

Security Council open briefing on the current security crisis in Haiti
26 September, 3pm

Madam. President, distinguished members of the Council,

1. Over the past several weeks, three crises have begun to intersect in altogether new and frightening ways in Haiti. A gang crisis continues to violently disrupt daily life, driving more than 20,000 people from their homes. An economic crisis has the country in a stranglehold, with Haitians facing soaring food prices, and fuel often available only on the black market. And as these trials play out, and Haitians exercise their legitimate right to protest, political stakeholders are still struggling to find common ground and define a path to elections.
2. In his 11 September address to the nation, the Prime Minister again launched a call for on-going dialogue as a means to create the necessary security, constitutional and political conditions for elections by the end of 2023. He highlighted the USD 600m a year lost by the state through uncollected customs proceeds, a problem the Government has been struggling with for some time. And he announced the Government's decision to reduce regressive subsidies on fuel which costs the State some USD 400m a year, as a means of increasing revenue for social programmes.
3. By the afternoon of the 12th, roadblocks were set up throughout the country, generating a full country-wide lockdown. This situation persisted in the capital for a full five days until 16 September, when the police began concerted action to remove the roadblocks.
4. The Prime Minister again addressed the nation on 18 September, extending his sympathies to the victims of violence. He urged people to come together in support of the reforms Government was implementing to make the State stronger, and encouraged all to resist vested interests.
5. Later that same day, one of the largest alliances of criminal gangs in the capital blocked the nation's main fuel terminal in Port-au-Prince, at Varreux. The state of siege has remained in place for over a week, despite concerted police operations over the weekend, cutting the capital off from its primary source of fuel, creating shortages across the country, and closing down hospitals.

Madam. President,

6. Throughout this crisis, I have maintained my good offices efforts with all sectors of Haitian society and encouraged all to engage in a broad, open and constructive dialogue. While so-far inconclusive efforts have led to a perceived stalemate, national stakeholders have begun to re-engage with a renewed sense of urgency. In the past weeks, Government representatives, political groups, and civil society organizations

launched new consultations on ways to forge a wider consensus on a path towards elections.

7. It is also encouraging to see private sector leaders starting to come together pledging to meet their respective fiscal and legal responsibilities. Sustained increases in revenues, and progress on issues such as subsidies and customs revenue, will be the clearest sign that this commitment is being met by all sides.
8. A number of observers and interlocutors have publicly pointed toward the role of ***entrenched economic and political interests*** in driving, sustaining, and manipulating the unrest, deepening the political crisis.
9. Despite efforts to undermine reform, however, the new customs administration is beginning to operate. In addition to the seizures made in recent months, customs import collections have increased five-fold between July and August. Programming on border management with the UN Office for Drugs & Crime aims to build on these early successes, more specifically in terms of tackling trafficking.

Distinguished Members of the Council,

10. The current unrest has put a major focus on the Haitian National Police: the HNP has truly been put to the test. The hard work demonstrated to remove roadblocks and restore some semblance of freedom of movement for the population has elicited a degree of trust in their capacities. While some barricades are quickly re-erected, the institution's response has demonstrated how far they have come. However, whole neighbourhoods remain unpoliced; and the chronic situation at the Varreux fuel terminal threatens to highlight the very real limits of the national force.
11. I am grateful to those donors who engaged early with the Joint Programme in Support of the Haitian National Police, known as the 'Basket Fund'. I urge international partners to continue meeting regularly, as we did last week (on 23 September), to generate more support for the Basket Fund. Investment in institutions, infrastructure and human capital is key.

Madam. President,

12. As ever, it is those already most vulnerable who suffer the most. The UN system in Haiti estimates at least 1.5m people have been directly impacted by recent gang violence, with gender-based violence, and in particular rape, being used systematically.
13. The present generalized insecurity has also severely curtailed humanitarian access. Before the current bout of civil unrest, some 4.9m Haitians were in a state of humanitarian need. In the last two weeks alone, attacks on WFP have resulted in the loss of some 2,000 tonnes of food aid valued at close to USD 5m that would have

collectively supported up to 200,000 of the most vulnerable Haitians over the next month. No doubt my colleagues from WFP will share more on these events.

14. It is self-evident that under such conditions, basic rights – from freedom of movement to education – are being catastrophically undermined, and access to basic social and health services repeatedly cut. Prisons have not received food, medicine, or water for days.

Distinguished members of the Council,

15. An economic crisis, a gang crisis, and a political crisis have converged into a humanitarian catastrophe. We must not lose hope but rather combine our efforts to find a pathway to a better tomorrow. A Haitian-led political solution is the first necessary step to address the current crisis. To support Haitians in their effort towards a better future, this Council must take urgent action.

Thank you.