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# Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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Chair: Mr. Sameer Zuberi



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• (0850)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair (Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.)):** Good morning.

Welcome to meeting number 18 of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today, as well as the honourable members and support staff.

This meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of June 23, 2022.

[*English*]

Members are participating in person and by Zoom, as are witnesses.

I have just a few comments to start us off.

Please wait until I recognize you and give you the floor before speaking. We had an incident at the last committee meeting that was really interesting. I'm sure that it won't happen again.

You'll be recognized by name. We're also on the Zoom application for interpretation. Go to the globe icon on the bottom of your screen, where you can choose either "floor", "English" or "French".

All comments should go through the chair. When you're recognized, you will be able to speak.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to the motion adopted by the House and

[*English*]

Standing Order 108(2) of April 26, 2022, we are going to study the situation in Haiti.

[*Translation*]

For our first hour, we welcome—

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I have a point of order.

There's an interpretation problem on the witnesses' end.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

The problem seems to be fixed now.

We have three witnesses joining us now.

We are welcoming Chalmers LaRose, from the Université du Québec à Montréal, department of political science, and the Royal Military College of Canada.

[*English*]

From the Association of Human Capital of Ethnocultural Youth of Tomorrow we have

[*Translation*]

Patrick Auguste, who is here in person.

[*English*]

We also have, from Little Footprints Big Steps, an international development organization, Ms. Morgan Wienberg, by Zoom.

Now we'll have opening remarks from everyone.

[*Translation*]

You will each have five minutes.

[*English*]

I'll give a hand signal when you have one minute left. Please keep an eye on me. Once you hit the five minutes, I will interrupt. You'll be able to continue what you want to say through the questions and answers.

[*Translation*]

Starting off the presentations will be Mr. LaRose, for five minutes.

Sorry, but I'm being told that Mr. LaRose isn't online right now.

We'll start with Mr. Auguste, then. He is here, in the room. You have five minutes, Mr. Auguste.

**Mr. Patrick Auguste (Master in Business Administration, Université du Québec à Montréal, Association of Human Capital of Ethnocultural Youth of Tomorrow):** Good morning.

I'd like to thank the committee for inviting me today.

I want to provide a brief overview of the situation before I discuss my recommendations.

Today is November 4. In Haiti, political paralysis has led to the emergence of violence at the hands of armed groups, the undermining of police, justice and other institutions, widespread insecurity, economic paralysis, deteriorating socio-economic conditions, rapidly worsening living conditions for the majority of the population and a total loss of confidence in authorities, fuelled by government paralysis.

Things are where they are for many reasons. Going back 36 years, the collapse of the Duvalier dictatorship in 1986 gave rise to an ever-deteriorating political discourse. With the political and social environment becoming increasingly adversarial, political and social divides have grown, and Haitian society has become more and more fragmented and divided.

Many actors have a hand in the current situation. Political activists, for one, are constantly fuelling political strife, blaming one another for causing all the country's woes. Refusing to budge, those same activists consistently stand in the way of consensus building, with their my-way-or-the-highway attitudes and their unwillingness to compromise, bend or look for win-win solutions. Then, there are the authorities, whose game is the same as the political activists'. Add to that the unofficial and illegitimate armed groups that fuel the state of insecurity by using violence against the people—mainly in the form of kidnappings, rapes and threats—against police, against institutions—courts, in particular—and against political activists. Those armed groups know they can count on a significant inflow of illegal guns and ammunition, as well as weapons taken from police officers and kidnap ransoms.

Police forces are increasingly overwhelmed and unable to stand up to the unofficial and illegitimate armed groups. Police killings are becoming more frequent.

Widespread opposition to foreign interference exists in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. That is largely due to the failings of foreign involvement in the past.

Foreign military troops inflicted violence on vulnerable members of the population, women and children, in particular. Rising housing and food prices also play a role, as does disease. Soldiers from Nepal are suspected of having brought cholera to Haiti.

The international community's political support for the current government is contested. Not only does the current regime appear to lack leadership and be powerless, but it is also negotiating in bad faith with political opponents. Since the assassination of the country's elected president Jovenel Moïse over a year ago, no timetable has been set for an election.

Nevertheless, some support for foreign military intervention exists in Haiti, since most of the population is suffering terribly. More and more, people lack the basic necessities, face violence and feel abandoned. I have two brothers in Haiti, and they are telling me the same thing.

As regrettable as foreign military intervention is, it is still preferable to violence at the hands of armed gangs.

Now I'll turn to some recommendations.

As I see it, there is no way around foreign intervention. However, it is important to bear in mind the mistakes of the past so that history does not repeat itself.

I also think that Haitian authorities should not be the only people at the negotiating table.

I'll leave it there because I'm out of time, but I would be happy to answer any questions you have.

• (0855)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Auguste.

[English]

We'll continue with Ms. Wienberg via Zoom for five minutes, please.

**Ms. Morgan Wienberg (Co-Founder and Executive Director, Little Footprints Big Steps):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My original intent was to draw to the committee's attention the violation of children's rights due to systemic family separation and the exploitation of children in Haiti in for-profit institutions, yet due to the current crisis even the most basic of human rights are now inaccessible to most Haitians. Due to what we can only call a civil war, there are currently over 100,000 internally displaced persons in Haiti. Many families have remained homeless since the 2021 earthquake.

Schools are not operating. Multiple times over the past five years, all students nationwide have been deprived of access to education.

Hospitals and ambulances have become non-functional. Many medical procedures are available only in Port-au-Prince, which is currently inaccessible. Blood transfusions and oxygen are challenging to access, especially in regions outside of the capital.

Malnutrition is rampant. Amidst exponential inflation, most families have lost their source of income due to prolonged lockdowns and lack of circulation within the country. Shortages of critical supplies have caused even more crippling inflation in regions that have been cut off from the capital. Families who were considered middle class a few months ago are now struggling to feed themselves.

Prisoners are dying of famine. The penal code is actually not respected in Haiti, as many children in prisons are below the minimum age, and prisoners can spend over a year in prison without even having a trial. Child prisoners are often placed in adult cells as punishment and are sexually as well as physically abused within the prisons.

Haitian Social Services has identified a spike in separated and unaccompanied children due to the current crisis. Street children are being recruited and even trafficked by armed gangs and then forced to commit crimes.

As families struggle to survive, children are at a higher risk of being placed in institutions. Already over 700 orphanages in Haiti are currently operating illegally, and in them countless children's rights violations are occurring, including severe neglect, physical and emotional abuse, child trafficking and sexual exploitation. Foreign pedophiles often prey on children in orphanages and are difficult to reprimand despite formal reporting. Political connections and financial means allow several human rights offenders within Haiti to be seemingly untouchable.

While Haitian authorities attempt to close illegal orphanages and reunite separated children with their families, orphanage directors often bribe, threaten or dismiss local authorities due to an imbalance of resources. Foreign support for child protection or any other sector must be aligned with the initiatives and recommendations of Haitian experts in that domain. Otherwise, we may unintentionally be supporting the very systems that are exploiting children.

Many girls and boys in Haiti are resorting to prostitution as a means of survival. Sexual violence is also rampant, as high numbers of women and children are being raped. This is not isolated to the capital; insecurity has spread across Haiti. Murders and sexual assaults are often filmed and shared nationwide, yet seldom penalized. The toll this has taken on mental health is debilitating.

These issues are the results of continually soaring poverty levels, a lack of economic stability, a weak justice system and the abuse of power by corrupt politicians as well as a small group of elite influential families.

Immediate action is required to address access to basic supplies, affordable transportation, medical care and education to reduce the unrealistic costs of living, to curb child trafficking and to allow Haitian people to circulate safely in their own country.

However, longer-term action is also required to address the systemic separation and exploitation of children throughout institutions; to push for prioritization of child welfare; to ensure that international interventions provide sustainable support that actually builds the capacity of Haitian citizens and infrastructure to remain more autonomous in the future; and to hold Haiti's leadership accountable for the conditions and treatment of the Haitian people so that the current crisis is not repeated.

Thank you.

● (0900)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Wienberg.

We'll continue with Monsieur LaRose for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**Dr. Chalmers LaRose (Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Université du Québec à Montréal; Royal Military College of Canada, As an Individual):** Esteemed members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me today. I am pleased to be here as part of your study on the current situation in Haiti.

I am Haitian, I am an expert on international relations, and I have been watching the political situation in Haiti. That is the lens through which I will be sharing my thoughts and observations on what I call the Haitian problem.

I'd like to start with a brief history of Haiti's evolution on the world stage.

A former French colony known as Saint-Domingue, Haiti gained independence by dismantling the slave-based colonial structure that fuelled the capital accumulation regime. The new state's contribution to freedom and equality was extraordinary, both in terms of what it achieved domestically and in terms of the momentum it created around the world. This was especially true at the regional level, given the role Haiti played in the freedoms gained by people in Latin America.

After the country gained its independence, however, several generations of Haitians were still forced to pay reparations to the descendants of their former slave owners. The weight of Haiti's double debt—the reparations owed and the loans taken out to pay those reparations—was immense, setting Haiti on the path to underdevelopment, while making Europe's and North America's major financial centres richer.

The state of the country today is disastrous. The situation is dire. Haitians forced to leave the country to find work face inhumane conditions. More than just poverty, Haitians are experiencing terrible misery. Hospitals are left with nothing, roads are inaccessible, justice is non-existent and violence is at its peak. The government is not in control of anything. The country is dying a swift death; Haitians are in desperate straits.

Add to that the damage caused by repeated natural disasters and a rampant socio-political crisis, and you would be hard-pressed to find a worse situation. What is generally described as countrywide terror at the hands of criminal gangs is merely the product of a political phenomenon. Bolstered by foreign governments in the face of the current geopolitical tensions, economic elites and transnational political actors are using these impoverished members of society as pawns in their political war, arming them with weapons and ammunition and giving them political and legal protection.

In response to the situation, many are calling for new foreign intervention under the umbrella of humanitarian assistance. I strongly disagree with that recommendation. The events of the past 20 years clearly show that nothing good has come of such intervention. To advocates of intervention, I say have a look at the Organization of American States' assessment of foreign intervention in Haiti.

The organization's general secretariat released a statement on Haiti on August 8, 2022, and this is what it had to say:

The last 20 years of the international community's presence in Haiti has amounted to one of the worst and clearest failures implemented and executed within the framework of any international cooperation...

Instead, this failure has to do with 20 years of erratic political strategy by an international community that was not capable of facilitating the construction of a single institution with the capacity to address the problems facing Haitians. After 20 years, not a single institution is stronger than it was before.

Also telling is the resignation letter of former U.S. ambassador and special envoy for Haiti Daniel Foote, and I quote:

This cycle of international political interventions in Haiti has consistently produced catastrophic results. More negative impacts to Haiti will have calamitous consequences not only in Haiti, but in the U.S. and our neighbors in the hemisphere.

In the face of such a situation, what can we do to encourage co-operation with Haiti and help the country get back on track? First and foremost, nothing can happen until relative security has been restored. Right now, international co-operation with Haiti should focus on the country's immediate security needs.

• (0905)

Haiti is a country on a unique and different track, a country whose security cannot be left solely to the whims of external forces or hypothetical friendly countries; nor can it be left exclusively in the hands of police. While it is necessary to support capacity building so that Haitian police can intervene, it is just as necessary to focus on the military's role in security and the redeployment of Haiti's armed forces.

At the same time, international mediation to resolve the political crisis must be encouraged. The resulting political compromise could ease the transition to an elected government, without outside forces getting in the way. Only on the basis of those concrete actions can Haiti—

• (0910)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. LaRose.

You'll have an opportunity to say more during the question-and-answer portion.

**Dr. Chalmers LaRose:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We'll start the round with the Conservative Party.

[English]

Mr. Aboulttaif, you have seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Ziad Aboulttaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** I will start with Mr. LaRose.

I think I would have loved for him to continue his testimony, as he was going down to the real cause of the problem and also the solutions that can be long-term solutions rather than a band-aid, as he probably indicated, in a way that's been the case for the last 20 years.

If we were to make a priority list of what needs to be done to start finding meaningful action to first stop what's going on in the country in terms of violence, with all the disasters the country has been going through, plus now the unrest and the kidnapping and all the implications on vulnerable communities there, especially children and women, and if I ask Mr. LaRose to give me a list of priorities for what needs to be done, sort of a road map, what will he say to us?

**Dr. Chalmers LaRose:** I had not finished my speech, but according to your question, I will say the following.

The situation in Haiti is complex, but also simple. It is a situation that has been going on for a while. The problem in Haiti is a lack of security. How now to handle the security question in Haiti is by providing resources to the security forces in Haiti.

The international community, after 1994, created a police force in Haiti and destroyed the Haitian army. The premise behind this was that the police force was sufficient to provide security to the Haitian people, but now, and as time passes, we have realized that this is not the case, and it will never be the case, given the nature of Haitian society.

What can be done as far as security is concerned in Haiti? We can provide logistic resources and build the human resources necessary for the national police. Second, in parallel, we can build the Haitian army as a security force of the second order. The combination of the two security forces should and would provide the security necessary for the Haitian force and prevent international intervention in Haiti.

**Mr. Ziad Aboulttaif:** Rebuilding the army is not as easy a task as we may think. It's going to take resources of all kinds. What do you think is the reason the international community is not really intending to go that way? Can you tell us what you think could be the reason that rebuilding the army is not on the list of things that are on the table right now?

**Dr. Chalmers LaRose:** It would take me a long time to comment on this.

I think there was a reading of the situation in Haiti that goes to the history of the army in Haiti. You have to take into account that the army we had before 1994 was built by the Americans in 1940 when they invaded Haiti. They built an army that was the kind of force that they had on the ground. This army was very much politicized in its content and also in its actions. This army also was responsible for the *coup d'état* against the elected government in Haiti in 1991.

The reading was that if we eliminate the army, democracy will prevail. In the context of the Haitian society, the army was a kind of obstacle for the emergence of democracy. They removed the army and they emphasized the police, but the police were never organized and were never sufficient to provide the security necessary in all areas of Haiti.

The problem was that for ideological, political, geopolitical and economic reasons related to the island, the army of Haiti was destroyed, leaving Haiti in a situation of a security vacuum.

• (0915)

**Mr. Ziad Aboulttaif:** Thank you for that.

Right now there are 100,000 displaced Haitians in the country. There's a health crisis with cholera and other health conditions. The education system is broken or is not there. Those situations have implications for the most vulnerable children and women. That seems to be the top priority for the international community to tackle and to work on.

On the other side, I agree. You're talking about the security issue and trying to strengthen the army or the police forces to play the role that is possible to bring back law and order.

To go back to the priorities, do you have any idea what it will take to at least deal with the health crisis and the education crisis at the moment?

**The Chair:** We'll have to allow that answer in the subsequent rounds. We've reached the seven minutes. Thank you, Mr. Aboultaif.

We'll now continue on to the Liberal Party for seven minutes, please.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'll split my time with Mr. Hanley.

I'd like to direct my question to Ms. Wienberg.

I know that you have recently returned from Haiti and that you have been spending years working on children's rights, particularly on the exploitation of children in institutions. This is something that predated the current crisis.

Could you tell us a little bit about what impact the current crisis is having in exacerbating the problems?

I will also take this moment to thank you for the incredible advocacy you're doing for the children of Haiti.

**Ms. Morgan Wienberg:** Thank you.

For some context, I lived in Haiti for over a decade and I came back to Canada at the end of September. Due to the situation in Haiti, I was forced to leave.

Even before the current crisis, as I mentioned—actually, since 2018—the Haitian government requested that no new orphanages be opened in the country, because they recognized, thanks to extensive international research, the damage that such institutions do to children. Unfortunately, due to foreign donations and volunteers, there's this false demand created for the development of institutions. We as Canadians have a responsibility to play a role in curbing that.

Due to the current crisis, children who are already being neglected and abused in orphanages are experiencing extremely dire conditions. We're receiving reports of children running away and leaving orphanages because they're not being fed. It's unclear whether these children are returning to their families or simply showing up in the streets, although social services are receiving numerous children of all ages simply unaccompanied in the streets.

There are also orphanages that are actually trafficking children in the form of displacing the children in the orphanages to safer locations because of the insecurity. However, they're doing this without informing Haitian authorities and without informing the children's parents. The majority of children in orphanages have living parents.

In addition to that, there's always a risk in times of disaster and unrest of many children being taken away from their families and going into orphanages or being abandoned into orphanages because the situation is so desperate and families are struggling.

● (0920)

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Mr. Hanley, I'll share my time.

**Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate. I'm also going to be very quick, in order to allow Monsieur Dubourg to ask a question. I know time is limited.

Morgan, I'd like to pass it back to you and again recognize your dedication over the last decade or more to the plight of children in Haiti.

I want to take a moment to look beyond stabilization of the current crisis and how we, as a country, can continue to focus on the children of Haiti and end the violence, the exploitation and the trafficking that they have been subject to over many years, even decades. Hopefully, that will continue to be at an end once we stabilize the crisis.

What's the best way that Canada can play a role? I'll ask you to describe it in a minute, more or less, so that Monsieur Dubourg has time for a question as well. Thank you.

**Ms. Morgan Wienberg:** Thank you, MP Hanley, for your question.

It's really important that we as Canadians and other foreign countries recognize our responsibility in addressing the child rights violations of children in Haiti and other similar countries, because we play a role in perpetuating the cycle of exploitation that they are experiencing.

Because of an imbalance of resources, which I mentioned, Haitian child protection authorities—primarily social services, IBESR, and the child protection brigade of the police, BPM—really struggle to enforce laws and initiatives to address child trafficking, these abusive for-profit orphanages and other child rights crises.

NGOs and foreign support are so much stronger than the resources that the government has. As a result, orphanage directors, child rapists and different child rights offenders can dismiss the government because they're able to continue receiving support that allows them to either bribe or threaten their victims and at times bribe and threaten the government as well.

It's important that we ensure that our citizens are educated on this topic, that they're supporting families and communities as opposed to institutions, and that all Canadian organizations are working in alignment with the Haitian child protection authorities.

**The Chair:** For the last minute, go ahead, please, Mr. Dubourg.

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.):** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

[Translation]

Thank you to the witnesses for participating in our study.

My first question is for you, Mr. LaRose.

Thank you for your opening statement.

This is a committee on human rights. According to some reports on the current situation in Haiti, 10-year-olds are being raped in front of their parents and more than 85,000 pregnant women don't have access to services. Your way of dealing with all that is to strengthen police capacity.

What do you recommend we do immediately, because help is urgently needed in Haiti?

**Dr. Chalmers LaRose:** Thank you for your question, sir.

I understand that your committee's focus is human rights. To look at the Haitian problem through that lens is the wrong approach. Of course, human rights in Haiti is a vitally important issue. Extreme human rights abuses are happening in Haiti, as they are all over the world. Human rights are at risk in various places across the globe.

• (0925)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Mr. LaRose, could you please just give us one last sentence and then close it up? We've reached our time.

[*Translation*]

**Dr. Chalmers LaRose:** The international community must continue to engage with Haiti in order to protect human rights and help those who are suffering.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. LaRose.

Over to you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being with us and taking part in this extremely important study.

Mr. LaRose, I'm going to follow up on the question Mr. Dubourg asked you. You said that approaching the current crisis in Haiti from a human rights standpoint would be the wrong thing to do. You said that, although Haitians were suffering extreme human rights abuses, the crisis in Haiti called for a different approach.

**Dr. Chalmers LaRose:** Addressing the problem from a human rights standpoint is always an exercise in damage control, as it's called. It's a band-aid solution. It covers up the wound, but it doesn't fix the problem. It's a superficial response that doesn't address the underlying issue. What Haiti needs desperately right now is a solution to its security problem. Once that's been dealt with, the focus can shift to human rights violations.

Resolving the crisis in Haiti requires a phased approach. The immediate focus has to be on putting out the fire. Once that's done, related issues will need to be addressed, followed by the most complex issues. The strategy, as far as I'm concerned, has to be to put out the fire, first, and, then, to deal with issues such as the food crisis, the human rights crisis and the energy crisis. The focus can shift to all of that once insecurity is no longer a problem.

I think Haitians, themselves, should be the ones to address the security crisis. In other words, we should provide Haitian security forces with the equipment and logistical support they need to respond to the security crisis in Haiti. From there, we can put the security problem in Haiti back on the table, by increasing the size of security forces and, at the same time, mobilizing Haiti's armed

forces. They are the ones who should be ensuring the country's security, not foreign forces.

In my view, that's what is important.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Mr. LaRose, we're faced with two contradictory views, as we've seen in recent weeks. On one hand, the Haitian government has asked for help, and the U.S. is calling for an intervention force, even asking the Canadian government to lead the force. On the other hand, people argue that Haitians, themselves, have to be the ones to resolve the crisis, that a Haitian solution is the only way to resolve the current crisis. In other words, the solution must fully take into account the sovereignty of the people.

Can you tell us more about outside actors or international powers that are influencing the events in Haiti right now?

Is there a direct connection with the issue before us?

**Dr. Chalmers LaRose:** Yes, there most certainly is. From the outset, there has been a direct connection between domestic and outside forces, in Haiti. That's why I began my presentation by providing some context on how the country of Haiti came to be. That history has had enormous ramifications when it comes to the relationship between domestic and outside forces. The country was completely shut out from the rest of the world for at least a century. During the geopolitical struggle between 1900 and 1915, the Americans came into Haiti and established an army, as well as a whole society, that catered to them.

Consider the sequence of events following the collapse of the Duvalier regime in 1986 up to the U.S.'s intervention in 1994 and the return of President Aristide. Those events led to the intervention of the UN, which provided its support.

As someone who researches international relations, I would say a conscious and rational effort was made not to give Haiti the ability to deal with its own security. A totally disjointed security apparatus was established in Haiti. What was the motive behind that? I have no idea.

Why does the international community always think it should intervene in Haiti when there's a security problem? Why not let Haiti, itself, find a lasting solution to its security problem?

Those are the questions we should be asking.

• (0930)

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** In that case, what role should Canada play?

Is it better not to intervene, than to intervene?

Is there a way to intervene that wouldn't undermine Haiti's sovereignty?

**Dr. Chalmers LaRose:** Thank you for the question, sir.



Since you are asking me a question about Canada's foreign policy, I would say that with regard to the Haitian issue, Canada must develop a measured and respectful foreign policy. Canada should also find its own way in this crisis and not simply seek to be a subcontractor for the United States.

It is essential for Canada's approach to reflect its own values, its own vision of human rights, security and the world. It must not lag behind the United States in trying to solve a problem in Haiti.

I think that, currently, Canada cannot afford to develop a capricious foreign policy, that is, to try to develop a power policy, which would not necessarily be in keeping with the nature and traditions of Canadian policy.

Canada cannot take the lead in intervening in Haiti, as this would be counterproductive and run counter to its own morals.

That said, in my opinion, Canada should continue to develop normalized relations with Haitian society through its traditional policy instruments; in other words, its organizations, the projects it develops in Haiti and its support for Haitian police. At the same time, in my opinion, if Canada deems it necessary, it could also focus on the issue of Haiti's armed forces to try to remobilize them.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. LaRose.

[*English*]

For the last questioner, we have Monsieur Boulerice.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses for being here with us today as part of this important study.

Québec has had a privileged relationship with Haiti for several years. Many Quebecers in Canada are of Haitian origin. There are therefore many institutions, especially in Montréal, some of which are in my riding of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, which I must highlight. We have the Bureau de la communauté haïtienne de Montréal and the Centre N A Rive. There's also the Maison d'Haïti, which is not my riding, but it is not far and has a representative who will come and speak to us soon.

These emotional and geographic connections with Haiti are such that the horrible situation the country is going through is even more painful to watch. It hurts us as Montrealers and Quebecers.

We are seeing a state fail on every level. Many things have been said. For my part, I want to emphasize security and a transitional government that will move towards elections. The priority, I think, is citizens' security. Nothing can be done if people are constantly attacked, murdered, raped, threatened and kidnapped. Corruption and street gangs are both very serious problems. On the New Democrat side, our conclusion is that we want to ensure stability and security for the Haitian people by and for Haitians, without imposing anything.

What concrete role can Canada play to promote stability and return to greater security for all Haitians, without interference?

I'd like to hear from all three witnesses on this.

Mr. Auguste, would you like to start?

• (0935)

**Mr. Patrick Auguste:** Thank you, Mr. Boulerice.

To re-establish trust, I propose that, first of all, Canada publicly admit guilt on behalf of the international community for the harm done during previous interventions. I am talking about trust with transparency.

The second step would be to work as a team, by creating a joint committee that includes foreign representatives. Canada could take the lead, and it could include local Haitian representatives—more than just government authorities. This joint committee could be open to the general public and the Haitian diaspora. A dozen people could be around the table to really lead this initiative. Starting with mistakes made in the past, everyone must make an admission of guilt and make an effort and arrive at some improvement.

Concretely, when it comes to security, I think the gangs, among others, play a political role. If we succeed in reestablishing a climate of trust, the gangs and guns will mostly fall silent, in my opinion.

Now, how do we move forward on the ground? We have to reinforce institutions and Haitian police. We need a plan for three, four or five years. For example, we have to reinforce justice, which is on its knees, and give people some space by freeing the streets, little by little.

What will be the result? We could succeed, over a period of three to five years, in putting this country back on the right track. However, every single actor will have to make an admission of guilt. Right now, they're all blaming each other: foreigners; the United States; Haitians; people from the Duvalier era, who are still there; the people from Aristide's new era, who are there. They're all accusing each other and they are all guilty. No one is perfect.

I think that this approach will reassure youth and the diaspora, and encourage everyone to work together. The Haitian problem cannot be solved by any single one of these parties, and especially not only on the Haitian side.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Wienberg, I would like to hear your opinion on the issue of security and the role Canada could play to contribute to stabilizing the Haitian state.

[*English*]

**Ms. Morgan Wienberg:** Thank you for the question.

I think that security has been raised. In my opinion, we do need to address the human rights issues, which are critical, at the same time as we address security and consider the long-term impacts of our interventions.

We are talking about over 100,000 internally displaced people. These are not people living in shelters; these are people completely exposed in public locations. They are dying of famine and all of the human rights violations we talked about. These need to be addressed immediately. This is why people on the ground who would not favour an international intervention are actually asking for it. It's because they are so desperate for some relief.

However, as we address these immediate needs, we need to keep in mind the long-term impacts, which is a mistake that has been made in the past with international interventions. The Haitian government cannot be the voice that foreign governments are listening to, because it's very clear that the Haitian government is not acting in the interests of the Haitian people.

I love the previous witness's idea of involving community leaders—not just Haitian authorities, but civil society as well—who are already active in helping their communities in times like this with the very minimal means they have.

We also have to make sure that we're building the capacity and—I think Mr. LaRose also mentioned—addressing the security issue. Just removing the gangs will not resolve the root cause of the issue. There are influential families and politicians who are puppeteering these gangs. They are paying citizens to protest and cause chaos and roadblocks in their communities. If we don't have sanctions against those individuals, we will see this same situation repeated again and again after the humanitarian crisis is seemingly resolved.

We really have to look at that.

• (0940)

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you, Ms. Wienberg.

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds left.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** I want to highlight the interesting suggestions made by Ms. Wienberg and Mr. Auguste. They will help us continue this study constructively.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Boulerice.

We will now suspend the sitting for a few seconds. Before that, however, I would like to thank all the witnesses for being here today. You may submit an additional 10-page brief.

[English]

If you want to do that, it will be translated and published on our website. However, everything you have said has been included in evidence and will be used for our work.

We will suspend just for a minute, not longer, and continue to our second panel.

• (0940)

(Pause)

• (0945)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** We will now resume the meeting.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

We'll begin with Philippe Dieudonné, master of project management, who has joined us in person and will be testifying as an individual. We also have Chantale Ismé, a feminist activist and community researcher at the Coalition haïtienne au Canada contre la dictature en Haïti.

Mr. Dieudonné, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Mr. Philippe Dieudonné (Master of Project Management, As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the committee, good morning.

I'll spare you having to listen to me on matters that have already come up here and talk instead about the impact of insecurity on the lives of the Haitian people.

The current insecurity is a consequence of poor governance and a people in dire straits because of the absence of social and economic investment on their behalf. When people are left uneducated and children have to fend for themselves on the street, the outcome is inevitably insecurity and the end result is a host of industrial-strength delinquents. I'm talking about thieves, assassins and kid-nappers who run a reign of terror to subsist, in the pockets of the powerful: state leaders, political leaders and even corrupt businessmen. Unfortunately, those in power use these vulnerable children to enforce the reign of terror and maintain chaos to defend their own interests.

There is a dilemma with respect to foreign intervention, meaning that some people are opposed to it and others support it. Those who are against it give a variety of reasons: French colonization, American occupation, the American intervention of 1994, the cholera that resulted from the MINUSTAH, dysfunctional institutions, etc. These positions are sometimes justified, but one might well ask what was done at the national level to stop these hardships from continuing to demoralize the country.

You are already aware of all the people being displaced, and the killings that have been happening lately. There is a serious shortage of responsible leaders. The Haitian people are left to their own devices. There is no guidance and no real control over the country. Without wishing to repeat myself, there is no oxygen or dialysis available in hospitals, no drinking water, nothing. You can't even buy water, a basic need. Nothing works in Haiti.

I'm going to tell you about my suggestion. I think I've heard everything here, but there's a much more important proposal. If there is to be an intervention, it would require a transitional structure made up of capable and honest sons and daughters from the Haitian diaspora. It takes real technicians who are prepared to play a role in implementing something like the Marshall plan. Why not? There are resources in Haiti. Let's develop medium-term, rather than immediate, win-win agreements to at least enable Haiti to develop ways of addressing our problem.

If a full-scale military intervention were needed and Canada was to participate, it would have to make sure of a number of things.

Firstly, it would have to be a full-scale military intervention guided by national authorities, and by honest, capable and upright people from the Haitian diaspora who would engage in the mission to guide it.

After that, enough soldiers would be necessary to truly deal with the short-term insecurity problem.

It would also be important to avoid becoming a victim of information asymmetry. There's a lot of talk, it's true.

It would have to involve soldiers who are not from countries where they were used to receiving \$2,000 or \$3,000 a year. If they come to Haiti, they're going to receive \$2,000 or \$3,000 a month. And what will they do? They'll start over. They'll arm the gangs as they did in the past, to be able to stay in the country. That will further aggravate the gang problem. That's not what we want. We want to work together. So it takes soldiers to be there on a short-term mission, as I just said, to quickly improve the situation.

There would also have to be serious sanctions on those who do not comply with values commensurate with rights and freedoms, like pedophiles.

Drones and other weapons will have to be used to capture the bandits. The international community certainly has the power to do that. Just recently, an Iranian general was struck by a drone; the Haitian gangs would not be able to avoid them.

● (0950)

Drones can find them, put them out of business and block their sources. The funds and bank accounts of people in civil society, business people and politicians can be blocked from where they are sending munitions to Haiti. And 86% of weapons and ammunition are from the United States. It's therefore important to work with the United States upstream to put a stop to this situation.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Dieudonné.

We will continue now with the second witness.

Please go ahead for five minutes.

[English]

Please look at me. I'm going to give you a hand signal for one minute and for 30 seconds.

[Translation]

**Ms. Chantale Ismé (Feminist Activist and Community Researcher, Coalition Haïtienne au Canada contre la dictature en**

**Haiti):** You said, "the second witness". I didn't know who the second witness was. I had the impression there were three people.

I'd like to begin by thanking you for this invitation, and for giving me an opportunity to speak about what's happening in my home country, and in particular, to talk about the hopes of the Haitian people and what they want.

I would like to bring you, the members, a strong message from the people of Haiti, not only from within, but from the diaspora as well, about their categorical denial of any aggression there. We officially oppose any form of intervention, no matter what it might be labelled, what its content might be, or the colour of the boots it wears.

The people of Haiti are historically living with the disastrous consequences of multiple interventions since the European invasion in 1492. Examples include the genocide of the Taïnos, which led to the coming of captives from Africa, the debt imposed by France on the country's independence in 1825, the theft of the Republic of Haiti national bank's gold reserves, which have never been returned since the American occupation of 1915-34, the dispossession of the peasants and their forced and orchestrated migration, the destruction of state institutions, and the replacement of the national army by a stateless police force. The unspecified reasons for these invasions were always hidden behind vaguely expressed desires to come and help Haiti, whether to bring it civilization or to restore peace.

Today, the Core Group, under the leadership of Canada and others, would like once again to respond to an unconstitutional and illegal demand from an illegitimate government condemned by the people of Haiti, to counter insecurity and deal with the humanitarian crisis.

Needless to say, Haiti is currently facing one of its worst crises, one that is affecting every sphere of society. However, the crisis is nothing new; it is the outcome of politics imposed upon the people of Haiti through the efforts of local lackeys from the world of politics and the private business sector. The structural adjustment policies that are destroying Haiti's economy are a few examples of this. One piece of evidence for this is the recent criminal measure imposed by Ariel Henry's government to increase the price of fuel by 128% on a people already in distress, at the request of the International Monetary Fund, supported by the Core Group.

For over 20 years, the Canadian Armed Forces and police forces like the RCMP have been part of the various United Nations peace-keeping missions to Haiti, including the United Nations mission in Haiti, UNMIH, in 1993, and the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti, BINUH, in 2019. The role of this most recent force in the country until 2022 was to promote and strengthen political stability and good governance, police professionalism, reduced community violence, and gang violence.

The outcomes of all these missions were inconclusive. They did not achieve any results in terms of their own objectives. Not only that, but all they brought to the people was suffering and an increase in vulnerability: rape, fatherless children, prostitution. Those who perpetrated these crimes were never arrested, or required to appear in court.

We wonder about the sudden desire to stamp out this crisis, which arose out of the policy implemented in Haiti by the countries of the Core Group, including Canada, which never took into consideration the demands of the Haitian masses, and which observed a deathly silence in the face of the abuses of all kinds they had to bear.

Nothing was ever said about the massacres, the hundreds of kidnappings that ruined the middle class, further pauperizing the working classes, casting doubt and despair on families; nothing was ever said about the systematic and savage repression of demonstrators and others by the national police established under the tutelage of the Canadian Forces; nothing was said about initiatives to federate and give legal status to the very gangs we want to fight today; nor was anything said about the massive influx of weapons and ammunition from the United States. The list is endless.

In light of these facts, the Coalition haïtienne au Canada contre la dictature en Haïti, the CHCDH, in keeping with the desires of the people of Haiti, are asking the Canadian government to resist any form of intervention in Haiti that risks provoking genocide in working-class neighbourhoods under the control of heavily armed gangs; to stop supporting the illegitimate government of Ariel Henry; to stop providing indirect support to gangs through government puppets, including Ariel Henry's; to support a Haitian solution to the systematically ignored crisis, including the Montana accord that brought together the strengths of the nation, the outcome of a broader consensus that advocated a clean break.

The CHCDH is also asking the Canadian government to co-operate in respect and dignity towards Haiti's constitution and sovereignty, based on real needs expressed by local stakeholders, through technical assistance from the national police and training in human rights, through support for the judicial system to bring justice to the population in connection with the many different massacres and the misappropriation of the PetroCaribe fund, and through support for the reparations demands of families who have recorded 10,000 deaths from cholera and 800,000 infections.

• (0955)

Honourable members, the people of Haiti, who are still standing and fighting despite hundreds of years of being denied justice and suffering from glaring social inequalities, exhort you to listen and respect their will.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Ismé, for your testimony.

[English]

**Ms. Anita Vandebeld:** I have a point of order—

**The Chair:** Right now we're having bells ringing.

**Ms. Anita Vandebeld:** Yes.

**The Chair:** I ask for everyone's indulgence to continue for 15 minutes. We'll entertain questions and answers. Is that good with everybody?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** We're going to have a fast round. With the unanimous consent we have from everyone here, we will continue on for 15 minutes sharp. That gives everybody just under four minutes.

We're going to start with the Conservative Party. Mr. Viersen, you have four minutes, please.

• (1000)

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Thank you.

Chantale, I'm not exactly clear on what your specific ask is. You don't want intervention, and yet we want to bring stability to the region. How do we do that? Is Canada uniquely qualified in some way around this?

[Translation]

**Ms. Chantale Ismé:** Thank you for your question.

If I've understood you correctly, you want to know what, concretely, I'm proposing, and whether Canada alone can come up with the solution I am putting forward. As I am addressing members of Parliament in Canada, I have been focusing on what Canada can do. Of course, others besides Canada can also play a role.

I'm suggesting respecting areas of expertise. Haiti is often described as a failed country. But there is expertise of various kinds in Haiti, even in matters of security. What's missing are the material and logistical resources. In terms of cooperation, what we're asking Canada to do is provide coaching, for example training a special force in the national police, accompanied by appropriate material and logistical resources.

Human rights education would also be required. People tend to forget that the police are also infringing human rights in Haiti. We therefore need this kind of training too.

I haven't come here to give you a diagnosis. That's already been done in Haiti by human rights organizations and many other organizations. In the short term, what I'm asking for is respectful cooperation in connection with our dignity and real needs. These real needs can be explained by local stakeholders. It would be important to sit down with Haitians in order to know how to intervene and what form it might take.

[English]

**The Chair:** You have a minute and a half left, Mr. Viersen.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Philippe, are there foreign interests that are driving some of the instability in Haiti?

[Translation]

**Ms. Chantale Ismé:** Definitely. That's what we're here to tell you about. For example, it used to be possible to go to Varreux, where there are fuel reserves. Yesterday, the national police went there and opened the area. Why now and not before? Right now, all the factories are closing and there are international interests at play. So resources can be found to get things done. The people of Haiti are now living through the end result of problems that have existed for years.

What we're saying is we now need to listen to what Haitians want, to address the needs and desires of the Haitian people, and to stop catering to the interests of international players and their lackeys. I said international, but there are also Haitian oligarchs and a Haitian bourgeoisie who support these interests.

[English]

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Okay, I get that, but are there outside forces, though, that are coming in and driving the instability in Haiti?

**The Chair:** Please answer in just a sentence or two.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Maybe say yes or no.

[Translation]

**Ms. Chantale Ismé:** In the past, governments, including the Parti haïtien Tèt Kale, or the PHTK, brought in foreign forces to quash uprisings by protesters and prevent the people of Haiti from rebelling against the status quo. I'm not a specialist in matters like this, so I'm not sure I can fully answer your question.

• (1005)

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Viersen and Madame Ismé.

[Translation]

We're going to continue now with Mr. Dubourg, who has four minutes.

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

I'd like to thank the witnesses for having agreed to appear before the committee today. Their participation in our study is very important.

Ms. Ismé, I'm going to ask you the same question I asked earlier.

We're told that at the moment, there are over 85,000 pregnant women who are not receiving any services and that children under 10 years of age are being raped in front of their parents.

You spoke about the expertise of Haitians and Haiti's national police, the PNH. And yes, Canada did contribute to the training of PNH members.

You put forward some solutions. What should we be doing to defend the human rights of Haitians?

**Ms. Chantale Ismé:** Thank you for your question, Mr. Dubourg.

In my view, the first thing required is to stop supporting the current government, because it doesn't have the political will to solve the problems and that, precisely, is the heart of the matter. Unless the national police receives orders from the chief of the national police supreme council, the CSPN, it can't take any action.

The top priority is to get rid of this puppet government which was set up by foreign entities rather than by the Haitian people.

Then, I would reiterate that there are specialists in such areas in Haiti. The trouble is that they don't have the material and logistical resources. They need some mentoring in terms of training and practice. The national police needs to be structured in such a way that

technical and tactical special units can be trained to respond quickly to circumstances.

Haitians should be dealing with the situation.

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** Thank you, Ms. Ismé.

As I have only a limited amount of speaking time, I'll have to go a little faster.

**Ms. Chantale Ismé:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** You spoke about the situation for political leaders in Haiti and the Montana accord. I have in fact heard that those participating in this accord are at each other's throats.

I'm aware of the fact that you are very much involved in welcoming immigrants who come to Canada.

What can we do in the short term to give hope to Haitians and young people who want to help develop their country?

**Ms. Chantale Ismé:** It's hard to give a short answer, Mr. Dubourg.

The Haitian question is not just about the military. That's one of the reasons we are against a military intervention, along with the other factors I previously mentioned. You can't solve a humanitarian crisis by means of an occupation.

The humanitarian crisis needs to be addressed. Most of the young people who are in gangs have lost hope and are simply being used by the oligarchs, the people in power.

Another aspect of the crisis also needs to be addressed. This aspect requires a form of co-operation that does more than simply hand out things like oil and bags of wheat.

As your speaking time is limited, I can't go into further detail. For example, because of the crisis, it's possible to buy staples that are beginning to rot from farmers. It's important to be creative while respecting what we want and relying on local workarounds.

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** Thank you, Ms. Ismé.

I have a final yes or no question for you.

**The Chair:** Briefly, Mr. Dubourg.

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** Are you in agreement on what sanctions should be imposed on corrupt people in Haiti?

**The Chair:** A yes or no answer please, Ms. Ismé.

**Ms. Chantale Ismé:** Yes, insofar as it is done jointly with the new Haitian government.

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** Thank you very much, Ms. Ismé.

**The Chair:** We will now continue with Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here. Their testimony has been truly interesting and informative about the complexity of the situation.

Competing views are held by others in Haiti and in the Haitian diaspora.

Mr. Dieudonné, are you in favour of an intervention or not?

**Mr. Philippe Dieudonné:** In fact, I'm not altogether in favour of an intervention. I'd say that if we have to intervene, it should be as the outcome of a common agreement with a traditionally structured committee consisting of daughters and sons of Haiti and the diaspora who have expertise, and technical people. We could also negotiate true agreements with those who wish to intervene and local people who would meet initially to deal with firearms issues.

It's true that there's a social problem, but what's causing the social problem? Why does the problem keep getting worse? It's because there are too many armed gangs who have international weapons and ammunition. The gangs have to be stopped at the source, upstream.

At the same time, there should be a joint intervention with specialists from Haiti and specialists from abroad, like Canada, to eradicate the problem. It can be stamped out and it can be targeted. Once two, three, four, or five gangs have begun to fall apart, I'm convinced that the others will get the message that it's the wrong way to go. At the same time, Haiti needs to develop.

It's important to learn from interventions that have been successful, and from recent UN missions that succeeded in places like Liberia, East Timor and Côte d'Ivoire. We've seen how they handled these matters. They succeeded because one state provided guidance for the missions, with the technical portion administered by independent structures.

• (1010)

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I'd like to give the floor to Ms. Ismé.

I really appreciated your comments, Ms. Ismé.

Right now, do you have the impression that the Canadian government supported the very Haitian government that everyone is now denouncing?

**The Chair:** You have a minute left.

**Ms. Chantale Ismé:** Yes, that's correct, it's one of the criticisms made by most of the Haitian people on whose behalf I am speaking. There are some who are disagree, but not the majority.

We are censuring the Canadian government and other members of the Core Group for their unconditional support of the Haitian government, which is in different to the suffering of its own people, and contributing, through its inaction, to this ever-worsening crisis.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** You believe that one of the first thing that has to be done is for the Canadian government to completely cut off support to the current government in Haiti?

**Ms. Chantale Ismé:** Exactly.

It's not only my view, but also of most of the Haitian people in the street demanding it.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses for their comments.

**Mr. Philippe Dieudonné:** I would just like to add that I don't believe there is a government in Haiti at the moment.

**The Chair:** We're now going to give the floor to Mr. Boulerice for four minutes.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for joining us today.

Ms. Ismé, I'm very pleased to see that someone from Maison d'Haïti has come to testify in connection with this important study being conducted by the Subcommittee on International Human Rights.

I'll continue to discuss what you said about how the Canadian government should stop supporting the Haitian government that you consider to be illegitimate.

A little earlier, we heard a lot about proposals to establish a national dialogue with the opposition forces and the prime movers of civil society.

What kind of mentoring work can the Canadian government do to effect this expected transition, which could take the form of new elections and a government that is more representative of the national will of Haitians?

**Ms. Chantale Ismé:** First, given the current state of decay in the Haitian crisis, we can't really talk about elections. That's virtually a consensus in the country. We think that this aspect of the matter needs to stay in the hands of the Haitian people. Issues concerning the constitution, the electoral calendar and the permanent electoral council are internal matters for Haiti and concern only Haitians. Canada's role would therefore be to support proposals from Haitians.

Among the structured proposals, I spoke about the Montana accord which achieved a fairly broad consensus from several active sectors of society, including peasants, workers, and both left-wing and right-wing political organizations. That's what civil society is.

That's the starting point, because what we're talking about is the women and men who showed courage over the past two years, who met and came up with a proposal to make a break with impunity, administrative chaos and corruption.

I think that now, we need to focus and allow Haitians to take the time to work on this transitional period, to prepare society for the democratic transition we are talking about. This would allow the country to have real elections that are truly democratic and representative of the needs of the Haitian people. You don't hold elections just for the fun of it; you hold elections to create a society that matches what the majority of the people want. This transitional period is very important. Not only would it give people time to solve a number of problems, but also to establish a consensus within the population. It would allow the Haitian people to reconcile with themselves. That's partly what it's about as well. These are people who have suffered many years of glaring injustices and social inequalities.

• (1015)

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** I think it's good to have this perspective in order to build solid, deep and popular foundations for a transition.

I understand that it's the right direction, Ms. Ismé, but in the shorter term, what can you suggest for problems like safety, food and the health system, so that we can help people?

We can't let this situation continue for months or years.

**Ms. Chantale Ismé:** No we can't.

That's what I was saying in the recommendations I made. It requires mentoring based on real needs. It could strengthen national production, farming and road construction. Those are all things that can be done rapidly in the short term. Humanitarian aid is required, but also for matters of safety and security. I previously mentioned that national expertise had to be mobilized, but that material and logistical resources were also required, along with training and technical advice.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you, Ms. Ismé.

**The Chair:** I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today and for their testimony.

[*English*]

This concludes our first day on Haiti.

I want to draw to everybody's attention that when we are considering the previous two sessions we've had, there was an agreement between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front.

We are now going to adjourn this meeting. We have votes within 14 minutes in the House.

[*Translation*]

Once again, thank you to all the witnesses for being here.

● (1020)

The meeting is adjourned.

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