

ECOSOC Special meeting

SAVING LIVES: ADDRESSING THE URGENT FOOD SECURITY NEEDS OF HAITI

16 June 2023

Opening Remarks

by

H.E. Lachezara Stoeva, President of the Economic and Social Council

Prime Minister of Jamaica,

Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines,

Minister of Planning and External Cooperation of Haiti,

Executive Director of the World Food Programme,

Executive Director of UNICEF,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

It is my honour to welcome you all to the Special Meeting of the Economic and Social Council on
“Saving lives: Addressing the urgent food security needs of Haiti.”

We gather here today because Haiti needs our urgent attention. The 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan, launched in April, warns that almost half of the Haitian population is going hungry. The recent flooding, landslides and earthquake have compounded the already deteriorating situation in Haiti. The country is plagued by high levels of insecurity and violence perpetrated by armed gangs. Here I would like to take a moment to express my deepest condolences to the families and communities, who have suffered loss, and extend our solidarity to those affected.

But words are not enough. Haiti is facing complex and multi-faceted challenges that require us to take urgent action now. This year's humanitarian response plan for Haiti requires \$719 million, which is the largest appeal since the 2010 earthquake and more than double the amount requested in 2022. And currently, only 22.6% of this is funded.¹ This plan targets 3.2 million Haitian people, whereas around 5.2 million Haitian people are in need. This should be our wake-up call.

The Economic and Social Council, through its Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, has been following closely the dire situation in the country. I am grateful to the Chair of the Group, Ambassador Bob Rae of Canada, and Ambassador Rhonda King of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Chair of its Working Group on Food Security, for their tireless efforts in this regard. I also would like to acknowledge the determined efforts of the United Nations system to support the Haitian people.

Excellencies,

Today, we will focus on the urgency of food security in Haiti. Food insecurity has been worsening, due to economic downturn, natural disasters and a decline in agricultural production, compounded by surging gang violence. While emergency food assistance is the utmost priority, we need to also focus on efforts that can help build sustainable food systems in Haiti.

We are joined by Member States, the UN system and civil society actors to mobilize action and resources in support of food security in Haiti.

We must learn the lessons from our past efforts in Haiti. A whole-of-society approach that engages the Haitian people would be key to building resilient food systems.

I encourage us all to be bold and think outside the box, to take immediate actions in solidarity with the Haitian people.

Let us work together for a Haiti free from hunger.

Thank you.

¹ <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/96/summary/2023> [the figure may need to be updated on the day of the meeting]

Closing Remarks
by
H.E. Lachezara Stoeva, President of the Economic and Social Council

Excellencies,

I thank all of you for your contributions to this special meeting. I would like to express our appreciation for the keynote addresses, messages and speakers at the roundtable. The participation of Member States from all regions and the UN system is a demonstration of our solidarity and commitment to a Haiti free of hunger.

Building food systems resilience in Haiti is no easy task. I am encouraged by your ideas, proposals and intentions. It is clear that we will need to have a coordinated and comprehensive approach to addressing the urgent needs of food security of the Haitian people. And our immediate task must be to urgently contribute to the funding appeals so that immediate relief can be provided to the most vulnerable Haitians.

Excellencies,

We cannot continue business as usual and expect different results in Haiti. I would like to end today's meeting with advice from a dear friend of ECOSOC, the late Dr. Paul Farmer, who worked in Haiti for nearly thirty years. In his interactions with the Economic and Social Council on emergency situations, Dr. Farmer always advocated for investing resources in strengthening public systems through national institutions in order to safeguard against future crises; and making sure that national plans are at the centre of all external support.

The Economic and Social Council stands ready to support the Haitian people. Let us work together to help them rebuild their food systems and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Excellencies,

I encourage you all to engage with the Economic and Social Council as it continues to focus on Haiti, including through its dedicated Ad hoc Advisory Group, chaired by Canada, as well as through the upcoming ECOSOC Transition Meeting on 20 June in Geneva.

I intend to issue a Presidential Statement to capture the key ideas and recommendations we have heard today. In addition, a more detailed summary will be prepared and shared with you.

Thank you.