

Briefing to the Security Council by Ms. María Isabel Salvador, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti and Head of BINUH New York, 23 October 2023

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Council, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to begin by stressing the enormous significance of the adoption of Resolution 2699 authorizing Member States to establish and deploy the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission, which is crucial in assisting the Haitian National Police in re-establishing security conditions conducive to elections.

I also welcome the adoption of Security Council Resolution 2700. I believe it is necessary, and it is the expectation of the people of Haiti, that the Committee considers expeditiously updating the list of individuals and entities designated pursuant to Resolution 2653 considering reports submitted by the Panel of Experts.

The extension of BINUH's mandate last July for another 12 months and the extended capacities that we have proposed to implement resolution 2692 will help us in delivering on our mandate. We have immediately started work towards ensuring we are adequately resourced.

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Council, Unfortunately, the security situation on the ground continues to deteriorate as growing gang violence plunge the lives of the people of Haiti into disarray and major crimes are rising sharply to new record highs. Just last Wednesday the Secretary General of the High Transitional Council was kidnapped in broad daylight by members of a gang dressed as police officers.

Killings, sexual violence, including collective rape and mutilation, continue to be used by gangs every day and in the context of ineffective service support for victims, or a robust justice response. The layer of complexity added to the security crisis by the vigilante groups remains. Between 24 April and 30 September, BINUH registered the lynching of at least 395 alleged gang members across all ten departments of Haiti by the so called "Bwa Kale" vigilante movement.

I have continued to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, encouraging their full commitment to national dialogue efforts to get onto a path to elections to fully re-establish democratic institutions and the rule of law. I commend the CARICOM Eminent Persons Group for their steadfast support in promoting a Haitian-led, Haitian-owned dialogue out of the crisis. Under its auspices inter-Haitian consultations have resumed. Nevertheless, significant differences persist, all of which are critical to placing Haiti on a clear path to elections.

I am concerned to see that the efforts towards elections are not moving at a desired pace. The Prime Minister has emphasized that his is a transitional government until elections can be held. He has publicly committed to measures that include the enlargement of the High Transitional Council, a more politically diverse cabinet, and the establishment of the Provisional Electoral Council. A majority of actors must engage in constructive and meaningful negotiations to overcome the current political stalemate, and move forward towards allowing the holding of inclusive, credible and participatory elections as soon as security conditions permit.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Le Secrétaire général a réitéré ce message à maintes reprises : “Il ne peut y avoir de sécurité durable sans un rétablissement des institutions démocratiques – et il est impossible de parvenir à des solutions politiques pérennes et pleinement représentatives sans une amélioration drastique de la situation sécuritaire”.

Dans cette optique, et alors que les parties prenantes haïtiennes attendent avec impatience le déploiement de la Mission multinationale d’appui à la sécurité, en demandant la mise en place de mécanismes de responsabilisation et de contrôle appropriés, il est primordial de garantir le respect de la politique de diligence voulue en matière de droits de l’homme (HRDDP) et de zéro exploitation et abus sexuels, ainsi qu’une vérification et une formation appropriées du personnel de la Mission multinationale d’appui à la sécurité.

Re-establishing control by the Haitian National Police is a prerequisite for holding credible and inclusive elections. The deployment of the MSS brings hope that the situation will improve. The Haitian National Police can only achieve lasting results when public security is restored, and the State resumes its functions, especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods prone to gang activity.

In order to achieve greater control by the state institutions, efforts must continue to establish effective coordination mechanisms between the Haitian National Police and partners providing support through the MSS or bilaterally, so that duplication is avoided and the effect of assistance, optimized. Stepped up efforts by the Haitian National Police, with the support of the MSS, will trigger a further need to address justice requirements which must be supported by the international community.

Haiti’s justice and corrections institutions continue to face significant challenges, and while some progress has been made, much more is needed to restore the rule of law, protect human rights and fight impunity. The effect of the security support of the MSS will, without a doubt, have significant impact on limited judicial and penitentiary capacities.

I recently visited the prison in Les Cayes and can attest to the appalling situation. We need to enhance working with the authorities to ensure that the extreme over-population at Haitian prisons and their inhumane conditions are addressed. Inmates in pre-trial detention need to be processed expeditiously. As of 11 October, 94 children are held in pretrial detention, some on very minor accusations such as theft of rice.

I must recognize efforts made by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security of Haiti including the announcement last Thursday of the establishment of an ad-hoc commission to study ways forward to reducing detention in Haiti’s prisons. Concerted efforts between the various stakeholders need to be made, and I believe that BINUH is well positioned to serve as a coordination mechanism to articulate necessary stakeholders.

Respected Members of the Security Council,

When approving resolution 2699, the expectations of millions of Haitians at home and abroad were raised. A glimmer of hope was cast towards finally seeing a light at the end of the tunnel that is not an oncoming train. Resources need to be committed to allow the UN to run programmes and projects to support the environment in which the MSS will operate, including

UNDP's basket funds in Justice, Elections and support for the Haitian National Police. Close coordination between the MSS, BINUH and the UNCT must be guaranteed.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen

Political progress in Haiti is closely linked to security, humanitarian and development aspects. The restoration of democratic institutions through credible and participatory elections is fundamental to a sustainable rule of law.

I reiterate the Secretary-General's call to Haitian stakeholders to put aside their differences and work towards democratic elections, for the benefit of the Haitian people. BINUH remains ready to support the CARICOM Eminent Persons Group in any way that may be helpful.

The representation and participation of all groups in Haiti is crucial to achieving lasting solutions to the multidimensional crisis. Addressing issues such as sexual violence, child protection and support for vulnerable and marginalized groups is a priority to ensure socio-political cohesion and lasting peace.

Elections are the only path and the only imperative to restore democratic institutions in Haiti. Only democracy and the rule of law constitute the basis from which Haiti can progress towards sustainable development and growth.

Thank you.