

## Security in Haiti and the Madrid Donor Conference

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*For many years now, not only with the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship, Haiti has been breaking up politically, socially and economically. The consequences have been growing insecurity and violence, the collapse of institutions, authority and power dispersion, and widespread poverty. The international community has carried out five military interventions in the last fifteen years; nonetheless, the causes leading to these interventions, especially the government's failure to ensure the security of the population, seem to be prevalent still today. The adverse effects of these failed interventions also contribute to the current instability. Furthermore, Haiti is the most corrupt country in the world and the level of insecurity and violence has affected even the United Nations forces working in the country, with the death of two blue helmets in mid-November.<sup>1</sup> The third Donor Conference will be held in Madrid on 30 November, and is an important moment for the international community to make a long-term commitment aimed at Haiti's decisive recovery.*

### Progress towards Democracy

The electoral process is not over yet, since there are approximately a thousand posts still to be filled. Nonetheless, the election of President René Préal on 7 February 2006 has brought a certain stability that the country urgently needed. This is not unimportant, given that, since Duvalier's downfall, only one president has been able to serve a full term in office: René Préal himself (1996-2001).<sup>2</sup>

Previously, René Préal had been Prime Minister under Jean-Bertrand Aristide's administration, but, in the elections held this year, he refused to make alliances with pro-Aristide leaders belonging to the Famni Lavalas party.<sup>3</sup> His new cabinet is composed of members belonging to seven political parties, a fact that, for some, sets a precedent for a national dialogue,<sup>4</sup> and, for others, is not really significant.<sup>5</sup> In addition, it is somehow questioned whether Préal's alliances have been forged with the parties or merely with some members of these parties.<sup>6</sup> From Port-au-Prince, uncertainty over the future of current alliances is discernible.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Haiti has been ranked 163 amongst 163 countries in the 2006 Transparency International Corruption Index, 6 November, 2006, <http://www.transparency.org/>

<sup>2</sup> 'Haiti Options and Opportunities for Inclusive Growth', Country Economic Memorandum, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit. Caribbean Country Management Unit, Latin America and the Caribbean Region, World Bank, 1 June, 2006, Table 1.7, p.14.

<sup>3</sup> International Crisis Group, 'Haïti après les élections: Défis pour les 100 premiers jours de Préal', 11 May, 2006, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations, Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti*, (S/2006/592), 28 July, 2006; see also Interview with the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) for MINUSTAH, Edmond Mulet, Port-au-Prince, 6 November, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with the National Democratic Institute, Port-au-Prince, November 6, 2006

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> "Partidos insatisfechos de la formación del gabinete", Ibid.; see also Interview with the SRSG for MINUSTAH, op. cit.

The electoral process is due to be completed with the partial and municipal elections to be held on 3 December, in which more than one thousand posts will be elected. Préval's party, Lespwa (*The Hope* in Creole), forms a minority government and has no majority in the Senate or Congress. In the elections to be held in December, three Senators and 11 members of Congress will be elected, thus completing the General Assembly and perhaps affecting Lespwa's power structure and alliances. Changes are likely to be produced, and some experts think this is positive because it would create a balance of power.<sup>8</sup>

The new president is strongly supported by the population and the international community. Elections, declared free and fair by international observers, are the first important step on the path to democracy. However, the democratic process has to be gradually and internally strengthened with consistent actions carried out by the international community. On the one hand, the population has, for decades, been excluded from the decision-making process over the future of the country. On the other hand, the current Haitian transition towards a democratic culture should be acknowledged.<sup>9</sup> This involves fostering participation and providing organisations of all sorts (civil, peasant, local and regional administrative powers which, in many cases, have to be created and preserved until they are stable) with the capacity to actively participate in the national dialogue promoted by both the government and the international community.

The international community can directly contribute to this, not only by endorsing the party or alliance in office but also involving the opposition, pro-Aristide groups that have divided the country.<sup>10</sup> The relative balance of political power is the factor that most favours democratic stability.<sup>11</sup>

Hence, the third Donor Conference coincides with an important and promising moment. Expectations are very high in the society about the government as they are in the government about the donors and vice-versa. The government is more stable now as compared to the latest Donor Conference, held in Puerto Principe in July, 2006. In this regard, it is the right moment to take advantage of this opportunity and solid support to define priorities and propose specific plans and strategies so that they can be implemented and adjusted to the country's specificities. In short, the Haitian people, who are desperately awaiting visible and short-term progress, should be offered solutions. Donors must support the government's initiatives and seek a convergence of interests between local parties and the international community, which is crucial for post-conflict recovery and long and short term harmonisation.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with the National Democratic Institute, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> International Crisis Group, 'Haiti après les élections: Défis pour les 100 premiers jours de Préval', op. cit. p. 12 ; see also Interview with a representative of MINUSTAH, Port-au-Prince, 7 November, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> 'Meeting the Challenge of Peace Operations Cooperation and Coordination', Challenges Project Phase II, Concluding report 2003-2006, Stockholm: Folke Bernadotte Academy, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Susan Woodward, 'Institutionally Fragile States. Fragile States, Prevention and Post Conflict: Recommendations', in Martin Doornbos, Susan Woodward & Silvia Roque, 'Failing States or Failed States? The Role of Development Models: Collected Works, FRIDE Working Paper 19, February 2006, pp. 20-21.

<sup>12</sup> 'Meeting the Challenge of Peace Operations Cooperation and Coordination', Challenges Project Phase II, Concluding report 2003-2006, op. cit., p. 48.

### Security: a priority for all

In the last few months, several reports have revealed a certain improvement in stability and reduced violence in Haiti.<sup>13</sup> The death of two blue helmets in November represents a major setback for this alleged improvement. Cautious examination of the security situation is essential. Insecurity still exists and kidnappings, murders and outbreaks of violence, in general, are cyclical and volatile. The analysis is made even more complex by the fact that there are no accurate records on violent acts and their perpetrators, as well as a potential link with political events.<sup>14</sup> Government authorities, representatives of MINUSTAH, international NGOs, local organisations and the civil society agree that security is the number one priority in the country.

A series of events and statistics show improvements towards a safer environment and reveal there has been some progress in the fight against insecurity. On the one hand, two armed gangs announced their plan to disarm after the elections, pointing out their readiness for peace. On the other hand, the heavy presence of MINUSTAH in the most conflict-ridden neighbourhoods in the capital city, such as Cite Soleil and Martissant, as well as the relatively successful actions carried out in conjunction with the police force, are limiting the operating space of armed gangs.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, police forces are starting to patrol troubled areas without the UN military counter-part, a novelty when compared to the norm over the last couple of years. The number of participants in the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) Programme, led by MINUSTAH, has increased this year, totalling 110 candidates who have participated or are currently participating in this programme. The armed conflict, according to Marc Schneider, comprises from three to eight gangs with 20 to 80 members each (representing a maximum of 640 armed combatants)<sup>16</sup> whereas MINUSTAH has 7,200 military troops and 1,951 civil policemen in total to defuse the situation. Several experts agree that conditions are now more stable and safer.<sup>17</sup>

Even so, it is not clear whether security has actually improved. Some representatives of MINUSTAH base their opinions on the reduction in kidnappings to justify the improvement,<sup>18</sup> whereas high government representatives simply insist that the situation *has* actually improved. However, the number of arms handed over by the gangs is still very low. Therefore, the bases of this 'improvement' are questionable.

MINUSTAH's operations to limit and reduce the operating space have a secondary effect of 'criminal displacement', and the results have already been revealed

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13 'En général la situation s'était notablement améliorée, grâce à la présence accrue de la MINUSTAH dans les quartiers chauds et la réduction de la criminalité', M. Guehenemo, *Le nouveliste*, 15 November, 2006, <http://www.lenouveliste.com/article.php?PubID=&ArticleID=36512>

14 International Crisis Group, 'Haiti: Security and Reintegration of the State', 30 October, 2006, p. 4. Likewise, *The Lancet* magazine published a highly controversial article on human rights violations, Athena R. Kolbe. Royce A. Huston, 'Human rights abuse and other criminal violations in Port-au-Prince, Haiti: a random survey of households', 31 August, 2006. In response to *The Lancet*, see Duncan Campbell, 'Lancet caught up in row over Haiti murders', *The Guardian*, 8 September, 2006.

15 Marc Schneider, 'Moving forward in Haiti: How the international Community and the US Government can Help', Testimony before the Subcommittee in the Western Hemisphere, 28 September, 2006.

16 Ibid.

17 See Interview with high representatives of the Haitian government, Interview with Deputy Force Commander, MINUSTAH, and Interview with the SRSG for MINUSTAH, op. cit.

18 In August, 2006, 72 'official' kidnappings were reported in comparison to 200 in December, 2005. 'Decline in "officially" reported kidnappings ... Many families avoid police forces and resolve cases on their own', see Marc Schneider, 'Moving forward in Haiti: How the international Community and the US Government can Help', op. cit.; and International Crisis Group, 'Haiti: Security and Reintegration of the State', op. cit., Appendix B.

through robberies and kidnappings in Petionville.<sup>19</sup> This 'displacement' of violent individuals and criminals could postpone, and maybe intensify, the problem in the future once the armed forces pull out.

The number and calibre of arms is alarming. It is almost impossible to know the exact number of arms used or controlled by the gangs, but it is estimated from 6,000 to 13,000 arms of different calibres.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, these only account for a fraction of the 210,000 arms which are estimated to exist in the country.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the access to arms is greater and has grown in the last couple of years.<sup>22</sup> Smuggling has also increased and certain entry points, such as Port-au-Prince Airport and ports, are in effect open doors. These activities related to the arms market, illegal traffic and easy access and movement promote and facilitate their use. Likewise, kidnappings have been and are a key issue since they are a highly profitable and immediate activity to purchase arms and ammunition.

### **The entrenchment of violence**

During the two years of interim administration, no measures were taken against growing violence, which have disastrous results.<sup>23</sup> Violence has risen amongst groups with political motives, such as pro-Aristide groups calling for his return,<sup>24</sup> and amongst criminal armed gangs. These gangs have taken advantage of the power vacuum to prosper. Violence is becoming entrenched, not only due to neglected political demands, but also due to increasing criminal activities in the context of an absent state and the lack of socioeconomic development.<sup>25</sup> As long as a very young population does not have access to education and employment, armed gangs will continue to exist.<sup>26</sup>

These armed gangs occupy a greater physical, social and economic space in the suburban districts and remain highly present in the population's daily life.<sup>27</sup> Gangs fulfil basic needs which the absent State does not, such as protection,<sup>28</sup> and they even apply a certain kind of justice in the district.<sup>29</sup> In some cases, there are signs that some 'micro-societies' have been structured within shantytowns. As a result, women and children are the most affected and their role has gained importance within the districts and serving armed gangs.<sup>30</sup> It would not be surprising to see 'children soldiers' or even criminal children in the near future.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Marc Schneider, 'Moving forward in Haiti: How the international Community and the US Government can Help', op. cit.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with a DDR expert, MINUSTAH, Port-au-Prince, 9 November, 2006. On the other hand, the report 'The call for tough arms controls. Voices from Haiti', Amnesty International, IANSA and Oxfam, 9 January, 2006, p.7, estimates that armed gangs use up to 13,000 arms of different calibres: firearms, submachine guns and automatic rifles (M1, M14, M16, Galils and T65).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p.13.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with a DDR expert, MINUSTAH, op. cit.

<sup>23</sup> Amnesty International, IANSA and Oxfam, op. cit., p.16

<sup>24</sup> Demonstrations held by Aristide supporters in Cite Soleil to call for his return on 10 November, supported by one of the main gangs led by Amaral Duclana. *Le nouveliste*, 17 November, 2006, <http://www.lenouveliste.com/article.php?PubID=&ArticleID=36581>

<sup>25</sup> Action Aid, 'Désarmement, démobilisation et réintégration: quel devrait être le rôle de l'UE en Haiti', October, 2006, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> International Crisis Group, 'Haiti: Security and Reintegration of the State', op. cit.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with a DDR expert, MINUSTAH, op. cit.

<sup>28</sup> Depending on the armed group, kidnapping ransoms feed the district controlled by the group. Interview with the Director of QIFD, 10 November, 2006. See also International Crisis Group, 'Haiti: Security and Reintegration of the State', op. cit., p.5, note 20.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Spanish Sisters who have been working in Cite Soleil for 30 years.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with a DDR representative, MINUSTAH, op. cit.

<sup>31</sup> Story on the ambitions of two Cite Soleil boys who want to belong to the security forces of one of the largest armed groups in Cite Soleil when they grow up. Interview with the Director of QIFD, op. cit.

## Challenges to MINUSTAH

The United Nations mission, sent in June 2004, has a broad mandate in response to a country whose state is incapable of ensuring its citizens' security and where a huge power vacuum has been created. Peace operation mandates in countries characterised by state absence or weakness comprise a range of tasks that go beyond traditional training and responsibilities of the troops, soldiers and civil policemen.<sup>32</sup> A clear example of these non-traditional tasks in Haiti is the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme. Challenges are huge and expectations are high. MINUSTAH has the responsibility to restore a safe and stable environment including assisting the government with DDR programmes and restoring the rule of law, as well as assisting the political process and human rights.<sup>33</sup>

Until the presidential elections, no DDR programme had actually been implemented.<sup>34</sup> The armed conflict in Haiti is characterised by the lack of peace agreements between armed parties and the government, gangs with no identified specific claims (political and territorial, among others), an array of violent actors and the division between groups and sectors of the population. These conditions have hindered the application of a typical DDR process.<sup>35</sup> MINUSTAH was forced to change its approach after Resolution 1702, which prescribes the re-orientation of its efforts towards pursuing a violence-reduction strategy based on comprehensive community approach, and to adapt to the complicated Haitian situation.<sup>36</sup>

In the first place, MINUSTAH's role is to support the new National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (CNDDR). The Commission, reformed under Préval's government, has improved its structure, credibility and power, and is now authorised to negotiate directly with the gangs and communicate directly with the President.<sup>37</sup> This Commission has given a positive impetus to the difficult relationship between MINUSTAH and the interim administration.

Apart from the CNDDR, the political context and the messages emerging from the government are ambiguous. On the one hand, Préval announced a 'disarm or die' policy via the media, while on the other, he is committed to dialogue.<sup>38</sup> There are widespread rumours on meetings between Préval and armed gang leaders at the National Palace. In addition, there seem to be differences in the approach to armed gangs between the President and the Prime Minister, Jacques Edouard Alexis, who is inclined to use more coercion - with no dialogue - and arrests.

On the other hand, MINUSTAH and the Haitian National Police (HNP) have created control posts in conflict-hit districts to reduce the operative areas of armed gangs and hamper the traffic of arms.<sup>39</sup> Armed individuals can demobilise and lay down arms voluntarily. MINUSTAH offers a reinsertion programme in which 57 candidates are currently participating, bringing the total so far to 110 participants. This

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<sup>32</sup> 'Meeting the Challenge of Peace Operations Cooperation and Coordination', Challenges Project Phase II, op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> United Nations, Security Council, session 4961, *Resolution 1542 (2004) Approved by the Security Council*, [S/RES/1542 (2004)], 30 April, 2004.

<sup>34</sup> International Crisis Group, 'Haiti après les élections: Défis pour les 100 premiers jours de Préval', op. cit., p.9.

<sup>35</sup> International Crisis Group, 'Haiti: Security and Reintegration of the State', op. cit., p.11.

<sup>36</sup> United Nations, Security Council, session 5513, *Resolution 1702 (2006) Approved by the Security Council*, [S/RES/1702 (2006)], 15 August, 2006.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with the National Democratic Institute, op. cit.

<sup>38</sup> *Radio Kiskeya*, 10 August, 2006.

<sup>39</sup> International Crisis Group, 'Haiti: Security and Reintegration of the State', op. cit., p.11.

programme integrates the following dimensions: to develop candidates' profiles and to train and prepare them for reintegration. At the same time, they can choose between two final options: learning a trade or accessing micro-credits to set up a small business. During the training process, candidates receive 3,000 dollars to fulfil their basic needs during the 18 months they participate in the programme.<sup>40</sup>

Through an agreement between MINUSTAH and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Committees for Development and Violence Prevention (CDVP) have been created, which represent the most innovative feature of the DDR programme. These centres, where there are experts with mediation skills, are located in conflicting areas (six in Cite Soleil and five in the rest of the country) and their mission is to create alternative spaces to violence.

Nonetheless, there are major constraints on the programmes led by MINUSTAH in its DDR division. In the first place, the reinsertion programme is planned and funded just for 1,000 places throughout the country, 600 of them in Port-au-Prince and 400 in other cities. Besides the limited funds for the number of participants, there are no funds for prevention or candidate follow-up. That is to say, neither the positive nor the negative effects and impacts of this programme are verifiable. It is difficult to know if programme candidates return to armed gangs after a while, or, in the best of cases, if they become 'rich' micro businessmen.

The economic analysis is important given that the resource a firearm represents and the minimal expectations of making a living decently after disarmament and reinsertion make many people think that disarmament is not worthy of consideration.<sup>41</sup> A small arm may cost around 1,000 dollars, but more sophisticated ones are worth from 8,000 to 10,000 dollars, which is much more than what MINUSTAH offers for basic needs in its DDR programme. Generalised social mistrust, the feeling that it is best to keep the most valuable arms for use or sale, and few lasting job opportunities impede the wider success of the DDR programme. In fact, so far, the firearms surrendered are small and in poor condition.<sup>42</sup>

The relationship between armed gangs and MINUSTAH is not ideal for the success of DDR programmes. Some sectors of the population have begun to perceive MINUSTAH's presence as negative and there have been recent demonstrations against it.<sup>43</sup> Mistrust, a sense of occupation and the lack of visible progress regarding the creation of job opportunities during the two-year MINUSTAH mission (though economic progress is not within its mandate) make armed gang members feel frustrated rather than foster an attitude towards cooperation. Finally, advances in the socioeconomic arena are also crucial to solve the problem of insecurity. Stepping up production and creating jobs - in a country where the annual average economic growth has been negative since 2001 - will do a lot to improve Haiti's security situation.<sup>44</sup>

MINUSTAH's DDR programme is important and action is needed to offer alternatives to the problem of insecurity in the short and medium term. On the other hand, restoring the rule of law (police and justice reform) is a far longer and more important process, whose positive effects would be felt in the medium and long term.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with a DDR representative, MINUSTAH, op. cit.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.; see also International Crisis Group, 'Haiti: Security and Reintegration of the State', op. cit., p.11.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with a DDR representative, MINUSTAH, op. cit.

<sup>43</sup> *Haiti Press Network*, 30 October, 2006.

<sup>44</sup> 'Haiti Options and Opportunities for Inclusive Growth', World Bank, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with UNPOL, Port-au-Prince, 8 November, 2006.

### Recommendations for the Donor Conference

Security is fundamental to every social and political actor in Haiti and also key to its recovery. Therefore, the following measures should be adopted or strengthened in the short term and be considered as part of a more global framework:

- To implement measures jointly (MINUSTAH and HNP) with the purpose of guarding and controlling borders to hamper the traffic of arms and other illegal goods which are transported with little control;
- To increase the budget to integrate reconciliation and prevention programmes so as to deal with the roots of violence and conflict and to train leaders in conflict resolution ;
- To undertake these prevention and reconciliation activities together with local counterparts who are accepted in conflict-hit districts;
- To follow-up the candidates who participated in the DDR programme to ensure they do not return to armed gangs and to offer them support after the programme;
- To link efforts between the DDR programme and local development and employment NGOs to complete the reintegration process;
- To link disarmament, violence prevention and reconciliation programmes with the creation of immediate jobs in projects provided by international cooperation and run by the government or private sector and local communities;
- To promote cooperation programmes consistent with reintegration, training and employment; and
- To keep an arms registry in conjunction with Haitian authorities, and to prohibit heavy weapons.

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