

IJDH Haiti News Briefs: Saturday May 13 – Wednesday May 17, 2006.

Dear Colleagues,

Please find below the mainstream news on Haiti for May 13-17, 2006

The inauguration of Rene Preval on Sunday May 14th was well covered by the major media outlets. In spite of chaotic and poor preparations, the inaugural events occurred as planned. Preval spoke briefly emphasizing peace, prosperity and hope for the next five years. A prison riot at the National Penitentiary, 800 meters from the National Palace, broke out in the midst of the inaugural activities. Some prisoners had escaped to the rooftop and demanded their release as political prisoners. The riot was contained by UN Peacekeepers and the use of teargas. It was unclear how many prisoners died in the riot, though many injuries were reported.

Though absent of heads of state, the inauguration was attended by 300 foreign dignitaries, most notably Canada's Governor General, Haitian-born Michaëlle Jean, Florida Governor Jeb Bush and actor Danny Glover. Michaëlle Jean was well-received with outpourings of affection in all her appearances from Port-au-Prince to Jacmel. As Governor General she has attained the highest position of any Haitian diaspora. Jean's extended four day visit was an emotional homecoming of sorts for her as well.

A common message reiterated by the UN, the World Bank, the US and several Op-ed pieces this week focused on the need for donors to pledge long term commitments to Haiti and its challenges ahead. The World Bank Director for the Caribbean, Caroline Antsey said that Haiti needed more than the \$780 million (of the \$1.08 billion pledged) received in the past two years. Antsey and other officials mentioned the urgency of Haiti's needs and to take advantage of this 'window of opportunity'. A ministerial meeting is planned for May 23rd in Brasilia, Brazil to review development aid released and Haiti's future needs.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan appointed Guatemalan Edmond Mulet to succeed Juan Gabriel Valdes of Chile as the UN Special Representative in Haiti responsible for MINUSTAH. Mulet has been Guatemalan Ambassador to the EU since 2000.

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1) Haiti visit ends on emotional high

'Child of Jacmel' welcomed home

Michaëlle Jean overcome by joy

May 17, 2006

FRANCINE KOPUN

The Toronto Star

http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_Type1&c=Article&cid=1147816220407&call_pageid=968332188492&col=968793972154&t=TS_Home

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Her family was there, too.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Change," they yelled.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2) Governor General visits her family's hometown in Haiti

Tue, 16 May 2006

CBC News

http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_Type1&c=Article&cid=1147816220407&call_pageid=968332188492&col=968793972154&t=TS_Home

Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean paid an emotional visit to her family's hometown in Jacmel, Haiti, on Tuesday.

Jean said she wanted to bring hope to the people of the town where her mother and grandmother were born.

Jean was born in Port-au-Prince, but says she visited Jacmel many times before her family fled Haiti when she was 11 years old.

The Governor General was presented with the key to the town, and promised that she will use the key to open all doors.

Jean said she didn't want to be the focus of the visit.

"I want to see what the people are up to."

Residents relay their concerns

Jean was taken from event to event.

But outside a power plant she was due to inspect, Jean was greeted by local singers who waved signs saying, "Don't forget us."

Jean read the signs and then spent a couple of minutes joining the dancing.

Local residents Danielle Cornay and Beatrice Villeneuve said there are lots of problems in Jacmel.

"The power plant doesn't run all the time," they said. And they need better schools and health care.

At the last event of the morning, the Governor General was treated to a short concert at a school that is trying to keep children off the streets.

"Music," said Jean, "is important. It gives us hope."

3) In Haiti, Jean speaks of hope over adversity

INGRID PERITZ

Globe and Mail, Canada

May 16, 2006

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20060516.wxjean16/BNStory/International/home>

Port-au-Prince — Governor-General Michaëlle Jean invoked the tenacity of her own grandmother, who sewed clothes and sold them on the street to put her children through school, as a source of inspiration for ordinary Haitians yesterday.

In a day that took her through the teeming streets of the Haitian capital to meet business leaders, students, women's groups and street vendors, Ms. Jean returned again and again to her message of hope over adversity.

She invoked the family matriarch, Dianira Oriol, who paid for her five children's education by selling homemade clothes on the sidewalks and marketplace of Jacmel.

She recalled her political exile to Quebec with her mother and sister, landing in a semi-basement apartment where "the only horizon is a sidewalk."

Ms. Jean looks like she belongs on a fashion runway and speaks a polished French that wouldn't be out of place in the Élysée Palace. But she repeatedly insisted on using creole, the language of the Haitian masses that's shunned by the country's elite, to reach out to her audiences.

In her speeches, Ms. Jean's family story of struggle against adversity became a metaphor for all of Haiti, which hopes the inauguration of its new President, René Préval, will begin to lift it out of years of misery and instability.

"For Haitians, hope has always been the golden rule of life," Ms. Jean said when addressing local business leaders. "Even when it was only held together by a thread."

She urged her audience to set aside their political differences to work for "a common good."

"We all share the same responsibility -- the responsibility that will put an end, once and for all, to despair in Haiti."

Her own Cinderella story, which took her from the basement apartment to Rideau Hall, has clearly touched people in her homeland.

As he introduced her to the business audience, a local official, Rosny Desroches, said Ms. Jean's trajectory proves that no situation in life is too desperate.

He invoked her parents' anguish when they decided to flee the Duvalier dictatorship in 1968, and "the sorrow of a little girl from the tropics who confronted the rigours of the Canadian winter.

"You showed resilience. You overcame adversity. Today, it's with honour and pride that the entire Haitian nation welcomes you."

Ms. Jean seems intent on proving she is taking the largely ceremonial position of Governor-General beyond ribbon-cutting. After the pomp-filled swearing-in of President Préval, she decided to remain in Haiti.

"If I was only coming here for ceremony, I would be gone by now," she told reporters. "I'm not on holiday here."

Her deep roots and attachment to her homeland surfaced over and over.

She even brought up her daughter, Marie-Éden, adopted in Haiti, when speaking about orphaned children in the country.

"When I'm here, I see them, I see them in the streets. And I see my daughter."

Ms. Jean hopes her trip will draw Canada's attention to the many woes of Haiti, where half the nation is illiterate, the average Haitian earns \$390 (U.S.) a year, and life expectancy is 53.

"We know that misery can be a powder keg," she said.

Canada has contributed \$190-million in aid to Haiti in the past two years.

4) Haiti welcomes Jean with love

May 16, 2006

FRANCINE KOPUN

The Toronto Star

http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_Type1&c=Article&cid=1147729811050&call_pageid=968332188492

Governor General accepts praise wiping away tears Says mission is to bring hope to her country of birth

Port-au-Prince—It was a day of high emotion in Haiti for Canadian Governor General Michaëlle Jean, as she neared the end of her four-day visit to the country where she was born and which remains close to her heart.

Hailed yesterday as a hometown hero in meetings with merchants, students and women's groups, Jean wiped away tears as she accepted lavish praise and revealed her difficult childhood. Raised by a single mother, who had herself been raised by a single mother of five, Jean said she knew adversity as a child. She and her family fled the murderous Duvalier regime in Haiti in 1968 when she was 11 and moved to small-town Quebec. Some of her neighbours had never seen a black person.

"Living in exile isn't easy — living with your mother and sister in a one-bedroom basement apartment, the sidewalk your only horizon," Jean said. "But there was a sense of pride, of dignity, and of will, and that's maybe what brought me here today."

She said her mother was a teacher in Haiti, but could not get work in her profession in Canada. She worked in a factory with other immigrants to support her two young girls.

Jean said her grandmother, who lived in the seaside town of Jacmel, laboured over a sewing machine day and night to make clothes to sell to put her five children through school.

Jean is scheduled to visit Jacmel today. Asked why she did not meet with children in the teeming slums of this impoverished city, Jean said those are not the images of Haiti she wants projected in the media.

"Believe me, I know Cité Soleil. I was born here; I'm from this country," she told Canadian journalists. She rejected the idea that she had come for Sunday's inauguration of President René Préval and had little to offer Haitians besides words.

"If I was only coming here for a ceremony I would be gone by now; the ceremony's over," she said. "I'm not going to Jacmel for personal reasons, or to visit my family. I'm not on holiday here."

Her purpose has been to bring hope to Haitians, who live in the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, and in that she seems to have succeeded.

Her speech about hope and peace was so well received at a meeting with the Haitian-Canadian Chamber of Commerce in the morning, that Haitian Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, who had been scheduled to speak after her, announced that he wouldn't be speaking at all.

"After a speech like that, it's better to be quiet," he said, to peals of laughter from the audience.

She was lauded at the meeting as the most successful emigrant Haiti has known.

"They are numerous, our compatriots in the diaspora who have distinguished themselves here and there in the world, in literature, medicine, architecture and music. But no one among them, of either sex, has attained the summit where you sit so royally," said Frantz Liautaud, a Chamber of Commerce official.

In the afternoon, Jean met with university students who gave her a standing ovation.

"I have the impression, not only that this whole room loves you, but that it adores you," said Denis Régis, executive director at the Centre for Diplomatic and International Studies, and one of the organizers of the meeting with students.

Jean said she is not surprised at the strength of the support she enjoys among Haitians. She said that when she was appointed to the office, she was deluged with messages of support.

Asked to recall her childhood in the city, her anger at what was done to the people of her country resurfaced.

"It was Papa Doc, it was dictatorship. It was one of the worst moments in Haiti's history. Hundreds and thousands of people died," she said.

"It's part of my story. It's still in me.

5) Haitian-born Canadian figure inspires hometown

16 May 2006

Reuters Alertnet

By Tom Brown

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N16106110.htm>

JACMEL, Haiti - A Haitian-born filmmaker who fled political violence as a child returned to her hometown on Tuesday as Canada's governor general hailed as an inspiration for Haiti's struggling people.

Canadian Governor-General Michaëlle Jean, the first black person to become the personal representative in Canada of head of state Britain's Queen Elizabeth, made her third visit to her hometown of Jacmel since her parents fled the "Papa Doc" Duvalier dictatorship in 1968.

She urged Haitians to throw their support behind newly installed President Rene Preval to help build a better future for the poorest nation in the Americas.

"The whole world wants to see Haiti seize this important moment and do what it takes to lift Haiti out of misery," Jean, 48, told townspeople packed into the tree-rimmed central square in Jacmel, the place she considers her hometown.

Onlookers said Jean's success was an example to them. "She's proof that being Haitian doesn't have to mean being a failure. That inspires us a lot" said Dorothy Belizaire, a 19-year-old high-school student.

Natalie St. Louis agreed. "She's a model of success that we would like to follow," she said.

Jean, who fled to Canada's French-speaking Quebec province when she was still a child and later became a documentary filmmaker, called on Haitians to join forces.

"The time for tensions and divisions is over," she said, speaking in Creole, to people in Jacmel.

The city of around 40,000 on the country's southern coast has relatively clean streets and reliable electricity supplies -- largely due to Canadian aid -- and contrasts starkly with the squalor and decay elsewhere,

Preval, who was installed on Sunday as Haiti's first democratically elected leader since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in an armed revolt more than two years ago, faces daunting challenges.

Eighty percent of Haitians live in abject poverty. Less than 2 percent of the Caribbean country's forest cover remains. And deep mistrust between the poor masses and a small

wealthy elite has sparked frequent bloodshed and political instability that has so far undermined efforts to establish full democracy after decades of dictatorships.

(Additional reporting by Joseph Guyler Delva)

6) World Bank official urges quick aid for Haiti

Mon May 15, 2006

Reuters

http://today.reuters.com/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=worldNews&storyID=2006-05-15T225154Z_01_N15340302_RTRUKOC_0_US-ECONOMY-AID-HAITI.xml&archived=False

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters) - International donors must work quickly to help Haiti's new government stabilize the country and start tackling the desperate poverty and violence, a senior World Bank official said on Monday.

Heaping praise on President Rene Preval, who took office on Sunday, Caroline Anstey, World Bank Director for the Caribbean, called his election "a great beacon of hope" for Haiti.

Preval, a one-time ally of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, is Haiti's first democratically-elected leader in more than two years.

Sounding a similar note to Preval himself, Anstey said there were no short-term fixes for the poorest nation in the Americas. But a democratic election marked a new beginning for a country often seen as a poster child for failed states.

"Haiti will need long-term support and long-term resources to really be able to enter onto a path of sustainable development and break what has been a cycle of conflict, instability and poverty," Anstey told Reuters.

An aid umbrella group for Haiti -- a 26-member body known as the International Cooperation Framework -- will meet on May 26 in Brasilia to discuss calls by Preval for new funds.

Anstey suggested Preval had given the meeting a sense of urgency with recent warnings that Haiti's latest experiment with democracy, and the chance to build a better future, could be eroded by a lack of international support.

"I think there is a very strong feeling that the window of opportunity is there but it's not going to be there forever," said Anstey. "Both the new Haitian authorities and the donors need to move fast," she added.

Haiti needs far more aid than the estimated \$700 million that the ICF has paid out since \$1.08 billion was pledged in July 2004 and Anstey noted other unstable nations were competing for the same pool of international funds as Haiti.

"There is a lot of attention right now, rightly so, on Sudan, on Liberia, and there's continued attention on Afghanistan," said Anstey.

Anstey said donors have often lost interest in Haiti, where the average inhabitant lives on less than \$2 a day and over half are malnourished.

"Donors have had a history in Haiti of coming in with big money and, within two years, pulling out. We need to see that spigot of aid turned on and remain on," Anstey said.

7) U.S. Participating in International Meetings To Help Haiti Rebuild Ministerial meeting in May precedes donors' conference in July

By Eric Green

Washington File Staff Writer

US State Department

May 16, 2006

Washington -- The United States is participating in two upcoming international meetings to help Haiti meet many of its daunting economic and social challenges, officials at the U.S. State Department have confirmed.

A May 23 ministerial meeting is set for Brazil's capital of Brasilia, with the U.S. delegation at that event led by Thomas Shannon, assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, and Adolfo Franco, assistant administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean at the U.S. Agency for International Development. The World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the United Nations, the Organization of American States and other multilateral groups are among those expected at the meeting.

A State Department official said in an interview that the May 23 meeting in Brasilia will provide an opportunity to review the status of international financial assistance provided to Haiti over the last several years and to prepare for a donors' conference for Haiti in July. The exact date in July and site for that conference have yet to be finalized, the official said.

International financial aid to Haiti is being guided under what is called the Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF). In operation since July 2004, the ICF outlines Haiti's many needs, from restoring electricity services to feeding disadvantaged children and getting them to enroll in school.

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

The Bush administration made a budget request on February 7 to the U.S. Congress for \$193 million in fiscal year 2007 for Haiti, for humanitarian aid and economic assistance. That request is pending in several committees in the Congress, another State Department official said.

**SECURITY COUNCIL CONGRATULATES PRESIDENT PREVAL, NEW
PARLIAMENT**

The U.N. Security Council congratulated Haiti's newly inaugurated President René Préval and the country's new parliament, and called on them to build a better future for the Caribbean country. Préval was sworn into office May 14.

Reviewing the list of challenges that the country faces, the Security Council highlighted "the need to ensure a secure and stable environment in Haiti, [and to] strengthen its democratic institutions, foster national reconciliation, inclusiveness and political dialogue, promote and protect human rights and the rule of law, and build governmental capacity." (See related article.)

The Security Council also emphasized the need to reform and strengthen Haiti's law enforcement systems. In that regard, the Security Council said it looks forward to the results of discussions to be held between the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the new Haitian authorities on security-related issues.

The full text of the Security Council statement is available on the U.N. Web site. For additional information on U.S. policy, see Haiti.

8) Preval Sworn In as Haiti's President

By Amelia Shaw

VOA News

Port-au-Prince

15 May 2006

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2006-05-15-voa39.cfm>

On Sunday, Haiti swore in Rene Preval as its first democratically elected president since former president Jean Bertrand Aristide was forced into exile two years ago, following a bloody uprising. Analysts say President Preval is facing a difficult term in office.

Jubilant crowds greeted Mr. Preval as he made his way to the National Palace in downtown Port-au-Prince, shouting "long live Preval, long live Aristide!" It was a historic day for many Haitians, who hope that Mr. Preval will bring change to the impoverished country.

Rene Preval is sworn in in Port-au-Prince, Sunday

The new president has widespread support among the poor, who see him as a close ally of exiled president Jean Bertrand Aristide.

While foreign dignitaries moved between the parliament and the palace, hundreds of U.N. peacekeeping troops patrolled the capital.

In his inaugural address, Mr. Preval appealed for peace. He said the future of Haiti is in the hands of all Haitians, but they will need the support of the international community.

The inauguration drew international attention, with many countries sending dignitaries. Governor of the U.S. state of Florida and President Bush's brother, Jeb Bush, was in attendance. He said Haiti's future will depend on its ability to establish law and order.

"I hope and believe again under the leadership of the new president there will be greater security, which will make it possible for more prosperity, more jobs created, and more economic prosperity," he said.

Besides establishing stability, analysts say Mr. Preval must begin a process of social and political reconciliation to bridge the enormous gap between the rich and poor. Haiti has a tiny minority of wealthy elite, but eight out of 10 people live on less than a dollar a day.

While mostly peaceful, the inauguration day was not without incident. Shortly before the ceremony began, a riot broke out in the national prison, shattering the fragile peace in the capital. U.N. troops quickly restored order.

The United Nations deployed its peacekeepers in Haiti in 2004 to help stabilize the turbulent country.

9) Haiti's New President Urges People to Make Peace Through Dialogue

By VOA News

15 May 2006

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2006-05-15-voa4.cfm>

Haiti's new president, Rene Preval, has urged his nation's divided people to make peace through dialogue, two years after an armed uprising ousted former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Mr. Preval made the appeal Sunday in his inaugural address to thousands of supporters outside the presidential palace in the capital, Port-au-Prince. He said the solutions to the country's problems are in Haitians' own hands.

Mr. Preval took his oath of office at a ceremony in Haiti's parliament, attended by foreign dignitaries such as President Bush's brother - Florida Governor Jeb Bush - and Canadian Governor-General Michaëlle Jean.

Shortly before the ceremony, gunfire was heard at a nearby prison where some inmates had climbed onto the roof. Police quelled the disturbance, and the atmosphere in Port-au-Prince remained largely festive.

Mr. Preval won the country's presidential elections in February. The 63-year-old leader replaces an interim government backed by United Nations peacekeepers from Brazil.

Mr. Preval has promised to help reunify the Caribbean nation, which has suffered waves of violence since Mr. Aristide fled into exile in 2004.

It is the second time Mr. Preval has served as Haiti's president. His first term was from 1996 to 2001.

10) Haiti poor fear new president may turn against them

By Joseph Guylor Delva and Tom Brown

Reuters

Washington Post

Monday, May 15, 2006

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/15/AR2006051500562.html>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters) - As their new president took office, some among Haiti's poor majority who helped propel him into power fear he may soon be distanced from them or "hijacked" by the Caribbean nation's tiny but wealthy elite.

Rene Preval, 63, won a February election largely because he is seen, like ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, as a champion of the poor. His most vociferous opponents were the impoverished nation's business and light-skinned upper classes.

He spent the first few hours in office on Sunday among diplomats and the wealthy, however, while the masses huddled in sweltering heat behind a fence surrounding the ramshackle capital's ornate presidential palace.

The crowd jammed into Port-au-Prince's central plaza grew angry when told they would not be allowed to watch Preval give his inaugural address unless they stood behind cement barriers erected well away from the palace gates.

They eventually surged forward anyway, ignoring orders from the police. Many were pinned by the weight of the crowd against the palace's gates and wrought iron fence, only to be pushed back by police in a noisy and sweat-soaked sea of humanity.

"We voted for Preval, now they are telling us that we can't see him deliver his inaugural speech," complained Marline Joinville, 20, one of the many hoping to get a glimpse of Haiti's first elected president in more than two years.

While the people were in the streets, she said, "those who used to kill us, who used to try to prevent Preval from becoming president, are inside."

Well-wishers at a party thrown in the gardens of the palace after Preval's address included former dictator Prosper Avril and outgoing Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, who headed an interim government installed after Aristide fled into exile, facing an armed revolt, in February 2004.

The interim administration has been accused of human rights violations against Aristide's -- and now Preval's -- supporters in the slums.

Preval paid tribute to both Latortue and outgoing President Boniface Alexandre in his inaugural address, saying they had organized the election under difficult circumstances. But Preval himself has said the election was marred by fraud aimed at preventing him from taking office, and the crowd jeered and gave a thumbs-down on hearing his mention of the two.

"Preval should bar those people from leaving the country and arrest them," said Lesly Cherubin, a young man wearing a T-shirt with Preval's image emblazoned across his chest.

"The bourgeoisie wants to hijack the president. They are all over him, while, we, who elected him, can't even see him," Cherubin said.

The United States, a powerful foreign player in Haiti that was accused of undermining Aristide, has welcomed Preval's election and Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, the U.S. president's younger brother, attended Sunday's inauguration.

U.S. officials have warned Preval not to bring Aristide back from exile, but demands for just that rang out outside the palace and the Parliament building where Preval was sworn in.

"Whether they want it or not, Aristide should come back," chanted the demonstrators outside Parliament.

The crowd also chanted "long live Preval." But analysts say that could change if he blocks the return of Aristide, who is despised by the elite as much as he is beloved by the masses.

A one-time ally of Aristide, Preval has said there's nothing to prevent the fiery Roman Catholic priest from returning from his exile in South Africa

11) Preval to lead Haiti again

By Stevenson Jacobs

Associated Press

San Jose Mercury News

May 15, 2006

<http://www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/news/world/14582494.htm>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Rene Preval, the only elected president in Haiti's history to finish his term, was sworn in Sunday to again lead the impoverished nation in its latest attempt at democracy after decades of armed uprisings, lawlessness and foreign intervention.

Preval took the oath of office in a sweltering, packed parliament chamber. Afterward, he stood and waved as about 300 legislators and foreign dignitaries, including Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, Canadian Gov. General Michaëlle Jean and the actor Danny Glover, gave him a standing ovation.

The inauguration was the final step in Haiti's return to democratic rule two years after a bloody revolt ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and plunged the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation into chaos.

In his inaugural address later outside the national palace, Preval urged unity among Haiti's fractured society and a return to peace after the February 2004 revolt.

"We need to make peace through dialogue and talking to each other so we can decide where we want to go together," Preval said. "If we don't talk, then we will only fight and there will be no peace."

Thousands cheered Preval, pressing up against the green iron gates surrounding the palace and waving Haitian flags as dozens of U.N. peacekeepers stood guard. Others danced and sang as traditional bands snaked through the crowd playing homemade horns and drums.

Preval urged Haitians to help maintain security so the country could create jobs, build roads and hospitals and move forward "without the presence of foreign troops."

"Haitian people, the solution to our problems is in our hands," he said. "Please help me, help the country, help yourself."

Preval, who governed Haiti from 1996 to 2001 and replaces a U.S.-backed interim government appointed after the revolt, is a former Aristide ally and champion of Haiti's poor.

The 63-year-old agronomist faces big challenges, including a corrupt state bureaucracy, a wrecked economy, roiling insecurity and the plight of prisoners.

Hours before the inauguration, prisoners demanding their freedom rioted at Haiti's national penitentiary, about a half-mile from the parliament building. There was no official word on casualties, though scores of inmates massed on the roof holding what appeared to be two dead bodies.

12) Préval inaugurated in Haiti

By Carol J. Williams

By Los Angeles Times and Knight-Ridder Newspapers

May 15, 2006

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-haiti15may15,1,6286048.story?ctrack=1&cset=true>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — René Préval was sworn in as Haiti's president for the second time Sunday, restoring legitimacy to the troubled nation's government after more than two years of anarchy and violence that followed the flight of Jean-Bertrand Aristide to escape an armed rebellion.

A soft-spoken agronomist and the only president ever to serve out his full term, Préval, who previously served from 1996 to 2001, inherits a nation occupied by foreign peacekeepers, in economic shambles and deeply conflicted over the legacy and future of Aristide.

In a ceremony at the Parliament that hasn't functioned properly in five years, the red-and-blue presidential sash was bestowed on Préval, who then appealed in a 15-minute speech for national unity and social peace to pull Haiti out of its misery.

"Only we Haitians can solve our main problem, which is division. We have to work together. Foreigners can't do that for us," he said.

While the inauguration was attended by 300 Haitian and foreign dignitaries including Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, average Haitians thronged the streets, their ears bent to radios to follow the fanfare. Thousands amassed outside the National Palace to cheer as the presidential party arrived for a reception and another brief address by Préval to those gathered on the manicured lawn or listening from behind the wrought-iron fences.

Blocks from the inauguration ceremony, inmates rioted Sunday at the National Penitentiary, where an estimated 80 percent of detainees have not seen a judge. Dozens of prisoners reached the roof and said they expected to be released now that Préval is president. U.N. soldiers stormed in to restore order.

Préval and Aristide were leaders of the democratic movement that ousted Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier 20 years ago.

Préval's first presidency was paralyzed by political opposition in the parliament and the sense that his mentor, Aristide, was the real power behind the throne.

This time around, Préval, whose base is among the poor masses, has courted the Haitian business community and international donors in hopes of easing those old hostilities. He has traveled to Washington to seek trade preferences and aid, to Cuba for medical help, to the Dominican Republic to ease tensions along the border and to Venezuela for cheaper oil — 100,000 barrels of which arrived this weekend.

For now, he appears to have the support of most key sectors, both at home and abroad. But many observers say he must act quickly to maintain that delicate cohesion in such a fractured society.

More than half the country lives on 44 U.S. cents per day per capita, according to the World Bank. A half-million children have no access to primary school. Only 10 percent of Haitians have electricity, and less than 50 percent have access to clean drinking water.

Haiti ranks among the poorest and least-developed countries in the world, behind war-ravaged nations like Congo, Sudan and East Timor.

Foreign observers say Préval must establish transparent and effective governance to open the flow of foreign aid — including \$554 million in financing available from the Inter-American Development Bank.

Some urgent measures widely agreed upon: increase the number of hours of electricity in the cities; work with the U.N. peacekeepers to vet police officers and disarm gangs and former soldiers; restore water and sanitation services; revamp the public-education system in which teaching is often rote, standards are inconsistent and fees prevent nearly half of Haiti's children from attending; promote rural and agricultural development; and improve the collection of taxes from the business sector and upper classes.

Haitian leaders are also pinning their hopes on the so-called HOPE Act before the U.S. Congress, which would give some Haitian exports preferential access to U.S. markets. Préval has said the bill could create up to 80,000 jobs.

Perhaps the diciest political subject facing Préval is Aristide, who is living in exile in South Africa. Aristide's more vigilant supporters want him to return, and could paralyze the country with violence if they do not get their way. Foreign diplomats are strongly discouraging his return, seeing it as potentially destabilizing.

Préval has been coy on the subject but reportedly has told U.S. and other diplomats that he does not favor Aristide's return.

13) New Haiti leader appeals for peace

By Manuel Roig-Franzia

Washington Post

May 15, 2006

http://www.boston.com/news/world/latinamerica/articles/2006/05/15/new_haiti_leader_appeals_for_peace/

PORT-AU-PRINCE -- President René Préval pleaded with Haitians to bring peace to the Western Hemisphere's poorest country as he was inaugurated yesterday during a ceremony that drew thousands to the whitewashed National Palace and marked the return of democratic rule in Haiti.

Crowds sang "Préval, Préval, we've been waiting for you" at each stop in the four-hour event, which his supporters hope will set Haiti on a new course two years after the violent ouster of Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Signs of the chaotic situation inherited by Préval -- a soft-spoken agronomist who once owned a bakery in Port-au-Prince -- were everywhere: As he prepared to be inaugurated, inmates at a central Port-au-Prince jail known for holding political prisoners protested, occupying a rooftop and chanting "we want justice."

The power briefly went out during a Catholic Mass Préval attended as part of the ceremony; Port-au-Prince was without electricity for much of the week before the inauguration and has persistent supply problems.

Later, at the National Palace, a crowd of invited guests and passers-by overwhelmed security guards, pushing past metal detectors and streaming across the gated compound. They arrived at the palace after traversing streets guarded by heavily armed United Nations soldiers and tanks.

Known for his brevity, Préval spoke for less than 10 minutes, prescribing a one-word solution for a nation plagued by political turmoil: "peace."

"The answer is simple, the answer is clear: We have to build peace," Préval said, drawing cheers. "If we don't talk to each other, we're going to fight each other."

Préval, who served as Haiti's president from 1996 to 2001, took his second oath of office after being draped with a red and blue sash at the national parliament building.

In a symbolically charged moment, he left the building at the side of outgoing president Boniface Alexander, who headed the US-backed interim government put in place after Aristide fled into exile.

The democratic succession was only the second in Haiti's tumultuous 202-year history. Préval's inauguration in 1996 was the first.

Préval faces huge challenges trying to bring order to a nation that the nonprofit International Crisis Group calls "a perennial candidate for failed state status."

Préval has kept expectations low and has asked for the patience of Haitians, particularly the poor who turned out in large numbers to elect him Feb. 7.

During a recent visit to the United Nations, he asked the donor nations that have kept Haiti solvent to make a 25-year commitment. An international donor conference is set for July.

Préval was declared winner of the presidential election after an internationally brokered agreement ended days of fiery protests and averted a runoff.

Since then, he has traveled extensively, including visits to Venezuela and Cuba, which have strained relations with the United States. He secured a preferential oil deal with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez; a Venezuelan oil freighter sat off shore prepared to make the first delivery yesterday.

The United States was represented by Governor Jeb Bush, Republican of Florida, which has the largest Haitian American population in the country.

14) René Préval Is Inaugurated as President in Uneasy Haiti

By REUTERS

The New York Times

May 15, 2006

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/15/world/americas/15haiti.html>

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, May 14 (Reuters) — President René Préval took office and appealed for peace in Haiti on Sunday as his troubled Caribbean nation inaugurated its first democratically elected leader since Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled more than two years ago.

Scores of people chanted for Mr. Aristide's return from exile in South Africa as Mr. Préval took the oath of office.

Shortly before the ceremony, the police and United Nations peacekeepers fired tear gas at the nearby National Penitentiary to quell a riot.

Mr. Préval, a 63-year-old agronomist who was president of Haiti from 1996 to 2001, takes the place of a United States-backed interim administration appointed after Mr. Aristide left Haiti in February 2004 in the face of a rebellion and under pressure from Washington and Paris to quit.

Mr. Préval appealed for peace in Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas. Haiti is struggling to establish a stable democracy after decades of dictatorship and military rule and recent political violence that took hundreds of lives.

"If we don't talk to each other, we are going to fight each other, and there will be no peace," he said on the steps of the National Palace. "Peace is what we need. Peace is the key to opening all the doors."

Tens of thousands of Haitians viewed the ceremony under the watchful eyes of blue-helmeted United Nations peacekeepers perched on rooftops.

No foreign leaders attended the inauguration, but guests included Canada's Haitian-born governor general, Michaëlle Jean, and Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida.

Mr. Préval took office more than two months after he was declared the winner of the chaotic Feb. 7 presidential election, a vote he claimed was tainted by fraud.

Haiti's capital was under tight security with about 4,500 Haitian police officers and United Nations peacekeepers perched on armored vehicles and patrolling the streets.

Shortly before Mr. Préval took the oath, the police and troops fired tear gas to halt a riot at the overcrowded penitentiary. Prisoners said as many as 12 people were killed in the uprising, but officials said several inmates were only wounded.

15) Prison riot mars Haitian president's inauguration

CTV.ca News Staff

May 14, 2006

http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20060513/Michaele_Jean_060514/20060514?hub=CTVNewsAt11

A prison riot just 800 metres away almost overshadowed the inauguration of Haitian President Rene Preval.

"It's very intense," said CTV's Lisa LaFlamme, reporting from Port-au-Prince on Sunday. "This is a prison that can hold about 800 people. Instead there are 2000 inmates. There's so much unrest because only about 40 of them have actually been charged with anything."

Inmates paraded what appeared to be two dead bodies from the prison's walls and called for amnesties for political prisoners jailed during the uprising against the last president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Outside, relatives screamed for calm.

UN soldiers fired tear gas into the compound.

LaFlamme said there was a heavy security presence outside the prison, and UN peacekeepers and police had surrounded the facility.

The inauguration

Upon being sworn in, Preval called on his citizens to make peace so Haiti, the Western hemisphere's poorest country, could emerge from its misery.

"Please help me, help the country, help yourself," he said.

About 300 foreign dignitaries were there to watch the ceremony, including Canada's Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean, who was born in Haiti. Canada has provided \$190 million in aid in the past two years and has 125 RCMP officers there helping train the Haitian police.

Some other notables present included Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and American actor Danny Glover.

Preval's inauguration marks Haiti's return to democratic rule two years after a bloody revolt culminated with the exile of Aristide, a former ally of Preval. Aristide now lives in South Africa.

Aristide supporters gathered outside the ceremony. They held up his portrait and calling for his return from exile. They chanted "Aristide's blood is our blood!" and "We want him back!"

Preval has said that Aristide or any other Haitian citizen can enter the country, although he wouldn't say if he would welcome the ex-president's return.

The U.S., a significant financial supporter of Haiti, has made it clear that it opposes Aristide's return.

Preval has a minority government. While the poor like him, the wealthy elite do not.

The 63-year-old agronomist, who served as president from 1996-2001, has pledged to unite Haitian society and restore peace.

"Today, we have to sit down together and make peace between us in order to emerge as a country without foreign troops," Preval told the crowd, garnering widespread applause. "Haitian people, the solutions to our problems are in our hands... we don't need anyone's help."

Experts say that Preval's political skills will determine whether the one-time French colony can move toward stability or remain dysfunctional.

"We're hoping he'll do what he says he will," said Charles Henri Baker, a businessman and the third-place presidential finisher. "If so, Haiti will be off to a good start."

16) Mr. Préval begins to pick up the pieces

OUR OPINION: JOB WILL TAKE TIME, MONEY AND INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENT

Miami Herald

Opinion Editorial

May 16, 2006

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/opinion/14587768.htm>

René Préval returned to the presidency of Haiti this week like a man returning to the wreckage of a home shattered by a Category 5 hurricane. He is surrounded by want and human misery in a nation where nearly everything cries out for immediate attention. If Haiti is to have a chance of breaking out of the endless cycle of poverty and hopelessness, the international community must be prepared to make a long-term commitment. This job will take time, support from abroad and money.

Fortunately, Mr. Préval will not have to operate in the shadow of his political mentor, former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, this time around, but the odds remain stacked against Mr. Préval and against Haiti. The country is broke, the political system in tatters, the government barely functioning -- and hurricane season is on the way. This much is clear: Haiti cannot do the job by itself, and Mr. Préval cannot tackle everything at once.

Taking on the gangs

Security remains the most urgent challenge, and here the United Nations can make a big contribution in the form of a renewed commitment by the U.N. force known as MINUSTAH to clean up gang violence. As important, the force must help to build a strong Haitian National Police cadre free of corruption and links to organized crime and drug smugglers. This is no easy task, but nothing else can be done if Haiti is not safe.

There should be little doubt that Mr. Préval has the ability to persuade the people of Haiti to roll up their sleeves and begin to pick up the pieces. At a minimum, though, he will need from them a strong measure of political support. This means putting an end to the fratricidal politics that destroyed the old Aristide regime and ushered in an era of violence unusual even by Haiti's rough standards.

Compromise necessary

Mr. Préval has a strong base in Haiti's parliament, but he does not enjoy a majority. That means that compromise and goodwill -- two qualities in short supply for a very long time -- must prevail if Haiti is to move forward. Those who opposed Mr. Préval's candidacy may not be able to overcome their skepticism, but they have an obligation to give him a chance to govern and to reach out to him.

Mr. Préval, for his part, can do himself and Haiti a world of good by using his authority to seek the release of former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, widely deemed a political prisoner because of his ties to former president Aristide.

But he should not roll out the welcome mat for Mr. Aristide himself. Now in exile, Mr. Aristide remains a polarizing figure in Haiti. Mr. Préval will have a tough enough job moving quickly to deal with Haiti's most urgent problems, and he does not need the added worry of Mr. Aristide to distract him and the people of Haiti from the task at hand.

17) Editorial: Canada's Haiti test

The Toronto Star

May 16, 2006

http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_Type1&call_pageid=971358637177&c=Article&cid=1147729810526

Haitian President René Prével preached a message of peace, prosperity and hope during his inaugural address this week.

And Haiti's spirits have indeed been buoyed by the Feb. 7 election that brought a moderate politician to the presidency and restored democracy in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country.

But 8.5 million people cannot dine on hope alone. That's why Canada and other international donors who profess an interest in Haiti's welfare must help the new government provide security, schooling, health care, and jobs for the very poorest in order to narrow the country's calamitous rich-poor gap.

Haiti's need far outstrips current assistance pledges of \$1.3 billion (U.S.), only a fraction of which has been delivered to date.

The Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola and has a comparable population, generates \$17 billion in wealth a year, in comparison to Haiti's \$4 billion. Restoring hope in Haiti cannot be done on the cheap.

While Governor General Michaëlle Jean's presence at Prével's swearing-in was a high-profile token of Canada's goodwill, Ottawa can and should do more. Haiti may be "the largest beneficiary" of Canadian aid in the hemisphere, but even at that our per capita help is modest.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper recently pledged \$48 million (Canadian) more in reconstruction and development aid, for a total of \$238 million in the past two years. That is less than \$15 a year per capita. It is spread thinly, to help small business and farms, ease debt and strengthen democracy. We have also sent 125 police trainers.

Despite the presence of 9,000 United Nations personnel, troops and police, Haiti is fated to remain "a perennial candidate for failed state status" unless it gets more aid, warns the International Crisis Group, which analyzes global conflicts.

Harper should step up Canada's aid in the run-up to a crucial donors conference in July in Port-au-Prince. He also should challenge the United States and other "friends of Haiti" to do the same.

Donors should commit to a stable 10-year governance and development pact. Under former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, official foreign aid all but dried up between 2000 and his ouster in 2004. That hurt the poor and fuelled unrest.

Préval must move quickly to give Haiti's poor a sense that jobs and social help are on the way, even as he reassures the wealthy elite that they are not threatened by his regime.

He needs to fix Haiti's crumbling power grid, preserve calm in the capital, create jobs, pay civil servants, provide affordable schooling for the poor, reform the police and courts and disarm gangs. But Préval cannot do any of it with empty hands.

18) Annan appoints Guatemalan diplomat as new head of UN mission in Haiti
UN News Centre

May 17, 2006

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=18501&Cr=haiti&Cr1=>

16 May 2006 – Secretary-General Kofi Annan has informed the Security Council that he will appoint the Guatemalan ambassador to the European Union, Edmond Mulet, as his new Special Representative in Haiti and head of the UN Stabilization Mission (MINUSTAH) there, a United Nations spokesman said today.

Mr. Mulet, who succeeds Juan Gabriel Valdés of Chile, has served as ambassador to the European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg since June 2000, negotiating tourism, trade and economic cooperation, as well as political issues. He has also taken part in preparing several summit meetings between the EU and the Latin American and Caribbean group.

An active political presence in his country since 1976, Mr. Mulet has promoted human rights, democracy and the resolution of indigenous issues. When Guatemala was ruled by military regimes, he was forced to leave a number of times and was wrongly imprisoned for a short period in 1981 before winning the first of many elections to Guatemala's National Congress in 1982.

In Congress, he was active in opposing the military's "self-amnesty" law, in reducing military benefits and in passing fiscal and other reforms, as well as the new Criminal Procedures Code. He was President of the National Congress from 1992 to 1993.

Mr. Mulet was appointed Guatemala's Ambassador to the United States in 1993 and opposed President Serrano's dissolution of Congress that year, resigning his post immediately and establishing the Organized International Guatemalan Resistance. When democratic institutions were re-established, he was re-appointed Ambassador.

Born in Guatemala in 1951, Mr. Mulet received his early schooling in his home country, Canada, the United States and Switzerland. He later attended Guatemala's Universidad Mariano Galvez and became a lawyer.

19) Security Council hails Haiti's new Government while noting challenges ahead
UN News Centre

May 16, 2006

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=18487&Cr=haiti&Cr1=>

15 May 2006 – The United Nations Security Council today congratulated Haiti's newly inaugurated President, his Government and the new parliamentarians and called on them to build a better future for the Caribbean country and to finish the cycle of municipal, local and remaining parliamentary elections.

In a statement on President René García Préval's inauguration yesterday, the Council president for the month of May, Ambassador Basile Ikouébé of the Republic of Congo, underscored the importance of the mandate given to newly elected parliamentarians by the Haitian people "to work constructively to build a better future for their country."

Towards that end, the Council urged the executive and legislative powers "to establish a fruitful and collaborative relationship," Mr. Ikouébé said.

The Council stressed that holding municipal, local and the remaining parliamentary elections in a timely fashion was fundamental to democratic governance.

Reviewing the list of challenges which the country faces and which Mr. Préval has pledged to tackle, the Council highlighted "the need to ensure a secure and stable environment in Haiti, strengthen its democratic institutions, foster national reconciliation, inclusiveness and political dialogue, promote and protect human rights and the rule of law, and build governmental capacity."

It also emphasized the need to reform and strengthen Haiti's law enforcement systems. In that regard, the Council looked forward to the results of the discussions between the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the new authorities on security-related issues.

The Council repeated that the country needed the quick implementation of highly visible and labour intensive projects that help to create jobs and deliver basic social services and it looked forward to the upcoming donors' ministerial meeting to be held in Brasilia, Brazil, on 23 May.

The intention of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to reintegrate Haiti fully into its activities was welcome, the Council said, also expressing its appreciation for the contribution of the Organization of the American States (OAS) to the electoral process.

"In this regard, the Council supports the commitment of the new Haitian authorities to enhance cooperation with regional partners in order to address issues related to regional stability," the President said.

The Council also thanked Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Special Representative, Juan Gabriel Valdés, for his dedication to the success of the UN presence in Haiti.

20) Haitian President René Préval is inaugurated

By JOE MOZINGO

Miami Herald

Sunday May 14, 2006

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/14581042.htm>

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Réne Préal, a quiet bakery owner who five years ago became the only elected president to leave office after a full term, was sworn in again as president today, restoring constitutional rule to Haiti for the first time since an armed rebellion forced President Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile two years ago.

Préal's inauguration brings the troubled nation a rare glimpse of hope in a bleak 202-year history of predatory rule, perpetual insurrection, crushing poverty and scant development.

On the steps of the National Palace, in front of thousands of people, Préal urged Haitians to stop fighting each other and begin talking about how to rebuild.

"We have to make peace," he said. "We have to have a dialogue ... Peace is the key to open doors -- the door of investment to create jobs and employment, the door for tourists to come the country, for roads, more schools, more hospitals."

Florida Gov. Jeb Bush led the U.S. delegation to the inauguration ceremony, which took place in the sweltering parliamentary chambers. Also in attendance were Canadian Governor General Michaëlle Jean, Actor Danny Glover, OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza and Venezuelan Vice President José Vicente Rangel.

"This means new beginning, a new sense of purpose," said Glover, who was a vocal supporter of Aristide, in an interview. "What's really important is that all the resources that have been promised, promised, promised to Haiti will be given to it."

The Archbishop in Port-au-Prince said Haiti was at a historic crossroads after "20 years of deceit" since the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship.

Préal, whose political support comes largely from Haiti's poor, has courted the country's elite and business community in hopes of easing deep hostilities that exploded during Aristide's rule. He has traveled to Washington to seek trade preferences and aid, to Venezuela for cheaper oil, to Cuba for medical relief and to the Dominican Republic to ease tensions along the border.

For now, he appears to have the support of most key sectors, both at home and abroad. But many observers say he must act quickly to maintain that delicate cohesion in such a fractured society.

"There is a unique and very rare hope for Haiti with this election, and this inauguration, and he has to take advantage of that quickly," said Mark Schneider, a senior vice president of the International Crisis Group, a Brussels-based think tank that monitors conflicts around the world.

"First, he has to convince the Haitian people that this is going to be different, that there really is going to be action to make their lives better," Schneider said. "And he needs to

take action that speaks to the international community such as, "I've talked to World Bank about monitoring government expenditures."

The obstacles Préval faces are tremendous -- constructing a modern nation almost from scratch.

Since Haiti was born of a bloody slave revolt from France, and then isolated for decades by the United States and colonial Europe, Haitian leaders have done little more than strive to consolidate their own power, most often through tyranny. Very few have tried to build infrastructure, a functioning economy, an educated society or a true democracy.

And of those sporadic improvements that have been made -- roads, factories, schools -- many have either fallen into disrepair or been destroyed during dozens of rebellions and uprisings.

In a speech to the U.N. Security Council in March, Préval called Haiti "a country waiting to be built."

The last insurrection, in February 2004, left untold hundreds dead, decimated the feeble police force, left government buildings looted and nearly destroyed the capital's duty-free assembly sector, one of its few sources of employment. Losses were estimated at 5.5 percent of Haiti's Gross Domestic Product.

When Aristide fled into exile, Haitian political and business leaders with U.S. backing scrambled to set up a transitional government, led by Gerard Latortue, a Haitian American businessman.

With huge help from a 9,000-member U.N. peacekeeping force, the new government restored minimal services, began rebuilding the police force, organized the presidential and parliamentary elections in February and March, and worked with international donors on an economic recovery plan.

But the interim government gained little credibility among the populace and did little to relieve Haiti's misery.

More than half the country lives on 44 U.S. cents per day per capita, according to the World Bank. A half million children have no access to primary school. Only 10 percent of Haitians have electricity, and less than 50 percent have access to clean drinking water.

Just 650 miles from Miami, Haiti ranks among the poorest and least developed countries in the world, behind war-ravaged nations like the Congo, Sudan and East Timor.

Préval, known for his low-key demeanor and honesty, is the first to say he cannot fix Haiti during this five year term. He is not prone to sweeping promises or fiery rhetoric. He talks of lowering the price of fertilizer, getting U.S. trade preferences for Haitian textiles, building schools, fixing roads.

He plans to meet with international donors in Brazil in July to discuss his short-term initiatives.

Foreign observers say Préval must establish transparent and effective governance to open the flow of foreign aid -- including \$554 million in financing available from the Inter-American Development Bank. And he must move quickly to make visible improvements and ease tensions in the country.

Préval's supporters expect him to release prisoners from Aristide's Lavalas Family party who were arrested by the interim government. Many were locked up on flimsy charges -- or no charges at all-- and prominent ones, like former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, have been dubbed political prisoners by Amnesty International.

Préval has acknowledged the entire system of justice -- decrepit and perpetually partisan - - must be rebuilt.

Other urgent initiatives widely agreed upon: increase the number of hours of electricity in the cities; work with the U.N. peacekeepers to vet police officers and disarm gangs and former soldiers; restore water and sanitation services; revamp the public education system in which teaching is often rote, standards are inconsistent and fees prevent nearly half Haiti's children from attending; promote rural and agricultural development; and improve the collection of taxes from the business sector and upper classes.

Haitian leaders are also pinning their hopes on the so-called HOPE Act before the U.S. Congress, which if passed would give specific Haitian exports preferential access to U.S. markets. Préval has said the bill could create up to 80,000 jobs.

Perhaps the most dicey political subject facing Préval is Aristide, who is living in exile in South Africa. Aristide's more vigilant supporters in the urban slums, who turned out en masse for Préval at the polls, want the former slum priest to return and could paralyze the country with roadblocks and violence if they do not get their way. Foreign diplomats are strongly discouraging his return, seeing it as potentially destabilizing.

Préval has been coy on the subject, but has reportedly told U.S. and other diplomats that he does not favor his mentor's return. Whether pressure will mount in the slums, observers say, will likely depend on how quickly Préval can provide minimal relief to the most forsaken.