

## CSW69 PARALLEL EVENT ADVANCING THE RIGHTS OF HAITIAN WOMEN & GIRLS: OUTCOME DOCUMENT

Commission on the Status of Women 69<sup>th</sup> Period of Sessions (March 2025, New York)

### EVENT BACKGROUND

On March 14, 2024 Haitian feminist organization NÈGÈS MAWON, the Haitian Women's Collective (HWC), and the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH) co-hosted a civil society parallel event at the 69<sup>th</sup> period of sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The event, [\*Advancing the Rights of Haitian Women and Girls: Haiti's Transition and Beyond\*](#), consisted of a moderated panel discussion among prominent Haitian women's rights advocates and the Chair of the UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls (UN WGDAWG) about the urgent challenges facing women and girls in Haiti, strategies for mobilization, and the role of international allies in supporting a feminist policy agenda. Particular attention was directed to Haiti's political transition and opportunities for advancing gender justice, including how civil society insights – exemplified by the [\*Policy Framework for an Effective and Equitable Transition\*](#) in Haiti and the principles of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda it incorporates – can help shape a just and peaceful future for Haiti, especially its women and girls. The panel purposefully limited its discussion of Haiti's crisis itself in order to “focus on how to enable transformation of policies, politics, and practices while also looking at how to decrease violence and discrimination against Haitian women and girls.”

**PANEL COMPOSITION:** Carine Jocelyn, founder of HWC (moderator); Souzen Joseph, executive director of 100% FANM; Laura Nyirinkindi, Chair of UN WGDAWG; Pascale Solages, general coordinator of NÈGÈS MAWON; Nathalie Vilgrain, general coordinator of ORGANISATION FÉMINISTE MARIJÀN

**EVENT RECORDING:** [English](#) (original) | [Haitian Creole](#) (interpretation) | [French](#) (interpretation)

**EVENT FLYER** (with participant details): [English](#) | [Haitian Creole](#) | [French](#)

### SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

In reflecting on Haiti's crisis and more specifically on strategies for mobilizing for a peaceful and equitable future, the panel shared the below main points derived from their extensive experience and expertise.

- **Women and girls distinctly harmed by Haiti's devastating crisis.** Haiti remains in a prolonged complex crisis with acute governance, insecurity, and humanitarian dimensions. Women and girls are distinctly affected, both as targets of brutal and widespread sexual violence deployed as a tool of conflict, and because longstanding discrimination and inequality leave them particularly vulnerable to other dimensions of the crisis, such as displacement and disproportionate obstacles to securing food and livelihoods. For more information about Haiti's crisis, see [IJDH Updates on Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Haiti](#) and regular news compilations from [Haiti Report](#).

- **Haitian government's failure to protect and accompany Haiti's women and girls.** The Haitian members of the panel – all leaders of organizations working to support women and girls in Haiti – observed that Haiti's government is failing its women and girls. "It is the responsibility of the government of Haiti to take care of the people of Haiti and somehow that has been lost in conversation." The government is not providing critical services, implementing policies that protect or advance women's rights, nor acting as a credible partner to civil society organizations that risk their lives to fill the resulting gaps. For example, Haitian civil society developed and advocated for the National Plan to Combat Violence Against Women 2017-2027, but while the government adopted the Plan, it has done no work to implement the much-needed policies. Panelists denounced the government's performative events, which frequently leave feminist leaders out of the room, in the absence of tangible action. "Yes we need more policies, we need more text, we need more laws, we need more conversations with the International Community, but we need more institutions doing their work, we need institutions, state institutions, doing their work in the country."
- **Ongoing exclusion of Haiti's women from public spaces and leadership.** Haiti's transitional government, notwithstanding its domestic and international legal obligations to ensure equal treatment of and reserve at minimum 30% of public roles for women, has paid scarce attention to women's distinct needs and has repeatedly failed to respect equitable representation requirements. For example, there is only one woman on the Transitional Presidential Council, and she has no vote. Haiti has a long history of discriminating against women, especially with respect to public roles and leadership. Few women hold public office and political violence has been directed at women seeking to run or vote in elections, exacerbating the inequality. An effective and equitable transition thus requires purposeful planning to prevent and address gendered political violence – and thereby offers an opportunity to correct long-standing structural inequity, but advocates see little evidence of those necessary efforts.
- **Failures of international engagement to empower Haitian women and girls.** The panelists observed that the international response to the needs of Haiti's women and girls has been inadequate – especially with respect to political empowerment, and described patterns of engagement that can be harmful to civil society mobilizing and sometimes "creates crisis or maintains [Haiti] in crisis." Panelists noted that most funding flows to the state or to big organizations without involving or offering transparency to grassroots groups, even though it is often their work and data collection that is at the core of the programming. They also noted a need to de-racialize foreign responses to Haiti, contrasting them with the more robust support for Ukraine, for example. The Chair of the UN WGDAG acknowledged that "the international community has not done enough and attention has been diverted to other conflicts in other regions in the world," noting further that international actors failed to call out the lack of women in Haiti's transitional government and are not fulfilling the principles of the WPS Agenda with respect to advancing a just and democratic future for Haiti.
- **Haiti's civil society organizations fill service and policy planning gaps impeded by unaddressed challenges.** Haiti's civil society has been left to do the work of their government, providing services as well as policy planning, agenda-setting, and mobilization around critical issues, including as

exemplified by advocacy around the [Policy Framework for an Effective and Equitable Transition](#) and the National Plan to Combat Violence Against Women 2017-2027. They do so even though Haitian civil society organizations – especially smaller ones working at the grassroots level – face enormous challenges and barriers to their work, most notably enormous physical danger and crisis-related harms like displacement and lack of basic necessities, along with limited and dwindling organizational resources. The Haitian members of the panel expressed deep frustration that even though Haiti’s government and its international partners hold the relative power and resources, they are failing to meet their legal and stated commitments to Haiti’s women and girls and it is Haiti’s civil society that is having to pressure them to do so. The panel further observed a pattern of taking credit for civil society work even as local organizations are left out of consultations and decision-making – or see their painstaking contributions disregarded.

- **Haiti’s civil society has a vision for an effective and equitable transition and a better future for Haiti’s women and girls.** The panel expressed confidence that the work of rebuilding Haiti and empowering Haiti’s women and girls can be done. Haiti’s history of liberty from enslavement and the accomplishments of its feminist movement are proof of what is possible with better practices, policies, and some resources. Specifically, they talked about the need to center women’s leadership and feminist priorities in Haiti’s transition. The failure of Haiti’s transitional government and its international partners to take seriously these imperatives – embodied in the globally adopted WPS Agenda – is impeding crisis resolution. It was noted that the [Policy Framework for an Effective and Equitable Transition](#) can help with adopting better policies but is being disregarded. Drawing on her global expertise and mandate, the Chair of the WGDWAG further affirmed that women being extremely underrepresented in Haiti’s transitional government “significantly undermines the chances of achieving lasting peace.” She further noted that the transition represents an opportunity to advance women’s rights but risks regression in the absence of adherence to WPS principles.

**Panelists identified a series of recommendations in their discussion**, summarized below. The Chair of the UN WGDWAG moreover pledged to continue monitoring the situation of women and girls in Haiti and to continue amplifying these recommendations and other priorities of Haiti’s feminist leaders.

***“It is the responsibility of the government of Haiti to take care of the people of Haiti and somehow that has been loss in conversation . . . And it’s the same way for international larger organizations that enter the country and want to do work in the country: it is their responsibility to figure out how to best do it with civil society”***

1. To be successful, Haiti’s transition must both **center women’s leadership and feminist priorities**. The panel emphasized in particular that the token presence of women is insufficient and that **women’s empowered leadership and a feminist agenda must be facilitated across the full range of political and private activities**, including all state institutions and public discourse – and as reflected in funding. The [Policy Framework for an Effective and Equitable Transition](#) is a good starting point for implementing the necessary policy and programmatic changes.

2. The **transitional government of Haiti and its partners must create conditions for women to participate at all levels of the electoral process as candidates and voters**, including with respect to their ability to campaign safely and equally access funding and other material inputs. A gender-responsive early warning system tracking factors like changes in the number of positions held by women, frequency of gendered hate speech, incidence of gendered political violence, and other indicators of women's inclusion or barriers to participating in public life is advisable.
3. The **right of survivors of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence must be urgently enforced**, including through (i) **strengthening justice and law and enforcement** of that law in terms of consequences for perpetrators; (ii) **reparations**; (iii) **gender-responsive medical care**, including sexual and reproductive care; and (iv) **psychosocial support**.
4. The government of Haiti and its international partners must live up to their legal obligations and stated commitments to Haiti's women and girls by **prioritizing their needs and agenda in their policies, programs, and budgets**.
5. **Local organizations must be part of decisions affecting program design and funding**. Both the government of Haiti and its international partners must center grassroots leadership, closely consider local perspectives and recommendations, and tackle root causes. "We need [ ] constructive international engagement to support [the] feminist movement in Haiti by prioritizing local leadership, sustainable funding, and accountab[le] partnership." "Empowering grassroots feminist movements is really critical for rebuilding peace and facilitating political transition in a decolonized, deracialized manner."
6. **Funders should invest more purposefully in grassroots women's voices and feminist activists**. The Chair of the UN WGDWAG specifically urged that "international [p]artners should be stepping up their efforts to fill gaps and support the sustainability and growth of an autonomous women's rights movement in Haiti, [which includes...] funding grassroots women's organizations, inviting Haitian women leaders to participate in high level dialogues, and fostering the development of independent women's funds." A pitfall to avoid is the creation of barriers to funding for grassroots groups through applying unreasonable standards.
7. **Programmatic funders should look beyond bilateral implementation partnerships** and consider working with organizations as part of a network or through collective funds or trusts models in order to permit for more collaborative, complementary design and implementation with broader geographical reach.
8. More generally, panelists urged **more inter-organizational solidarity, especially from non-Haitian organizations**.