



**Haiti's Children Cannot Wait:  
Supporting Stability, Resilience and Prosperity in Haiti**

**2 DECEMBER 2024**

**INFORMAL SUMMARY**

The Economic and Social Council convened a Special Meeting on “*Haiti’s Children Cannot Wait: Supporting Stability, Resilience and Prosperity in Haiti*” on 2 December 2024.

The meeting, chaired by President of ECOSOC, H.E. Mr. Bob Rae, included Haitian government representatives, leaders of various UN organizations, and Member State representatives to bring urgent attention to the critical situation facing children and youth in Haiti due to the escalating violence, food insecurity and lack of access to education and basic services.

The opening segment heard strong calls for urgent action for Haitian children and youth from H.E. Mr. Bob Rae, the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); H.E. Mr. Philemon Yang, President of the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly; H.E. Mr. Antonio Rodrigue, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Haiti to the United Nations; and Ms. María Isabel Salvador, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH). Ms. Samarre Tercier Marcellin, a Youth Advocate for UNICEF, also delivered a message in the opening, sharing her recent experience in Haiti and urging all to continue to help the children of Haiti, to support schools and protect Haitian children from violence. Mr. Guy Ryder, Under-Secretary-General for Policy at the Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General, delivered closing remarks.

The special meeting featured two panel discussions, with the first panel focusing on responding to urgent protection and humanitarian needs. The panelists included Ms. Catherine Russell, Executive Director of UNICEF; Mr. Tom Fletcher, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs; Ms. Wanja Kaaria, Country Director for the World Food Programme in Haiti; and Ms. Clyfane Saintil, Secretary-General of the Board of Directors, Toya Foundation. UNICEF’s National Goodwill Ambassador, Jean Jean Roosevelt, delivered a compelling message and musical performance urging all stakeholders to prioritize child protection in Haiti. The second panel focused on strengthening Haitian capacities for future generations, featuring Mr. Nicolas Janvier on behalf of Haiti’s Minister of Youth, Sports, and



Civic Action; Ms. Ulrika Richardson, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Haiti; Ms. Anne-Lucie Lefebvre, Country Manager for Haiti, World Bank Group; and Mr. Clifton Sylvain, Member of the Management Board and Secretary for Communications, l'Observatoire Jeunesse Haïtienne.

21 Member States, including one on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), actively participated in the discussions during the panels, urging for increased support to the Haitian people, and highlighting their ongoing efforts and assistance in this regard. They also welcomed the coordinated efforts of the United Nations system (including BINUH, UNCT, UNICEF and WFP), the World Bank and civil society actors on the ground in supporting the Haitian people.

**Amidst the alarming increase in the total number of children recruited by armed groups in Haiti, there were strong calls for urgent action for Haitian children and youth.** Participants emphasized Haiti's severe multidimensional crisis, including security, political, social, humanitarian, human rights, and development challenges. Violence has led to alarming rates of sexual assaults, kidnappings, and forced displacement.

**International efforts must focus on both immediate relief and long-term solutions.** The meeting stressed that addressing the security situation in the country must be the utmost priority. At the same time, the humanitarian response to meet emergency needs must continue jointly with efforts to address development needs through an immediate response plan coupled with robust investment. Inaction risks not only an entire generation and the future of Haiti, but also regional destabilization. A call was made for an international conference on Haiti to explore effective solutions to respond to Haiti's complex challenges.

**A comprehensive security response is essential to counter gang violence, dismantle armed gangs and restore stability.** Member States were encouraged to redouble their efforts to provide financial, logistical and technical support to the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission to fulfil its mandate to support the Haitian National Police (HNP). While the efforts of the HNP, supported by the MSS mission, were recognized, references were made to the discussions around the transformation of the MSS mission into a peacekeeping force to stabilize Haiti, with an emphasis on securing the country and enabling the return of a democratically elected government. The illicit flow of arms and financial flows to armed gangs in Haiti needs to be curtailed by fully implementing the UN Security Council sanctions regime.

**Discussions also stressed the need for international cooperation to support reforms in the security and justice sectors** and to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for crimes and violence against children and women.



**Participants called for a substantial increase in the contributions to the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan for Haiti**, which currently faces a funding gap of 56.9 per cent out of the required US\$ 673.8 million. In this regard, it is important to increase flexible funding for humanitarian operations, focusing on food, education, and healthcare access. Security and stabilization need to be prioritized to achieve progress along the humanitarian front and deliver effective aid.

**Haiti's crisis has had a disproportionate impact on its children and youth.** According to UNICEF, more than 1.3 million children are affected by violence from armed groups in Haiti. Children are actively being recruited and used by these groups, with up to 50 percent of the members in some groups being children. This year has seen a staggering 1000 percent increase in sexual violence against children. Furthermore, armed violence has displaced over 700,000 people, including 365,000 children. Haitian children continue to suffer from a lack of basic services such as water, sanitation, and healthcare.

**Food insecurity remains a dire concern, with 5.4 million people facing acute levels of food insecurity, with over 40 per cent children.** Among the 2 million people facing emergency levels of acute hunger, nearly half are children. Severe malnutrition is impacting over 120,000 Haitian children, inhibiting their physical and emotional development. Internally displaced persons sites are experiencing catastrophic levels of food insecurity. Healthcare is on the verge of collapse, with only one public hospital in the capital remaining operational. The United Nations system, including the World Food Programme, and partners have been working in Haiti to address the root causes of hunger and have provided support to over two million people in 2024 by providing hot meals and supported 500,000 children with school meals, sourcing 70 percent of food locally to bolster local economy. However, shrinking and inadequate resources continued to hinder further efforts.

**There was a call to support Haiti's efforts to fully implement the National Child Protection Strategy, a five-year plan for a multisectoral response.** It is crucial for partners supporting child protection in Haiti to harmonize and align their efforts with this strategy. The Haitian National Police and the Multinational Security Support mission were called on to prioritize the safety and protection of all children, including those previously recruited by armed groups. Furthermore, there is a need to establish safe reintegration protocols for children associated with armed gangs, provide shelter and expand child protection mechanisms to facilitate recovery and productive opportunities. UNICEF's efforts to reintegrate children associated with armed groups, providing education and psychosocial support, were noted.

**Discussions emphasized the severe impact of the ongoing crisis on children's access to education in Haiti.** Around 1.5 million children have lost access to education due to escalating violence and school closure, with many schools repurposed as shelters. Many Haitian children are not enrolled in school due to financial constraints, as parents must pay



an average of US \$140 per year per child for private primary schools, which make up 80 per cent of the primary education system. Participants called for urgent international support to reopen schools, provide safe learning spaces, and invest in education as a key part of recovery and stabilization. Programmes, such as cash transfers, school rehabilitation, and emergency nutrition support, have demonstrated the positive impact of targeted interventions. Preventing child recruitment into gangs by offering alternative education and social services were also highlighted. Local initiatives by civil society actors focused on socio-educational clubs, psychosocial support, and leadership training for children and women. Participants emphasized involving youth in decision-making and developing education programmes, including technical and vocational training, to equip them with necessary skills and building their resilience. Ensuring children's access to education was considered key for the development of Haiti's long-term peace and stability.

**While humanitarian assistance and political security solutions are crucial to stabilizing the current situation, the international community and Haiti also need to focus on sustainable development strategies to safeguard the country's long-term stability.** Efforts need to address root causes of instability such as poverty, inequality, and exclusion through sustainable development initiatives and community resilience programmes. Reference was made to the Rapid Crisis Impact Assessment, being undertaken at the request of the Haitian Government in cooperation with the United Nations system, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, to develop an investment plan to address immediate stabilization and recovery priorities. Participants called for better alignment of international assistance with local strategies, emphasizing the importance of engaging Haitian actors. A decentralized and local approach to strengthen communities and government institutions would be critical for stability and sustainable development of Haiti. Haitian youth, who are agents of change, must be engaged in shaping and implementing solutions.

**The ECOSOC President launched a "Call to Action" in [English](#) and [French](#) to mobilize efforts to support stability, resilience and prosperity in Haiti, with a focus on Haitian children and youth.** The "Call to Action" urges the international community to enhance its support for Haiti's efforts, building on progress in both political and security areas. It recommends actions to enable the Haitian population to safely resume their daily activities, boost investor confidence in the country, and empower the younger generation to thrive. In particular, the "Call to Action" emphasizes the need to provide education, including school meals, protect children and youth from violence and threats of gang recruitment, provide healthcare and create economic opportunities for Haitian youth.