Haiti is “a long-term effort.” The election of a democratic government in is not an end in itself, he said, “but rather serves as further encouragement for us to honor our commitment to Haiti.”

Insulza’s remarks came as he addressed the International Conference for the Social and Economic Development of Haiti, for which representatives of international organizations and donor countries are gathered in Madrid, at the invitation of Spain’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Secretary General said this framework for cooperation calls for political and social stability to foster sustained economic growth, “because Haiti must be allowed to embark on a productive course of steady progress whereby external aid eventually is seen as a complementary rather than vital form of support.”

Warning, however, that the objective is yet a long way off, Insulza renewed the call for the international community not to abandon its commitments to help the people and government of Haiti.

He identified security issues as major obstacles to socioeconomic development in Haiti, referring to the growing numbers of armed gangs, drug trafficking, kidnapping and assassinations, and suggested that it must be understood that “in the current social climate now gripping the country—high unemployment and poverty rates as well as an inadequate police presence—the lack of security will remain a problem for the authorities.”

One way to redress this situation, he said, is to put in place the government’s Social Reconciliation Plan, an initiative which “points in the right direction and should be implemented without delay,” as an auxiliary to longer-term efforts to improve the country’s infrastructure and productivity.

Insulza called for a more active role by the private sector, saying while he understands the business community’s concerns over security, “if this attitude were to turn into outright disincentive and antagonism, that too would hinder full implementation of the kind of development policies we hope to get underway.” He said the necessary funds must be urgently committed to launch the Social Reconciliation Plan, to help lift Haitians out of their present situation.

Insulza explained the need for state institutions to take urgent action and to better coordinate efforts, because without strong public institutions, and without a properly functioning state, the political process could be affected and international assistance would be ineffectual.

The Secretary General also touched on the work the OAS has done in Haiti, noting its important role in the process that culminated in last February’s election of President René Préval. Insulza noted that regional elections will be held next Sunday, which will “complete the installation of full democracy in Haiti.” Some 3.5

## **Champions of the poor**

**Women work to help promising Haitian students, Belle Glade's struggling people.**

**By Carol Anne Burger**

**Special Correspondent**

**South Florida Sun Sentinel**

**Posted December 10 2006**

Ellie Caldwell and Gloria VanBrocklin aren't out to fix the world's problems, but their efforts have made a difference in the lives of poor people in Belle Glade and Haiti, particularly one Haitian college student.

Caldwell, who lives in Wellington, teaches English and writing at Palm Beach Community College in Belle Glade and is the creator and director of Wellington Cares, a clearinghouse for donations and assistance for the poor.

VanBrocklin is a pediatric nurse practitioner who works for Florida Atlantic University at the Community Wellness Center, a full-service clinic attached to Glade View Elementary School in Belle Glade. She is also an associate of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament of Bensalem, Pa., a suburb of Philadelphia, which operates the St. Katharine Drexel Mission Center in Ferrier, Haiti. VanBrocklin, who lives in West Palm Beach, spent three years there as a missionary in the mid-1990s.

"I got to know Ellie Caldwell when she'd gather donations for me to bring to Haiti," VanBrocklin said.

In the past, Wellington Cares has gathered books, supplies, food and clothing to be sent to Haiti, but those efforts have been stymied by delays in delivery because of bureaucracy and distribution problems.

Both women have come to champion a more direct way of helping people overcome poverty by giving scholarships to bright Haitian high school graduates.

"Americans are generous and want to help, but they also want to know that what they give is actually getting through to the people who need it," Caldwell said. "They are demanding accountability through direct, one-on-one assistance."

That's where the St. Katharine Drexel Mission Center Scholarship Aid Program comes in, VanBrocklin said.

"The sisters have been running the mission center in Ferrier for 20 years, and I've been going back several times a year since I returned to the States," she said.

VanBrocklin left Haiti after the 2004 coup that unseated elected President Jean Bertrand-Aristide. But she has never forgotten the conditions in Haiti or the people there who suffer through grinding poverty with what she calls "a spirit and fortitude that says, 'I'll make it,' through a strong faith and willingness to work hard."

"In Ferrier, there's an orphanage, an elementary school, an elder care center and a clinic. We feed 500 people each day," VanBrocklin said.

Inside the high-walled mission, nuns have trained local women to work in the orphanage and clinic, and they have developed other marketable skills, such as sewing and fine embroidery. "We teach them skills to pass on to others, so they can help themselves. Now, we're trying to establish a scholarship they must first earn, it's not a handout, so that they can rebuild their own country," VanBrocklin said.

"Building up Third World countries seems a good way to help people stay in their countries, so they don't come here with such desperate need," Caldwell said. "There are few scholarships in Haiti, so these poor kids who graduate at the top of their high school classes have no hope of going to college."

During her last stay in Haiti, one student, Jodemel Raphael Duprey, impressed VanBrocklin so much that she contributed money for him to attend Our Lady of Haiti, Notre Dame, in Cap-Haitien this year. He is studying computer science and finance.

Upon her return last March, she spoke with another nurse at the Glade View clinic and with Caldwell, both of whom matched her donation, making his advanced schooling possible.

A little goes a long way in Haiti, where Duprey's mother works at the mission clinic. She saved enough money to pay for his high school education (there is no free public education in Haiti) and for his room and board at college. But tuition, room and board and books cost about \$1,000 in U.S. dollars, too large a sum for her to manage alone. "His mother has sacrificed so much," VanBrocklin said. "Just going to high school there costs \$500 a year, and college seems out of reach."

Duprey graduated first in his class in June and has worked at the mission, entering data into the computer, accepting no pay for his time.

"He just feels thankful for any help. Like so many who only want a chance to earn their way out of poverty, they'll do anything asked of them for an opportunity," VanBrocklin said.

Caldwell has expanded the options available at Wellington Cares to include either whole or shared donations to worthy students such as Duprey, to be administered by the St. Katharine Drexel Mission Center.

"There will be no administrative costs, and the money will be sent to St. Katharine's center twice a month to be doled out directly to the college when bills are due for the student," Caldwell said.

Checks should be made out to St. Katharine Drexel Mission Center, Att: Scholarship Aid, and sent to Sister Patricia Downs, Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1663 Bristol Pike, Bensalem, PA 19020-5796.

**Fact Sheet**  
**Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs**  
**US State Department**  
**Washington, DC**  
**December 5, 2006**

U.S. Assistance to Haiti

As Secretary Rice stated in March 2006, "We all have a tremendous stake in the development of a democratic Haiti." The United States is committed to improving the lives of average Haitians, and it is Haiti's largest bilateral assistance donor. In fiscal years (FY) 2004-2006 the U.S. spent more than \$600 million for improving governance, security, rule of law, economic recovery, and critical humanitarian needs. The President's budget request for FY 2007 includes over \$198 million for Haiti.

U.S. Government assistance addresses critical humanitarian needs, strengthens governance, improves security, and fosters broad-based economic recovery in Haiti.

**Economic Growth:** U.S. Government programs have distributed more than 200,000 loans to small and micro enterprises; provided \$24 million to support electricity generation; and created more than 200,000 short-term jobs. The United States remains Haiti's largest trade partner, with bilateral trade totaling over \$1.1 billion in 2005.

**Stability:** The U.S. Government-funded urban peace-building initiative promotes peace in troubled neighborhoods by providing short-term job opportunities focused on infrastructure repair and implementing educational and health programs. The United States also supports the work of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti, with contributions totaling \$120 million in FY 2006.

**Governance and Democratization:** The United States has provided advisors to key Haitian government ministries. To improve the justice system, 800 judges, prosecutors, and clerks have been trained. The U.S. Government works with local organizations to promote civic education and the growth of civil society. In addition, the United States launched a multi-year assistance program for Parliament in August, at an estimated cost of \$7 million.

**Elections:** The United States provided more than \$34 million for transparent administration of all rounds of national, local, and municipal elections, as well as support for political parties, media, and voter education.

**Health:** The U.S. Government provides access to basic health care to more than 45% of the population in Haiti. Every year U.S. funding is used to immunize about 50,000 children under the age of one. About \$55 million has been approved for FY 2006 under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), a \$5 million increase over FY 2005. Through PEPFAR, an estimated 8,000 individuals will have begun anti-retroviral therapy by the end of 2006.

**Food Aid and Disaster Relief:** Since the spring of 2004, the food assistance program has distributed food to over 862,000 recipients. Responding to the devastation of Tropical Storm Jeanne in 2004, a \$34 million program helped Haitians repair homes, schools, and other public buildings.

Education: U.S. Government-funded programs are improving education at 450 primary schools; 150,000 children and youth have benefited from education programs.

Police: The United States funds a contribution of 50 U.S. police officers to the UN Stabilization Mission to Haiti, provides training for new and existing Haitian National Police (HNP), and has funded upgrades to the police academy and key police stations as well as communications, vehicles, and duty gear. Training for Haitian police officers places an emphasis on respect for human rights, ethics, and policing skills. To date, the United States has contributed \$40 million in essential equipment and training assistance for the HNP.

The U.S. Government also works closely with other bilateral and multilateral donors and the Government of Haiti to ensure that all donor assistance to Haiti is effectively coordinated in the context of the joint multi-donor-interim government development strategy, known as the Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF). At the July 2006 international donors' conference in Port-au-Prince, the U.S. pledged \$210 million of the \$750 million pledged in total for July 2006 through September 2007, making it the largest single-country donor. On September 15, 2006, the United States signed a \$492 million, three-year agreement with the Government of Haiti, to support programs on justice and democracy reform, healthcare, public works improvement and other critical projects. Since July 2004, the United States has disbursed more than \$457 million for assistance to Haiti.