

As Haiti Slides into Violence, Its People ‘Cannot Wait Any Longer’ for Assistance, Foreign Minister Tells Security Council

Mission Head Urges International Help to Support Law Enforcement, Tackle Gangs

With Haiti descending into a catastrophic spiral of violence, the head of the United Nations office there warned the Security Council in her briefing today that the country’s people need help now.

Maria Isabel Salvador, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), stressed that gang violence is expanding at an alarming rate in areas previously considered relatively safe in the capital, Port-au-Prince. Compared to the first quarter of 2022, criminal incidents — homicide, rape, kidnappings and lynching — more than doubled in the same period in 2023 to 1,647. Some residents have begun to take matters in their own hands, as two days ago, a group of civilians seized 13 suspected gang members from police custody, beat them to death and burned their bodies.

The Haitian National Police force is severely understaffed and ill-equipped to address the violence and criminality, with deaths, dismissals and resignations cutting it from 14,772 to about 13,200 personnel — requiring urgent international support. Despite steps towards the establishment of a Provisional Electoral Council — a critical milestone for eventual elections — Haitians continue to suffer one of the worst human rights crises in decades, with gangs using sexual violence to terrorize populations, and children among the victims of killings, kidnappings and rape.

She further noted that nearly half the population (5.2 million people) needs humanitarian assistance, with the internal displacements increasing by 50 per cent in the commune of Port-au-Prince compared to November 2022. She called on the Council to work urgently to break the vicious circle of violence. “The Haitian people cannot wait — we need to act now”, she stressed.

Ghada Fathi Waly, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), noted the flow of illicit firearms and drugs into Haiti are fuelling violence — with heavily armed criminal gangs targeting critical infrastructure such as ports, grain storage facilities, police stations, court houses and prisons, and gaining control of major highways to the capital. These challenges make Haiti an attractive hub for drug traffickers, undermining prospects for the political process — not to mention the catastrophic implications for acute hunger and access to essential services.

She called on the international community to support large-scale actions to assist law enforcement and border management. She noted that UNODC has successfully carried out assessments of six border points and is cooperating with the Organization of American States (OAS) to strengthen Haiti’s capacity to

investigate and prosecute cases of corruption, money-laundering and economic crimes. “Sustained, comprehensive assistance is needed,” she asserted.

In the ensuing debate, Member States concurred that the appalling violence, humanitarian situation and complete instability have reached levels that threaten to turn Haiti into a failed State.

Jean Victor Geneus, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Haiti, warned that “Haiti cannot wait any longer” — with the security context deteriorating over the past 48 hours, and chilling scenes of violence in the streets of the capital. He embraced the Secretary-General’s call for urgent deployment of a specialized international armed force — as the systematic use of gang violence with hostage-taking, theft, assassination and rape is the modus operandi of criminal gangs. Hailing the dedication and courage of the Haitian National Police, he said the use of force alone cannot be the definitive solution to the problem.

Noting the huge gap between the haves and have nots, with the minority (5 per cent) controlling 90 per cent of the country’s wealth, he affirmed that extreme poverty marginalizes those in poor neighbourhoods, who are recruited by armed gangs, including child soldiers. He estimated that 80 per cent of cities are under the control or influence of armed groups, with half the population living on less than \$2 a day. He cited extensive sanctions imposed by Canada, the United States and the Dominican Republic, which have begun to bear fruit — but urgently appealed for international financial support.

Roberto Álvarez, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, noting that the tragedy also affects his country, said he does not understand the delay in Council action. “We are starting to think that there is a hierarchy of countries in need,” he said, citing double standards by which some States receive rapid attention. He noted his Government has imposed entry bans on some Haitian nationals. Comparing the situation in Port-au-Prince to an internal armed conflict, he stressed that as the Haitian State collapses, inaction by the United Nations would be an abdication of responsibility.

The representative of Gabon, also speaking on behalf of Ghana and Mozambique, stressed that the human impact of the situation in Haiti is terrifying, economically intolerable and “politically alarming”. He strongly condemned the ongoing use of rape and other forms of sexual violence — disproportionately affecting women and girls — by armed gangs, with a 63 per cent increase in abductions and a 21 per cent rise in homicides, welcoming all initiatives aiming to support the capacity of the Haitian National Police.

Canada’s delegate, speaking on behalf of the Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, stated that against the backdrop of horrendous multidimensional violence, it is critical to restore security to alleviate the suffering. This calls for strengthening the Haitian National Police and the rule of law and curbing the flow of arms and ammunition. Sanctions are one important tool to help break the power of armed gangs, he said, also noting that the solutions to this crisis must be Haitian-owned.

The representative of China agreed that the Haitian people are in a living nightmare, and curbing the rise of gang violence requires vital efforts to cut off their support and funding. However, he spotlighted the “deeply worrying trend” of illicit flows of weapons from abroad, noting that if left unchecked, this would exacerbate the current instability. Council resolutions concerning these must not simply stay words on paper, he said, encouraging the sanctions committee to update the sanctions list.

The meeting began at 10 a.m. and ended at 12:10 p.m.

Briefings

MARIA ISABEL SALVADOR, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), addressing the Security Council for the first time since taking office, noted she has interacted with civil society representatives and visited some of the streets of Port-au-Prince — recognizing the tension and fear Haitians experience every day. Since the last briefing by her predecessor in January, gang violence has expanded at an alarming rate in areas previously considered relatively safe in Port-au-Prince and outside the capital. According to data collected by the Haitian National Police and BINUH, in the first quarter of 2022, 692 criminal incidents — homicide, rape, kidnappings and lynching — were reported, while in the same period in 2023 the number of recorded criminal incidents more than doubled to 1,647.

With limited or no police presence, some residents have begun to take matters in their own hands. Two days ago in Port-au-Prince, she noted a group of civilians took 13 suspected gang members from police custody, beat them to death and burned their bodies. While the Government has continued to invest in the Haitian National Police, the force is severely understaffed and ill-equipped to address the violence and criminality. Deaths, dismissals and increased resignations among the police have cut its operational strength from 14,772 to about 13,200 personnel, of whom only about 9,000 perform police tasks. She recalled that barely 3,500 police officers are on public safety duty at any given time, nationwide, stressing that the need for urgent international support to the police cannot be overemphasized.

Despite Haiti's security challenges, she cited ongoing efforts towards the implementation of the 21 December agreement ("The National Consensus for an Inclusive Transition and Transparent Elections"). The newly established High Transitional Council has continued to work with the Government and various stakeholders to broaden consensus. Implementation of the agreement proceeds, including steps towards the establishment of a Provisional Electoral Council — a critical milestone for the eventual holding of elections that would hopefully usher in a return to democratic governance. While citing further efforts and progress regarding the Court of Cassation and creation of the necessary conditions for holding elections, the overall process remains fragile and vulnerable to the deteriorating security situation.

With the increase in armed gang violence, Haitians have continued to suffer one of the worst human rights crises in decades. Interviews carried out by BINUH indicate that gangs continue to use sexual violence, including multiple-perpetrator rape, to terrorize populations living in areas under the control of their rivals. She cited other forms of sexual violence reported as being used by gangs against women and girls living in communities under their influence, with children among the victims of the most heinous crimes, including killings, kidnappings and rape. Over the last three months, schoolchildren have been hit by bullets while sitting in their classrooms and kidnapped when being dropped off at school and are being recruited into armed gangs. She welcomed the appointment by the High Commissioner for Human Rights of an Independent Expert on Human Rights to strengthen monitoring and protection mechanisms.

Strongly condemning the widespread incidents of sexual violence — incidents severely underreported compared to other types of violence due to fear of reprisals — she noted that nearly half the population (5.2 million people) needs humanitarian assistance, with the number of internal displacements increasing by 50 per cent in the commune of Port-au-Prince compared to November 2022. She emphasized the need for the deployment of an international specialized force, as articulated by the Secretary-General in his letter dated 8 October 2022. Stressing that any further delay in addressing the unprecedented insecurity could lead to a spillover in the region, she called for the Council to work urgently to break the vicious circle of violence. “The Haitian people cannot wait — we need to act now”, she stressed.

GHADA FATHI WALY, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), pointed to an escalation of violence and insecurity in Haiti, including rising numbers of homicides and kidnappings. The flow of illicit firearms and drugs into Haiti are compounding the situation, fuelling violence and adding complex challenges. UNODC’s assessment titled “Haiti’s criminal markets: mapping trends in firearms and drug trafficking” paints an alarming picture: increasingly sophisticated and high-calibre firearms and ammunition are being trafficked into the country, with most new firearms and ammunition entering illegally by land, air and — most frequently — sea. Severe limitations in maritime control capacities, personnel and equipment, as well as a lack of border surveillance and patrol infrastructure, have curtailed efforts to stop the influx, which is enabling gang-related violence to reach unprecedented levels. Heavily armed criminal gangs are targeting critical infrastructure such as ports, grain storage facilities, customs offices, police stations, court houses, prisons, businesses and neighbourhoods. They have also gained control of major highways and roads providing access to the capital. Some gangs have expanded their territory outside Port-au-Prince.

She cautioned that the dire security situation is overwhelming the already limited capacities of Haiti’s national police, customs, border patrols and coast guard. Haiti is leading its security response the best it can; however, this comes at great human cost, she said, adding that “homicide rates are skyrocketing, while more and more police officers are being targeted and killed in the line of duty by gangs”. Meanwhile, Haiti’s law enforcement and border control challenges make it an attractive hub for drug traffickers. Haiti acts as a trans-shipment country for drugs, primarily cocaine and cannabis, arriving through public, private and informal ports, as well as clandestine runways, and mostly being shipped onwards to the United States, the Dominican Republic and Western Europe. As illicit drug markets expand around the world, and global supply and demand of cocaine reach record highs, the threat of trafficking as a destabilizing factor in Haiti only grows.

These realities undermine prospects for the political process, not to mention the catastrophic implications on efforts to address acute hunger and access to essential services, she underscored. Against this backdrop, she called on the international community to support large-scale comprehensive actions to assist law enforcement and border management, to prevent illicit flows and help stabilize the situation. Significant investments are also needed in community policing and criminal justice reform, as well as combatting corruption and money-laundering. Black markets are relying on corruption and patronage networks to thrive, with a complex web of public and private actors implicated in trafficking, while corruption in the criminal justice sector leads to impunity.

UNODC continues to work with its partners to help lay the foundation for the progress that is needed in Haiti, she noted, stressing that UNODC has successfully carried out assessments of six border points, identifying urgent equipment needs. In parallel, it is exploring the potential for greater Haitian-Dominican cooperation on border control, to develop mirroring skillsets. In addition, UNODC has been cooperating with the Organization of American States (OAS) to strengthen Haiti's capacity to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cases of corruption, money-laundering and economic crimes, as well as to improve information-sharing with international investigators on transnational organized crime. "Sustained, comprehensive assistance is needed, complementing any operational support provided to Haiti's police with a long-term vision to restore criminal justice, border control and customs institutions," she asserted, noting that it is through these fundamentals that Haiti's people can be protected from violence in the long term. She also welcomed the establishment of a sanctions regime that will help fight impunity for the crimes committed in Haiti.

Statements

JEFFREY DELAURENTIS (United States), expressing concern about the horrifying security and humanitarian situation in Haiti, highlighted the terrorizing and recruiting of youth and the increased vulnerability of women and girls to sexual violence used as a tool for intimidation. Noting that homicides increased by 21 per cent in the first quarter of 2023, he also pointed to the closure of schools due to gang violence. Also expressing concern about the killing of Haitian police officers, he added that political stability is key to restoring peace in the country. Noting that the national consensus agreement of 21 December led to some positive developments, he added that the Government and other stakeholders must establish an inclusive electoral council. More is needed to support the security, health and stability of the Haitian people, he said, applauding the United Nations system-wide scale-up to address malnutrition, cholera and child protection. The Council must do its part, he said, calling for additional sanctions on those who foment violence in Haiti.

HERNÁN PÉREZ LOOSE (Ecuador) noted the security crisis exceeds the design and logistical and institutional capacities of BINUH, which only has authorization for 42 civilian officers for advice on police and prison matters. He urged for the deployment of a specialized multinational support force, as the Haitian people cannot wait any longer — noting that in the first quarter of 2023, more civilians died in Haiti than in many of the bloodiest conflicts still ongoing in the rest of the world. He called for a timely visit to Haiti to consider reform of the security sector, strengthening of sanctions and a selective arms embargo. Voicing concern over UNODC's report on criminal markets in Haiti, he urged the Council to support border and port control, as well as the fight against the illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition. He welcomed the visit by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, in February, and the recent appointment of William O'Neill as an expert on human rights in Haiti. He warned that according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) Food Security Monitoring report, between now and June 2023, 4.9 million people would be affected by acute food insecurity. Further, sexual and gender violence cannot go unpunished, and full, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access must be guaranteed.

MICHAEL XAVIER BIANG (Gabon), speaking also on behalf of Ghana and Mozambique, cited the human impact of the situation in Haiti as “terrifying”, “economically intolerable” and “politically alarming”. “All of this is unfolding four hours away by airplane,” he said. On the security front, Haitians continue to face unspeakable horrors fuelled by criminal acts committed by gangs which are extending their control of the country’s territory and committing the most odious of crimes, including rape and other sexual violence. He voiced extreme concern that this violence has not spared children who have been specifically targeted by gangs. These gangs are also targeting the police force directly and also using schools and health-care establishments as their base to conduct their operations. He strongly condemned the ongoing use of rape and other forms of sexual violence — disproportionately affecting women and girls — by these armed gangs. “Violence in Haiti has reached never-before seen peaks,” he warned, pointing to a 63 per cent increase in abductions and a 21 per cent rise in homicides. He welcomed all initiatives aiming to support the material, technical and human capacity of the Haitian police, calling on donors to increase their contributions. Turning to humanitarian affairs, he underscored that 4.9 million Haitians must be lifted out of food insecurity and half a million children — whose education was disrupted by gangs — must be brought back to school. Moreover, he continued, restoration of the rule of law should go hand in hand with the strengthening of State institutions, specifically the police, throughout Haiti’s territory.

GENG SHUANG (China), noting the pain and despair of the Haitian people, said their situation is a living nightmare. The political transition process in the country lacks broad support, he noted, adding that it is crucial to end the political stalemate. Calling on all parties to put the interests of the country’s people first, embrace dialogue and create conditions for free and fair elections, he said the United Nations must help advance a Haitian-owned and Haitian-led political process. Curbing the rise of gang violence is key, he said, stressing that it is vital to cut off their support and funding. The illicit flows of weapons from abroad, especially from the United States, is a deeply worrying trend, he added, noting that if left unchecked, this would exacerbate the current instability. Council resolutions concerning these must not simply stay words on paper, he said, encouraging the sanctions committee to update the sanctions list and refine sanctions measures and monitoring. Also expressing concern about the cholera epidemic and the economic decline, he said that China will continue to support the Haitian people in finding an effective solution to this complex crisis.

ADRIAN DOMINIK HAURI (Switzerland) noted that almost no area of Port-au-Prince and its surroundings is spared from gang violence, condemning the systematic use of sexual violence by gangs, as well as the targeting of children and the recruitment of minors. Addressing gang violence is a prerequisite to rebuild State structures. He emphasized that an estimated 1.8 million people are now in an emergency food insecurity situation — an unprecedentedly severe crisis, with structural challenges, climate change and natural hazards exacerbating the situation. In addition, the expansion of gang activity in areas important for food production risks plunging even more people into hunger. He noted that Switzerland has increased its funding for WFP — and calling for the safe, timely and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance, he echoed the Secretary-General’s call for protection of those personnel from gang violence. In the south of the country, Switzerland is committed to strengthening local governance of water and sanitation. He urged support for progress made at the political level, and accelerated strengthening of the judicial system, tackling impunity and corruption to combat the growing autonomy of gangs and break the cycle of violence.

FERIT HOXHA ([Albania](#)) said that amid political crisis, Haiti remains gripped by vicious gangs which dominate the lives of that country's people through rampant warfare and extortion. Voicing concern over the catastrophic deterioration of human rights and pervasive insecurity there, he said the cycle of violence is compounding an already catastrophic humanitarian situation, worsened by high prices and shortage of food. It is imperative for Haiti to restore law and order, combat corruption and the impunity of armed gangs, he asserted, adding that with their brutal methods, extortion, kidnapping and drug trafficking, gangs are "suffocating the capital" and "have metastasized the country". It would be naive to think that gangs exist in isolation. Those responsible for the spread and financing of gang violence, including those within the Haiti elite, should be held accountable. "Haiti cannot move ahead with illegality and lack of legitimacy of its core institutions," he observed. The Haitian National Police — undermanned, underpaid and underequipped — is unable to get the upper hand, he cautioned, noting that the longer this situation lasts, the more powerful the gangs will become to dictate their terms and seek a place in the political and financial spheres of the country. In this context, he supported the deployment of an international specialized armed force. "Haiti is burning," he declared, stressing that the country needs help and must avoid becoming a failed State owned by gangs.

NATHALIE BROADHURST ESTIVAL ([France](#)), stressing that the "suffering of the Haitian people is unacceptable" expressed concern about the high rate of killings, abductions, sexual violence and recruitment of children by gangs. The international community must provide more support for the Haitian National Police, she said, adding that her country stands ready to work with partners to remedy the situation on the ground. Also calling for more support via BINUH, she called on the Council to quickly adopt sanctions against the criminals destabilizing Haiti. However, sanctions alone will not solve the crisis, she said, encouraging Haitian actors to continue an inclusive dialogue and ensure broader participation in the political process. It is essential to hold democratic elections once the necessary security conditions are reached, she said, adding that the political class must demonstrate responsibility. Highlighting her country's humanitarian aid for Haiti, she said "we cannot stand idly by while Haiti sinks into chaos".

JOÃO GENÉSIO DE ALMEIDA FILHO ([Brazil](#)), expressing concern about the escalation of gang violence and the failure of Haitian authorities to mount an adequate response, said the police face daunting odds as they attempt to combat gangs that are targeting infrastructure and recruiting minors. Haiti is grappling with high levels of internal displacement, a sharp increase in food insecurity, and limited access to essential services, such as education and health care. Stressing that a breakthrough in the political dialogue between the Government and the opposition is essential, he noted that Haiti lacks any democratically elected Government representatives. Failing to address this legitimacy vacuum could potentially plunge the nation into a more severe crisis, he cautioned. Noting the initiative launched on 21 December to build a national consensus for an inclusive transition, he called for intensified efforts to ensure a broad national political dialogue. He expressed hope that the sanctions regime adopted in October 2022 will facilitate a peaceful political understanding between key actors there.

FRANCESCA GATT ([Malta](#)) noted that the Haitian people continue to suffer at the hands of armed gangs as they compete to expand their territorial control, displacing over 100,000 people. Citing the sanctions regime as an important tool for targeting and deterring those who engage in or support financial and criminal

activities, she called on the Council to update the list of those designated as soon as possible. She urged Haitian authorities to engage with civil society groups to build consensus towards the conditions necessary for free and fair elections — a Haitian-led and -owned political process. She noted women and girls are disproportionately affected by sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, which is being used as a tool by gangs to terrorize, punish and subjugate communities — with children suffering some of the most serious abuse; the protection of those vulnerable groups must be of paramount importance for the international community. She further reiterated the call on all parties to facilitate rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need.

SUOOD ALMAZROUEI (United Arab Emirates) said economic recession, political deadlock and unprecedented violence has meant that a terrifying struggle is an all-too-common reality for the people of Haiti. Voicing deep concern over the growing levels of violence in that country, he said regions once considered safe from gang violence are now threatened. Clear signals of this are recent harrowing reports of people set on fire, he added. In this context, it must remain a priority to build the response skills of the Haitian National Police, as well as strengthening anti-corruption measures and tackling the trafficking and proliferation of illegal arms and illicit financial flows. Moreover, supporting Haitian-led community-based violence reduction approaches are just as critical to improving the security situation and tackling humanitarian challenges. With the continued recruitment of children and closure of schools, these approaches can mitigate the level of vulnerability that the Haitian young women and men face. He further underlined that the rule of law must be a guiding compass for Haiti, noting that for survivors of sexual violence who fear retaliation, State institutions built on a strong rule of law must serve as both a safe haven and a vehicle for swift and definitive justice. Haiti is facing one of the worst humanitarian crises in today's world but suffers from an underfunded response, he asserted.

SHINO MITSUKO (Japan), expressing concern about Haiti's worsening security situation, noted the rapid increase in cases of kidnapping and armed violence. Women and children have been subjected to sexual violence and forced recruitment, she noted, adding that protecting the right to life, water, food and health is crucial. Stressing the need to respect the rule of law, she said it is vital to support the Haitian National Police. Although the main responsibility for stability rests with the Haitian authorities, regional and international initiatives should augment those efforts. Applauding the continued agreement by regional groups, including the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), she said, targeted sanctions are essential for addressing the crisis. Addressing security should go hand in hand with resolving the political crisis, including the holding of free, fair and transparent elections, she said, also stressing the importance of establishing a judicial system. Welcoming the positive steps taken to implement the consensus agreement, she said that her country is considering possible support for the elections. Calling on political actors to achieve progress through dialogue, she expressed solidarity with the people of Haiti.

FERGUS JOHN ECKERSLEY (United Kingdom) expressed concern over widespread instances of gang rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by gangs to strike fear into communities. The recruitment of children into gangs, indiscriminate sniper fire in civilian areas and high food insecurity have contributed to what the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights called "a living nightmare". It is a tragedy that the Haitian people — and women and children in particular — continue to experience this

horror on a daily basis. Noting that the Haitian National Police remains overstretched and underresourced to tackle the immense security challenges, he called on international partners and the Security Council to respond to Haiti's request for further international assistance in tackling the underlying causes of gang violence. Citing the installation of the High Transitional Council as a positive step towards implementing the 21 December political accord, he urged all actors to redouble their efforts to reach a consensus. Calling on the Council to consider further sanctions designations of those who seek to undermine the peace and stability of Haiti, he cited the critical need for Haitians to come together to overcome the political impasse towards creating conditions for successful democratic elections.

VASSILY A. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation), Security Council President for the month, speaking in his national capacity, said, "Haitians are taking the law into their own hands, lynching the gangs." Port-au-Prince is besieged by these armed gangs, he said, adding that all exits from the city have been blocked, while supply roads and movement of people around the country are being disrupted. "The population lives in fear for their lives," he said, noting that abductions, rapes and homicides are now the norm. There can be no talk about the national health-care or educational system operating as they should, he said, stressing that "this is a genuine humanitarian, socioeconomic and political disaster". Neither the Haitians nor the international community understand how to help the country "not fall into the abyss". Humanitarian organizations — including the United Nations bodies — are doing everything they can to save Haitians from hunger, he observed, calling on the Council to address the country's interrelated security problems. Resolving Haiti's pressing problems by restoring the legitimate power of the State should be achieved through the implementation of the so-called consensus document. He underlined that there has been no progress on ensuring political transition for transparent and credible elections in the country. He called on the Haitian parties to stand ready to partake in an inclusive political dialogue. The authorities have lost control over the ports and border crossing, allowing criminals to use these crossings, he cautioned, voicing concern over an ongoing illegal flow of weapons into Haiti and noting that weapons are reaching the island from the United States.

JEAN VICTOR GENEUS, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Haiti, warned that the security context in his country has deteriorated over the past 48 hours, with chilling scenes of violence in the streets of the capital. He cited the unspeakable suffering of a people, deprived of the fundamental right to security and freedom of movement, taken hostage by armed gangs. His Government embraces the Secretary-General's call for the urgent deployment of a specialized international armed force, coupled with BINUH's support to build police capacity — as the systematic use of gang violence with hostage-taking, theft, assassination and rape is the modus operandi of criminal gangs. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that nearly 128,000 people have been displaced. Haiti is in danger, he warned, and needs the assistance from the United Nations family to escape this turbulence.

Hailing the dedication and courage of the Haitian National Police, despite their limited means, he noted that the country has always responded to calls for help from brotherly peoples, whether in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa or in Europe, in their legitimate fight for self-determination and political emancipation. The use of force, as a first step, is essential to defeat gangs, restore order and create an environment conducive to the proper functioning of the State, but that alone cannot be the definitive solution to the

problem. Noting the huge gap between the haves and have nots, with the minority (5 per cent) controlling 90 per cent of the country's wealth, he affirmed that extreme poverty accentuates youth unemployment and marginalizes those in poor neighbourhoods who are recruited by armed gangs, including child soldiers. He estimated that 80 per cent of cities are under the control or influence of armed groups, with some political and economic actors funding criminal activities to secure political power.

The economy has shrunk over the past five years with uncontrollable inflation of more than 50 per cent, and he estimated that 4.9 million people are food insecure, with half the population living on less than \$2 a day, and the risk of a serious health crisis due to hospital closures. The Prime Minister intends to move towards the process of normalizing the political situation — and following the establishment of the High Council of Transition and the Court of Cassation, the course is set for the formation of the Provisional Electoral Council, an independent body responsible for carrying out the elections. The Head of Government, Ariel Henry, is eager to hand over the fate of the country to an elected President and legitimate representatives as soon as possible. He cited extensive sanctions imposed by Canada, the United States and the Dominican Republic, which have begun to bear fruit — even while the gangs become more arrogant and powerful.

He encouraged the Group of Experts to speed up its work, to quickly publish the list of all those who fuel instability and inflict violence on the population by financing gangs and corruption. Haiti relies on robust international aid to the police, while deployment of an international force remains essential to stem the violence and human rights violations, restore the rule of law and create the conditions conducive to the holding of credible elections. He urgently appealed for international financial support in the medium and long term to ensure social reintegration of the marginalized and improve the living conditions of the vast majority. Despite the distress and disappointment, the people's hope springs eternal — but on behalf of raped women and girls, the families of innocent victims of gang barbarism, he stressed: "Haiti cannot wait any longer."

ROBERTO ÁLVAREZ GIL, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, noting that the tragedy that is affecting the lives and health of millions of Haitians affects not only Haiti but also his country, cited Pope Francis and called on delegates to "turn your gaze to Haiti, which has been suffering for so long". Noting that the situation in that country has been grave for a long time, he said he does not understand why it has taken the Council so long to do what is necessary. "If we are frank, we are starting to think that there is a hierarchy of countries in need," he said, expressing concern about the double standards by which some States receive rapid attention and aid. The repeated pleas made by the authorities of Haiti, requesting assistance to end the violence, have long been futile. Highlighting the high rates of food insecurity and the famine in that country, he asked: "How can we allow such an outrageous humanitarian situation to happen before our eyes?"

Noting that the Panel of Experts of the sanctions committee recently began its work on the Haitian crisis, he expressed the hope that their efforts will lead to effective measures. His Government has imposed entry bans on a number of Haitian nationals, he said, highlighting the recent resolution adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council, approving the appointment of an independent human rights expert for Haiti. Stressing the need to put a definitive stop to the insecurity, he pointed to the latest UNODC report which identifies the alarming increase in arms trafficking to Haiti as the main ingredient for the increase in violence.

Appealing to the Council to implement the measures required to prevent the transfer of arms and ammunition to Haiti, he stressed that when a State is unable to protect its people, this responsibility falls to the international community. Noting that Haitian authorities have repeatedly requested a special force to support the national police, he said the situation in Port-au-Prince is comparable to that of an internal armed conflict. Given the dissolution of the Haitian State, inaction by the United Nations would be an abdication of responsibility, he added.

ROBERT KEITH RAE ([Canada](#)), speaking on behalf of the Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, said the country's multidimensional crisis is deepening with devastating impacts on the daily lives of Haitians. Gangs have expanded their control and continue to terrorize the Haitian population; kidnapping has become a lucrative industry; children and youth continue to be recruited into gangs; and women, girls and boys are targeted for horrendous sexual violence. Meanwhile, the price of food and fuel is putting a further strain on families and businesses, with nearly half the Haitian population lacking enough to eat and some communities facing famine-like conditions.

Against this backdrop, he stressed the critical importance of restoring security to help alleviate the suffering of Haitians, allowing for people to safely leave their homes and strengthening investor confidence in the country. This calls for a comprehensive approach that curbs the flow of arms and ammunition, strengthens the Haitian National Police and the rule of law, protects human rights and reduces community violence. Further, he strongly encouraged efforts to ensure a more inclusive national political dialogue to chart a way forward towards putting the country back on the path to sustainable development, including through the holding of fair and transparent elections. The international community must move swiftly to address the immediate humanitarian needs of Haitians while investing in the country's sustainable development to increase its resilience to future shocks. Moreover, measures must be taken to address the emergency food needs of Haitians while also providing emergency livelihood assistance to build a more resilient and productive food system. He also underscored that immediate measures to restore security must be accompanied by efforts to address the root causes of violence in the country: extreme poverty, corruption, impunity, and collusion between the political and economic spheres. In this context, sanctions are one important tool to help break the power of armed gangs, he said, also noting that the solutions to this crisis must be Haitian-owned.