



ECOSOC Management Segment

**Statement of Mr. Bruno Lemarquis, DSRSG/RC/HC on the situation in
Haiti**

21 July 2021, 10 am – 1 pm

DRAFT

**Mr Vice-President of the ECOSOC,
Mr. the President of the Ad-Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti
Monsieur le Représentant Permanent d’Haiti
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Today’s discussion is taking place at a very peculiar and tragic moment for Haiti, with the recent assassination of President Moïse, an event that shocked the country and the world. May this tragedy represent an opportunity for Haiti to break with the downward spiral in which it has been caught for too long. A new Government took office yesterday, under the leadership of Prime Minister Ariel Henry, with two main priorities, restoring security and organizing elections as soon as possible.

Against this background, and to add to the presentation of the report, I would like to focus on the humanitarian and socio-economic situation; an update on UN efforts; and a call for support.

On the first point:

The humanitarian situation is complex, with three or four crises at the same time.

The long-term impact of climate shocks, the socio-economic consequences of successive shocks, including the covid pandemic, the impact of gang violence, and the on-going socio-political crisis

are all contributing to increased humanitarian needs. But for the past five years this increase is essentially due to man-made crisis. Haiti remains one of the most underfunded and forgotten crises, while 40 per cent of the population are in need of humanitarian assistance. The current Humanitarian Response Plan aims to meet the urgent needs of 1.5 million people, including 1.2 million severely food insecure. Given the largely chronic nature of those humanitarian needs, due to development deficits, the UN and its partners are advancing a nexus approach to reduce vulnerabilities, risks and needs, in particular in the areas of food security, disaster reduction and social protection.

Over the last 9 months, gang violence in the Port-au-Prince area has displaced at least 19,000 people, with many many more leaving in difficult conditions. The growing insecurity and road movement restrictions are affecting humanitarian assistance and access, especially to gang-controlled areas and to the South of the country. During the month of June, roughly 1/3 of Port-au-Prince has been affected by gang violence at an unprecedented scale, and around 400,000 people in the southern departments are affected as well. The security situation along critical trade routes and commercial areas has also resulted in fuel shortage and reduced supply of goods, with an impact on food and transportation prices. Most Haitian families are being stretched and the most vulnerable groups are hit hard.

Despite a relative downward trend in early July, the country is generally experiencing a surge in the number of COVID cases, hospitalizations and deaths. On 15 July Haiti received its first covid-19 vaccines – with 500,000 doses donated by the United States through the COVAX mechanism. Several other shipments are expected soon. Meanwhile, the onset of the hurricane season increases the risks of additional crises.

Excellencies,

Haiti's social and economic situation continues to be characterized by multi-dimensional poverty and inequalities, growing insecurity, prevalent impunity and corruption, unfulfilled human rights, and other structural challenges that detract the country from its trajectory towards the SDGs. The deep socio-political polarization, the spike in gang violence and the covid pandemic are compounding this situation.

The recent security threats to the industrial zone, where the heart of Haiti's economic and commercial life is housed, send the wrong signal to potential investors. The lootings, the destruction of investment infrastructure and other outbursts of violence are likely to deepen Haiti's position at the bottom of international rankings of competitiveness and business climate. As such, it may perpetuate the fall in inflows of foreign direct investment from \$105 million in 2018 to just \$30 million in 2020. This means less opportunities for job creation and poverty reduction in the short to medium term.

Excellencies,

The recent tragedy did not happen in a vacuum. It happened in a context marred by intractable challenges that we have come to refer to as Gordian knots.

Many billions have been invested in Haiti over the last decades, but key development indicators have continued to regress in the face of limited development effectiveness. This calls to reconsider our approaches and way of working to move away from emergency aid, short-term approaches and project approaches to long-term solutions and thus achieve greater impact. Since my previous update, we have been working on operationalizing a new direction set out by the UN Team in Haiti under our One UN Plan. The Plan's objective is to focus the UN's political and programmatic resources on the structural obstacles to the achievement of the SDGs, with a sharper emphasis on the intractable obstacles, or "Gordian knots", that prevent meaningful and tangible progress on the larger political and development challenges affecting Haiti.

In this context, the UN Team is gradually focussing its efforts on issues such as the fight against impunity and corruption; and the modernization and transformation of the economy. It is also aligning its support behind the institutionalization of public policies that benefits in particular the most vulnerable, for example on Social Protection and Food security.

The UN is also working to build coalitions of actors (both national and international) around the identified structural challenges. As a result of recent consultations, bilateral and multilateral partners, including

the IFIs, have agreed to embrace the same approach and to tightly coordinate their efforts to tackle the same Gordian knots.

Now, my last point: what is needed in terms of support?

Continued support, solidarity and advocacy from all Member States, as well as international and regional partners is crucial at this critical juncture, including support to the UN Team's new approach to implement lasting solutions.

I call of Haiti's international partners, in light of the glaring lack of development impact and low aid effectiveness in Haiti for the past 25 years in spite of very significant efforts and investments, to engage with this approach, with a focus on key structural issues that have hampered the country's development, common strategies, tighter coordination, better alignment with national priorities and by making full use of our respective comparative advantages.

On the humanitarian front: Humanitarians will continue to do all that is possible to alleviate suffering and save lives, however, as of early July, only USD 71 million out of US\$235 million has been received for the Humanitarian Response Plan. Urgent support is in particular needed to support the needs of the displaced and their relocation. I call on your support to alleviate the plight of children and women, who are the most affected groups of the predominantly man-made crises in the country.

Let's turn this challenging moment for Haitians, Haiti, and friends of Haiti, in a momentum for change, an opportunity to "flip the orthodoxy" while relying on co-created sustainable solutions. Haiti is a land of opportunity and has so much to offer the region and the world.

In closing, I would like to reconfirm the UN Team's commitment to advance development, peacebuilding and hope in the country, while addressing humanitarian needs. Finally, I want to express gratitude to the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti for its continuous support, engagement and advocacy.