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Chair: Mr. Sven Spengemann





# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Monday, February 7, 2022

• (1200)

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC)):** I want to welcome everyone to meeting number four of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development on Monday, February 7, 2022.

My name is Marty Morantz, member of Parliament for Charleswood-St. James-Assiniboia-Headingley. I'm the vice-chair of the foreign affairs committee. I am chairing the meeting today, as the chair is not available for personal reasons.

I think we'll get right into our witnesses this morning. I'm sorry for the wait.

Mr. Grant, you're up, and you have five minutes. Please proceed.

**Mr. Michael Grant (Assistant Deputy Minister, Americas, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

I'm joined today by Sébastien Carrière, Canada's ambassador to Haiti, and Sylvia Cesaratto, director general of Central America and the Caribbean at Global Affairs Canada.

Geographical proximity, a common language and the presence of over 165,000 members of the Haitian diaspora in Canada explain our current strong relationship with Haiti. Since the 2010 earthquake, Canada has provided \$1.8 billion Canadian in aid to Haiti, including humanitarian aid. Canada is the second largest bilateral donor to Haiti after the United States, with an annual development assistance budget of \$89 million Canadian in 2020-21. This makes Haiti the largest recipient of Canadian aid in the Americas.

At the United Nations, Canada chairs the Economic and Social Council's Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti and is an active member of the Core Group on Haiti. This group includes the United Nations, Germany, Brazil, Canada, Spain, the United States, France, the European Union and the Organization of American States, or OAS. Canada also plays a very active role in the Haiti file within the OAS, as demonstrated by its participation in the OAS's good offices mission to Haiti in June 2021.

As committee members are no doubt aware, the situation in Haiti is particularly complicated. The country is facing multi-dimensional crises that have been steadily worsening in recent years, and particularly in recent months. We're talking about the juxtaposition of political, security, humanitarian, social and economic crises. The

country is considered a fragile state. The International Crisis Group placed Haiti on its list of 10 countries experiencing conflict that should be monitored closely in 2022. It remains critical to stay focused on this country.

[English]

Mr. Chair, the events of the last six to eight months have exacerbated an already fragile situation in Haiti. Insecurity has increased as a result of clashes between gangs and kidnappings in Port-au-Prince. The assassination of President Jovenel Moïse has deepened the political crisis, as has collusion between gangs and political actors. The earthquake that struck the south of Haiti in August, the departure of 30,000 Haitian nationals from certain countries in the region, a fuel crisis and corruption all point to the challenges the country now faces.

[Translation]

The United Nations reported last week that the current humanitarian situation is one of the most difficult in Haiti's history. An estimated 4.9 million people, or 43% of the population, are now in need of assistance and are food insecure. The worsening humanitarian situation directly affects migration from Haiti to all countries in the area.

It should be noted that the United Nations' presence on the ground, outside the enforcement agencies, is now limited to a political mission without an armed presence. This mission is the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti, or BINUH, whose mandate expires in July.

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz):** You have one minute.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michael Grant:** Its renewal will be discussed in the coming months in New York, within the United Nations Security Council.

[English]

Today, Mr. Chair, is February 7, a very significant date in Haiti. Since 1997, February 7 has been enshrined in the Haitian constitution as both the beginning and end date of presidential terms.

Indeed, President Moïse's term would have ended today. Since his assassination last July there have been attempts made to find a political agreement between the interim government of Prime Minister Ariel Henry and opposition and civil society groups in order to move towards organizing elections.

[Translation]

In light of the seriousness of the situation, on January 21, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada chaired an international ministerial conference on Haiti. In addition to Prime Minister Henry, 27 ministers and representatives of partner countries and international organizations attended this meeting. The importance of a political dialogue was discussed—

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz):** I'm sorry, Assistant Deputy Minister Grant. I'm going to have to ask you to wrap up as we need to move on to the questioning.

• (1205)

**Mr. Michael Grant:** Very good, sir.

I'll just make one more comment.

At that ministerial conference, Minister Joly made it clear that the solutions going forward must be by and for Haitians. Canada announced during that ministerial meeting nine new initiatives of \$50 million and we will also participate in a donors' conference on February 16.

Canada has been clear in encouraging all of the parties to find a way forward peacefully and politically out of this crisis.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We're now ready to answer your questions.

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz):** Thank you very much, Mr. Grant. I should properly introduce you as the assistant deputy minister of the Americas.

We also have at the meeting Sébastien Carrière, the ambassador of Canada to Haiti, and Sylvia Cesaratto, director general, Central America and the Caribbean.

They are all available to answer the committee's questions.

With that, we will move into round one.

Mr. Ziad, you have six minutes. You have the floor. Please proceed.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

Mr. Grant, I want to begin where you ended your remarks.

Minister Joly had said that any decision when it comes to Haiti has to start by and for Haitians. On July 17, 2021, the Core Group—the ambassadors of Germany, Brazil, Spain, the United States, France, the European Union, and the United Nation's special

representative for Haiti—expressed their support for Ariel Henry as interim Prime Minister of Haiti. Prior to that, Canada and the Core Group recognized Claude Joseph as interim Prime Minister.

Do you believe Minister Joly's statement leads to a decision that Canada supports a different interim Prime Minister than our allies on the other side? There is a difference in position here on this specific topic or issue, and I'd like to hear from you.

I'd also like to hear from Mr. Carrière on what exactly led to Canada's position in that regard.

**Mr. Michael Grant:** Indeed, I think if Ambassador Carrière could follow my comments it would be a great.

I'll be brief.

First and foremost, as I stated, Canada believes that the way forward in Haiti needs to be led by Haitians. We have been encouraging both the interim Prime Minister, Mr. Henry, as well as the civil society actors and opposition, to come together and reach an accord on a way forward.

They do have a difference of opinion. Mr. Henry would like to move to elections very quickly and some of the main civil society groups have indicated they would like to have a transition period of two years, but it is up to them to decide.

Going back to last summer, clearly the tragic assassination of President Moïse did send Haiti into a political crisis. Just prior to his assassination he had indicated that Mr. Henry would be nominated as Prime Minister. In the immediate aftermath we, of course, indicated our ongoing support for Haiti and Haitians. When the outgoing Prime Minister, Mr. Joseph, and Mr. Henry, reached an agreement on a transition, Canada and its international partners reiterated our support for Haiti, Haitians, and the interim government going forward.

Again, the way out of this political crisis and the way to get to political stability is through an agreement of all parties and to get to an election so the constitutional order can be reinstated.

Ambassador Carrière, would you like to add anything to my comments?

**Mr. Sébastien Carrière (Ambassador of Canada to Haiti, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** I will maybe just add that the timing of this meeting is actually excellent because today is February 7, and that's the day that presidential mandates end and begin here in Haiti. Ariel Henry was nominated by President Moïse, and that term, that mandate, was going to end today, so we're now in a situation where everybody is sort of accusing everybody else of not being legitimate. In my personal view, this is quite unproductive, and we're trying to get everyone to focus on finding solutions for the way forward.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** The call for an investigation into the assassination of the president has been issued by the former Governor General of Canada, which means that to support that initiative there is going to be some financial support for the investigation.

Would you be able to brief us on where this is going? Is Canada going to put the money on the table for that initiative? What is the government's position on this, as we speak?

• (1210)

**Mr. Michael Grant:** Thank you very much. As you know, Canada has been a strong supporter of Haiti over the years, including in the security sector.

To date, Canada has not received a specific request from the Government of Haiti for either direct financial assistance for this investigation or on the judicial side. We stand ready to provide any judicial assistance that is requested.

We do know that the Government of Haiti has reached out to other governments, including the United States and Jamaica, and I believe those countries have provided that kind of assistance.

As we work with our partners in looking at what Haiti needs going forward, clearly, seeing how the international community can help bolster the justice sector is something we're definitely looking at, but in terms of the specifics of the investigation, there's been no formal request made to the Government of Canada.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Mr. Carrière, would you like to comment on this?

**Mr. Sébastien Carrière:** I would only add that Michael is right. There are a few suspects that were arrested in Jamaica and then deported to the U.S., because there is no extradition treaty between Jamaica and Haiti. There's also a suspect in Turkey that Haiti is working to bring to Haiti, and also someone who was arrested next door in the Dominican Republic, so it seems like the walls are coming in, and most of these cases are being dealt with in a court of law in the United States.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** If our government supports any initiative that is led by Haiti, and no formal request has been received from the government there for Canada to participate in such an investigation process, what are the grounds, let's say, for the former Governor General to call for Canada to push in this direction? There are grounds there for anyone to ask that kind of question to get some clarity on this. Would you be able to comment?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz):** Sorry, Mr. Aboultaif, that is the end of the six-minute round. Perhaps someone else will get to that question in a future round. Thank you.

Mr. Dubourg, you have the floor, for six minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Chair and committee members, thank you for inviting me to this standing committee.

I also want to acknowledge the witnesses who are appearing before us this morning.

First, I'd like to ask Ambassador Carrière a number of questions.

When were you appointed Canada's ambassador to Haiti, and what was your relationship with Haiti prior to your appointment?

**Mr. Sébastien Carrière:** Thank you for your question.

I was appointed this fall and I started on October 5. This is my third time working on the Haiti file. The two previous times, I worked at headquarters in Ottawa. In the aftermath of the earthquake on January 12, 2010, I worked for the crisis task force set up

in response to the earthquake for several months. I was responsible for intergovernmental relations. I then served as deputy director of Haiti relations from 2013 to 2015.

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

I understand that you started after the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse. Since then, as Mr. Grant just said, the situation has been critical. The crisis is multi-dimensional. We're hearing about kidnappings and corruption. Politicians are talking a great deal about agreements floating around the country.

Since you have been there, I imagine that you have been walking around and meeting people. How do you view this multi-dimensional crisis in Haiti?

**Mr. Sébastien Carrière:** I think that "multi-dimensional" is the right term for this crisis. Security is an extremely worrying issue. We're hearing talk of 1,000 kidnappings last year. However, most experts think that there were many more. Many kidnappings aren't reported. Matters are settled directly, in two or three days, between the families and the criminals involved.

A great deal has been said about the Martissant issue. This neighbourhood is located in the southwest of the capital. The national road that provides access to the entire south of the country is blocked by gangs. It's impossible to get through. When an earthquake hit the southern region last August, this blockade made it extremely difficult to deliver humanitarian aid.

Regarding the political crisis, today is February 7, and there's competition among the agreements. From the outside, it looks like the Ariel Henry agreement versus the so-called "Montana agreement." A great deal has been said about this topic, especially in prestigious American magazines and newspapers such as the *Miami Herald*, *The New York Times* and *Foreign Affairs*.

However, other groups are involved. There are other agreements and other political players as well. The Haitian Senate has 30 members, 10 of whom are still serving. These are the remaining 10. As for the other 20 members, we know that there hasn't been an election in the Senate for five years. Joseph Lambert, the president of the Senate, is also involved in the crisis, as well as the nine remaining senators.

In short, a host of political agreements and a host of political players are negotiating. There's political sparring, which is normal, to determine who is taking a position, how and why.

• (1215)

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

As you know, and as Mr. Grant said, on January 21, Canada, with Minister Joly, showed leadership by bringing together 19 foreign affairs ministers and other international organizations to show solidarity with Haiti. We announced a \$50 million contribution.

That said, Minister Joly clearly stated in her remarks that she wanted to see a Haitian solution, by and for Haitians. As you said, February 7 is an important date in Haiti. We're wondering how an agreement or agreements could be reached.

Moreover, are elections possible in Haiti in this type of situation?

**Mr. Sébastien Carrière:** We believe that in the current situation, especially for security reasons, it would be extremely difficult to hold elections in Haiti.

As to whether elections should be held by the end of the year or in two years' time, these are matters of domestic politics on which I do not want to comment. However, it is quite clear to me that we cannot have an election in the short term. The minister has also said so.

The important thing is to avoid applying a solution that comes from outside to solve this problem. For our part, we believe that the solution lies in an agreement between the stakeholders, whether they are political entities, civil society or economic actors.

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** In closing, Ambassador, can you tell us very briefly what these agreements are?

We've heard of the one called the "Montana Accord" and the one dubbed the "September 11 agreement", but are there others?

**Mr. Sébastien Carrière:** The three main ones are the September 11 agreement, which is Prime Minister Ariel Henry's agreement; there is the Montana Accord, which, as I mentioned before, has been much talked about in the United States; and there is the PEN agreement, an initiative of Senate President Joseph Lambert and a few other political actors, including Senator Youri Latortue.

There was an agreement between the proponents of the PEN agreement and those of the Montana agreement. They told me that it was not an agreement, but an understanding. I'm still trying to figure it out.

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz):** Thank you very much. That ends this round, Mr. Dubourg.

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for six minutes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank all the witnesses for being with us today and for making themselves available to share with us the situation in Haiti that is of concern to all members of the committee. We have made it a priority on the agenda of the committee.

I would also like to say that I am sorry we could not start earlier, as we were struggling with some housekeeping issues. I thank you for your patience.

If I may, Mr. Chair, I would like to return right away to the issue of security in Haiti.

Among all the calamities that have befallen and continue to befall this unfortunate country, there are currently some 95 armed gangs that are, in effect, running the show over much of the territory and isolating the capital from much of the country. This has been recognized by Canada and at the conference hosted by the minister, since a little over \$12 million of the \$50 million that will be provided to Haiti, as I understand it, will be used to increase the capacity

of the Haitian National Police, or HNP, through critical training and increased effectiveness.

My question is quite simple. In my previous life, when I was a member of Parliament in the late 1990s and Haiti was in the process of creating its national police force, Canada sent the Canadian Armed Forces and police officers to stabilize the country and help in the training of the Haitian National Police. I had the opportunity to travel to Haiti at that time to see the work of our police officers and the work of this nascent Haitian National Police. A few decades later, we are where we are.

My question is, what more do we think we can do, more effectively this time, given the situation that exists in Haiti today?

• (1220)

**Mr. Michael Grant:** Thank you very much for your question.

I will ask my colleague Ms. Cesaratto to answer it.

Ms. Cesaratto?

**Ms. Sylvia Cesaratto (Director General, Central America and the Caribbean, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Grant.

I thank you very much for your question.

Actually, as you mentioned, Canada is very active in the security sector and has been for a long time. You know more about that than I do, I think. More than 10 years ago, we helped Haiti set up the National Police Academy, or NPA. At the recent conference, as you mentioned, we also announced further grants to the National Police. This increased support is aimed primarily at strengthening the management capacity of the police, including the integration of women into the National Police.

We are also looking at how we can continue to support the National Police Academy, as it is essential to continue training police officers. At the same time, we are also sending police officers from the RCMP or the Sûreté du Québec, a priori because they have the linguistic affinity to pass on their expertise both to the HNP and to the UN mission, which is under BINUH, the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti.

Canada plays a very important role in strengthening security. As we also tried to do at the January 21 meeting, we are trying to have better coordination with donors to strengthen that security. So we are working with the UN to create a security fund that other countries can contribute to. This could then be used by the UN to implement a national security strategy that has been negotiated with the government of Haiti.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Thank you.

Very briefly, I would like to endorse the words of Daniel Foote, the U.S. envoy to Haiti who resigned; he insisted that U.S. political interventions in Haiti have never worked. I think our saying that the solution must come from Haitians themselves, not from outside, is in that same spirit.

In terms of security—I'll come back to this—should we not, in light of my own experience, conclude that our efforts have been in vain so far? What can we do better to achieve goals this time?

**Mr. Michael Grant:** If I may, Mr. Chair, I will answer the question.

Of course, we agree that Haitians themselves must find the solution, and we encourage all parties to find a solution.

With regard to the Haitian National Police, we believe that coordination between the UN mission and our partners is necessary. This is exactly what we are trying to do with the new projects and in working with the UN.

• (1225)

[*English*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz):** Thank you, Mr. Grant.

We're going to move now to Ms. McPherson.

You have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank our witnesses for joining us today and to apologize for the delay in starting the study.

What is happening in Haiti is, of course, extremely complex, and your expertise and sharing of your perspectives is vital for this committee to understand the challenges facing the Haitian people.

I would like to follow up a little bit on some of the questions that have been asked by my colleagues.

With regard to the Core Group and how it is working, Mr. Bergeron just brought up the previous special envoy to Haiti, Mr. Foote, who said in his letter of resignation that what our Haitian friends really want is the opportunity to chart their own course without international puppeteering and favoured candidates, making it very clear that he felt that the Core Group had, in fact, overstepped.

We've heard from a number of different sources that there has been the impression that there is interference in what is happening in Haiti. Of course, we should all believe in the idea that the solution for Haitians must come from Haitians and that we must give Haitians the ability to select their own course, select their leadership and government.

I just want to get a little better understanding on how the Core Group works and the response, I guess, to those very clear calls from many different sources that the Core Group is once again involved in trying to pick some sort of leadership on behalf of the Haitian people instead of allowing those democratic processes to go forward.

**Mr. Michael Grant:** Thanks very much. I'll respond and then, if possible, maybe Ambassador Carrière can follow.

The Core Group really plays out on the ground and in Haiti amongst the ambassadors and representatives.

First to Mr. Foote's comments, I think his comments were directed towards the Government of the United States for the most part

and a bit towards the Core Group. All I'll say is—again it does sound a bit like rhetoric, but it is something that we've long espoused and continued to—that the only way forward is for Haitians themselves.... Canada, the Core Group or anyone else cannot simply impose our views on the Haitian people; they must determine the way forward.

I think in the summer, when the tragic assassination took place, there was obviously a lot of confusion and crises, so when there was an agreement between then Prime Minister Joseph and the person who had been nominated to be Prime Minister, Mr. Henry, as a way forward, the Core Group certainly said that was helpful for stability. We also made it clear at the time and since then that there needs to be a long-term solution, that it needs to involve all parties and that we need to get to elections.

I think the most recent meeting that Minister Joly hosted was an opportunity, because it was much more than just the Core Group. Many in the international community said this quite loudly, and said directly to Prime Minister Henry, that there needed to be an agreement amongst all of the parties, that he needed to reach out to the civil society and the opposition to reach one. So we were pretty clear.

However, maybe, Sébastien, you could come in a little bit about the workings of the Core Group on the ground.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I'm sorry to interrupt, but I have limited time.

As to the elections going forward, I do just wonder what Canada is doing to ensure.... How are we working with the UN and the OAS? How are we making sure that this is in place, that the election can go forward and that we can have a Haitian-selected democratic government put into power in Haiti?

**Mr. Michael Grant:** Whether in the OAS or at the UN, or bilaterally between ourselves and the interim government or the various civil society groups or opposition, we are clear that there needs to be this agreement going forward and that without it there is no real chance of elections taking hold.

There's a real debate and it's an honest debate as to, if there is an agreement, how quickly elections can happen. Sébastien provided his views earlier that doing it super fast is unlikely. The conditions on the ground are not in place. Prime Minister Henry would like to have it in a year; some in civil society think it should be in two years. That's for Haitians to decide.

From the Canadian perspective, we stand ready, once that decision is made, to help establish the mechanics, whether it's through the United Nations or the OAS, to help with the electoral officials in Haiti in standing up elections, whether that's through financial resources or expertise.

• (1230)

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Would we consider sending an observer mission to Haiti for that election?

**Mr. Michael Grant:** That is something that Canada has done in the past. In the Americas, the OAS has a very strong reputation and experience in doing that, and Canada has supported those missions financially and with personnel, so I think it's something we would look at quite positively.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Mr. Chair, I realize I have about 10 seconds. Can I tack those onto my next round?

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz):** Sure.

Mr. Genuis, you have the floor for five minutes. Please proceed.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our witnesses.

I really believe that advancing justice and looking at areas such as police reform should be a critical part of our work in international development, because so much flows from the rule of law in terms of people's ability to pursue opportunities for themselves. If security is not taken care of, it's much more difficult for them to do that, but if it is, then much else flows from that in terms of opportunity for investment and other actions.

I want to probe the fact that clearly a substantial portion of our development assistance dollars are related to security and supporting police capacity. We see this with allies and partners as well.

What is the nature of our engagement with policing? Are we talking about providing equipment? Are we talking about training? Is there a need for broader, deeper root-and-branch reform, which we've seen in some countries, where police officers are essentially replaced by new recruits who come in and bring a broader, deeper culture change.

What is required in the kinds of reforms that will really meaningfully strengthen law enforcement in Haiti?

**Mr. Michael Grant:** Sylvia, can I pass the floor to you for that one?

**Ms. Sylvia Cesaratto:** Yes. Thank you, Michael.

I wonder if I can outline that, as Michael mentioned originally, we have the biggest international assistance programming in the Americas in Haiti. That's about \$50 million per year in bilateral assistance. We program across all pillars of our feminist international assistance policy, one aspect of which, of course, is inclusive governance. Under there, we are working to address insecurity, as you mentioned, and working with the PNH.

It's a complex situation, but we are working closely with the management of the police itself and with the UN, which has specialists on the ground that are able to analyze where the gaps are and where the needs are. Canada's assistance is in capacity building, and mostly until recently with the academy: the standing up of the academy, helping to recruit and to train the new recruits.

We're moving some of our programming now into the management structure of the police academy per se, strengthening the capacities of the senior management of the police establishment to implement their own national security plan, but that's in close coordination with the UN and with other partners on the ground.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** If I understood your response correctly, you're talking about programs of providing additional training to

existing personnel rather than, as I described, more dramatic police reforms that we've seen in countries such as Georgia and Ukraine.

**Ms. Sylvia Cesaratto:** That is correct. We're hoping, however, that through the establishment of the security basket fund through the UN, we could go a bit further on the reforms in conjunction with the UNDP, which is actually setting up this fund.

Again, this has to be in coordination with the host government, the Haitian government, on visa reforms.

• (1235)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Yes. Of course you can't reform a police force without the agreement of the host government, but I would be curious for your opinion of what's required here. Is providing additional training to the existing players sufficient, or is that less effective than broader, deeper police reform?

**Ms. Sylvia Cesaratto:** Well, I think it's multi-dimensional. You have to attack it from several perspectives.

One is certainly that there aren't enough police to deal with all of the issues they have to address, so the academy will help to bring in new recruits. We know that other international partners are working with the PNH and the UN to establish vetting units, for instance, within the police itself.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I'm sorry, I want to get in one additional question in the time I have left.

It does strike me that if there are fundamental culture problems in a police force, additional recruits may solve a problem but not the core problem.

Could you just comment quickly on some of the challenges we've seen around international adoption and family reunification coming out of Haiti? I've heard from many people who have connections to those situations. Do you have any comments on the work being done in that area?

If we run out of time, could you respond in writing, please?

**Mr. Michael Grant:** Yes, perhaps we will respond in writing.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz):** We've just run out of time.

Madam Clerk, could I ask you to follow up with the witness to get a response in writing for Mr. Genuis?

Ms. Bendayan, you have the floor for five minutes. Please proceed.

[Translation]

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.



I also thank Mr. Grant very much, and Ambassador Carrière for being with us today. I would also like to recognize my colleague Emmanuel Dubourg, member of Parliament for Bourassa, who is on the committee today and who represents a very strong voice for the Haitian-Canadian community within the federal government.

It is clear that the relationship between Canada and Haiti is extremely important. I am very proud of the support that Canada continues to provide to that country. This support includes, of course, the additional \$50 million in development assistance announced just a fortnight ago, but also approximately \$90 million contributed annually, making Canada the second-largest donor to Haiti, after the United States.

We all agree that Canada has an important role to play and that it must do more. The assassination of President Moïse shocked the world, including the large Haitian diaspora in Quebec, which numbers about 143,000 people. We also know that today's meeting is taking place on a very special date. In fact, today is the day that President Moïse's mandate would have ended, but it has not, since Ariel Henry is the provisional president and Haiti is in the grip of a major political crisis. About a month ago, provisional president Henry himself had to be rescued from a shootout between his security guards and gang members that took place during an official ceremony.

We all say here that the solution is going to come from the Haitian people, and, of course, it is, but given the current situation, I would like to hear from our witnesses on how Canada could best support the Haitian people. The \$50 million in aid is very important, but how can we ensure that this money gets to the ground quickly to have the best possible effect for the Haitian people?

**Mr. Michael Grant:** Thank you very much for your question.

I will answer it, but Mr. Carrière or Ms. Cesaratto could add something.

Indeed, we are the largest donor after the United States, but we cannot act alone. We need to work with our partners and international organizations. In New York, Canada is the chair of the Economic and Social Council's Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, which has tried to improve the way the UN and Haiti's international donors work. So the only solution is to work together.

I would ask Ms. Cesaratto and Mr. Carrière to complete my response.

• (1240)

**Ms. Sylvia Cesaratto:** Thank you for your question.

As you pointed out, Haiti is extremely fragile. It is one of the poorest countries in the world, with some of the lowest socio-economic indicators in the world and certainly in the Americas.

Our programs are targeted at the most vulnerable people and those most affected by the socio-economic crisis in Haiti. It is therefore the citizens of Haiti who will be the direct beneficiaries. These programs are based on all the pillars of our commitment, and our implementing partners are primarily Canadian and international non-governmental organizations, such as UN bodies or the UN World Food Programme, or WFP.

**Ms. Rachel Bendayan:** Ambassador, is there anything you would like to add?

**Mr. Sébastien Carrière:** Indeed, Canada's solidarity with the Haitian people is unwavering. You have described it well.

I would also say that beyond development aid, there are what my colleagues call "pockets of excellence" in this country, that is to say, economic projects that work very well without international aid. I'm thinking of a man called Pierre Léger, in the Cayes region, who is the world's leading producer of vetiver, an essential oil that serves as the basis for almost every perfume you know...

[*English*]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz):** I'm sorry, that is the end of the round.

We'll move on to Mr. Bergeron, who has the floor for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** It's a shame, because it was very interesting to hear about this excellence that is found in some places.

According to the Government of Canada's own data, barely 1% of the Haitian population is fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The bulk of the government's contribution is through the COVAX initiative, but we know that it has made bilateral donations based on criteria that we don't quite understand. Since this seems very arbitrary, we have asked that the government prioritize Palestine, Haiti and Taiwan, for a variety of reasons. I think the ones regarding Haiti are obvious to everyone.

As I was saying, the Canadian government has made bilateral donations without our having a clear understanding of the criteria, including to Egypt and that region, to Jamaica and Barbados, but not to Haiti.

Why is it that we have not yet helped Haiti with immunization, when they are struggling in every way to try to get out of the pandemic?

It seems to me that this would be a concrete way to help. What do you think?

**Mr. Michael Grant:** Thank you very much for your question.

Actually, we are closely monitoring the health situation related to COVID-19 in Haiti.

Canada has already contributed \$12 million to the COVID-19 effort. In terms of vaccines, I think we're now looking at other countries that we can donate to. We are working with the United Nations, our partners and the Pan American Health Organization.

Ms. Cesaratto, is there anything you would like to add?

**Ms. Sylvia Cesaratto:** Thank you.

I was, in fact, going to add that we had also given \$50 million to the Pan American Health Organization, which has been setting up programs in Haiti, especially to do outreach to people who are reluctant to get vaccinated, which is a big problem.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we also revised our existing program by adding \$13 million to directly address the personal protective equipment needs of our project beneficiaries.

• (1245)

[English]

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz):** That is the end of the round.

Ms. McPherson, you have the floor for two minutes and 40 seconds.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to say that the questions on vaccinations are very important to me and a key priority for me. I would like to highlight that the promises on the vaccinations are not the same as the delivery of vaccinations and that we should keep that in mind.

I have some questions for our guests today on the \$50 million and how that is going to be allocated. My first question is with regard to food security. We do know that \$12 million has been allocated to the World Food Programme for food security issues happening in Haiti right now. I am wondering whether or not that is being seen as sufficient and whether or not that is going to deal with the scale of the issues that we have. Could I get some clarity on that piece, please?

**Mr. Michael Grant:** Briefly, the challenges in Haiti are quite extreme, so for Canada, whether it's on an annual basis or in an extraordinary year, we're looking at where we can make the most difference. For many years, we've been working on food security and in the health sector. Clearly the challenges remain. I don't think that anyone can say that we have all the answers.

Maybe, Sébastien, on the ground, can you perhaps give a bit of perspective of where the most effort and most impact can be made?

**Mr. Sébastien Carrière:** Specifically on food security, to answer the member's question, the World Food Programme is working on a program that's called school canteens, *cantines scolaires* in French. They were feeding upwards of three-quarters of a million of kids every day.

There is also a component of it that is sourced locally, from local farmers and so on. That aspect is very interesting.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** My next question may actually be good for you, Mr. Ambassador, so I can get some more things in here.

There was also \$17.48 million allocated to the sexual and reproductive health rights of the most vulnerable women and adolescents. I'd love to know some more information about that project. Could you also touch on whether or not these dollars have actually been spent and have been delivered? If so, when? If not, when?

I'm sorry to do everything so fast.

**Mr. Sébastien Carrière:** I have about 30 seconds, so I think maybe a written response on the specifics of that project would be in order.

That's only to say I visit projects. I can see, myself, through field visits, the aid actually getting delivered and being used to help Haitians, Haitian women in this case, who need—

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** That \$50 million has been delivered, then?

**Mr. Sébastien Carrière:** With that specific \$50 million that was announced two weeks ago, some of those projects were already in the pipeline. Some are just starting now.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz):** I'm sorry, that is the end of the round.

Madam Clerk, would you follow up with the ambassador on a written answer to that question.

Mr. Aboultaif, you have the floor for five minutes. Please proceed.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Thank you, Chair.

The interim Prime Minister Henry has committed to holding a referendum to modify the country's constitution by February 2022 and to organize presidential and legislative elections early in 2022.

Does the Canadian government believe that Haiti is in a position to hold free and fair presidential and legislative elections? Why or why not?

**Mr. Michael Grant:** I think Ambassador Carrière mentioned earlier that at the present time the situation is such that it would be very difficult for Haiti to hold elections. What is needed first is an agreement between the various parties on a way forward. There is a difference of opinion as to when general elections should be held. It's for Haitians to determine when that is best.

When they determine a way forward, Canada, and I believe international partners and organizations, will be ready to support that.

Perhaps, Sébastien, you can comment on the specifics in terms of the timeline in 2022.

**Mr. Sébastien Carrière:** It's an excellent question.

Beyond the security situation, there's a vast debate in the country amongst political scientists and constitutional experts who are asking themselves, should you have a referendum to reform the constitution if you're not elected with a mandate to change the constitution? As with every political issue, there are people on both sides making arguments that contradict each other.

The interim Prime Minister Ariel Henry is making a speech this afternoon at 3:30. He's addressing the nation. We'll see if the referendum comes up. It's been coming up less, I would say, publicly in the debate, which is maybe a sign that he is abandoning it. We'll have to see what the intentions are and what the week will bring. Today is very calm. There are usually demonstrations on February 7. Today it's extremely calm out there. It's like a statutory holiday. There's absolutely nothing happening, which is good.

My understanding is that negotiations between the various courts will continue. Montana group made a letter public last week in which they invited the Prime Minister to a dialogue. The Prime Minister said he would answer that letter tomorrow, so we'll see what that brings. I'm sure there will be something about that in his address to the nation at 3:30 this afternoon, as well.

• (1250)

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Mr. Carrière, as political debates could take months and months or can sometimes happen sooner than people expect, either way, what do you need on the ground? Is there a road map as such?

Time is always of the essence and the situation is always demanding, because the unrest isn't new to a country such as Haiti. It has been there for a long time, in addition to disasters of all kinds, natural disasters and things like that. The country has been very unfortunate in terms of the overall situation on all levels. That might push the conversation to take place more quickly and to have some reasoning on the ground to be able to get out of this ASAP.

What do you need on the ground there? Is there anything we need to know ahead of the speech by the Prime Minister?

**Mr. Sébastien Carrière:** What I would say is that there's a lot of fatigue out there amongst the population with the political process. Some Haitian friends are even telling me in private, "Let them all go and we'll just manage this ourselves." That's how much people are fed up.

There's a real sense of insecurity. Every Haitian I know knows somebody who has been kidnapped and thinks they're next, and that is not a nice sword of Damocles to live under. What we need is patience. We need to accept that Haitian politics has its own rhythm. We need to make sure that our own impatience as foreigners doesn't get the better of us, and let them chart a path forward together.

Dates are important. February 7 is an important date. It can be seen as a milestone that you try to negotiate something in advance of, but tomorrow is the 8th and that's also a good date for a political accord. The fact that it's not settled today doesn't matter as much to me as that the dialogue is ongoing.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz):** That is the end of the round.

Ambassador, could you finish your thought?

**Mr. Sébastien Carrière:** I think I was done.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz):** You're good. Okay.

For the next round, Mr. Ehsassi, you have the floor for five minutes. Please proceed.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Allow me to also thank all the witnesses for their very helpful testimony.

I think what we have all heard so far is that Canada has been incredibly active on a bilateral basis, as well as in the context of multilateral deliberations. That said, given our active role and given what Mr. Grant referred to as the multi-dimensional crises that are unfolding in Haiti, I wonder if Mr. Grant and Mr. Carrière could

perhaps inform us as what we would like to see other partner countries address at this particular point given the numerous challenges on the ground in Haiti.

**Mr. Michael Grant:** The first thing that would come to mind is what we saw a couple of weeks ago. It has been quite a while since we've had a broad international meeting on Haiti. Yes, there's the Core Group, and yes, there are some bodies in the UN, but that meeting brought together quite a number of partners beyond the norm. That was quite impressive to see and important.

It was important for Haitians, first and foremost. They saw that the international community is engaged. Going forward, the meeting in January was important, and there's another one coming up that's actually organized by Haiti and the UN looking at the humanitarian assistance that's needed.

I think countries need to step up. The average contributions for Haiti over the last few years have fallen well short of what's needed. There are some donors that still maintain a high level, and Canada is one of them. More donors need to step up.

The other thing we've seen, and the meeting on the 21st was a good example, is that countries of the region are really playing a much more active role. I think that's positive. The Dominican Republic is a great example, as well as CARICOM as an organization and individual members. More of that would be helpful.

• (1255)

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Thank you.

We have heard repeatedly today that it's important that the solution be provided by Haitians. It is a great pleasure to have Mr. Dubourg amongst us today. He has been a fount of knowledge on developments in Haiti.

To make sure that we're making the most of the resources we have in this country and that we are hearing from the diaspora here in Canada, what mechanisms are available?

**Mr. Michael Grant:** As a foreign ministry, first and foremost, Global Affairs is always open to hearing from Canadians on foreign policy priorities, whether it comes in at officials or at the political level, and I think actually Ambassador Carrière, in Port-au-Prince, is probably on the front line of a lot of those interactions.

Sébastien, you might want to add some points.

**Mr. Sébastien Carrière:** Specifically on the diaspora, I grew up in Montreal surrounded by Haitians. I have a Haitian uncle, a Haitian best friend, even a Haitian father-in-law at some point; all that to say that one thing we can say about our Haitian diaspora is that they're not shy. They reach out directly and indirectly at all times, and it's very good to hear from them.

What I'm getting from them is, frankly, the same kind of vibe I'm getting from this committee: Across party lines, there is interest in Haitian solutions and interest in supporting such Haitian solutions.

I have to say, the meeting a few weeks ago was quite a sight to be seen, where you had some 20 foreign ministers, from a very diverse group, all sitting around the table telling the Haitian people and its government that we're ready to help once they've figured out what they want to do.

The international community is very well disposed to accompany Haiti on its path back to democracy.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Thank you very much.

I have only 10 seconds remaining, so I will cede the floor. Thank you.

**The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz):** Thank you, everyone. It being 12:58, that brings us to the end of our meeting.

Ambassador Carrière, Mr. Grant and Ms. Cesaratto, thank you very much. It has been a very interesting round of questions and answers. I thank you all for your testimony today.

With that, if there are no other issues that members of the committee would like to raise, I call this meeting adjourned.

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