



Speech

Organization of American States



**LUIGI R. EINAUDI, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL OF
THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
ABOUT THE MISSION OF THE OAS IN HAITI AT THE
SESSION OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
October 11, 2000 - Washington, DC**

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EL PRESIDENTE: We move on to item 6—the oral report by the Assistant Secretary General on the Mission of the OAS to Haiti. I give the floor to the Assistant Secretary General.

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EL SECRETARIO GENERAL ADJUNTO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Members of the Council will recall that the Secretary General reported in September on his August mission to Haiti—a mission organized in accordance with Permanent Council resolution CP/RES. 772 (1247/00) of August 4. In that mission, he was accompanied by three members of this Council, the ambassadors of Argentina, Chile, and Venezuela; by the Assistant Secretary General of CARICOM; and by yours truly. The key finding of that mission was an acute need for dialogue to address the problems caused by the May 21 local and parliamentary elections; to improve prospects for the prospective presidential and senatorial elections; and, more generally, to strengthen democracy.

I would like to report to you very briefly on events since then. In mid-September, at the request of Foreign Minister Longchamp of Haiti, I made a very brief consultation trip to Haiti. I met with President Préval and with the head of La Fanmi Lavalas, former President Aristide. Convinced by those conversations that the Government was prepared to show some flexibility on at least a number of the points of interest to a dialogue, I returned to Haiti from September 21 to September 29. President Préval made a strong television statement welcoming the presence of the OAS, calling for dialogue among the political parties, and pledging to implement the results of such a dialogue.

During my visit, I met with a wide variety of Haitians, parties, civil society. In hopes of generating an accord, I concentrated on political parties; in particular, La Fanmi Lavalas and the major grouping of opposition parties, Convergence démocratique. For a week I shuttled, meeting alternately with the Convergence and Lavalas leaderships. In many of these meetings, I am pleased to report that I was accompanied by representatives of member and observer states, CARICOM, and the United Nations. In fact, though many of these were the representatives normally assigned to Port-au-Prince, Canada and the United States dispatched their senior officials concerned with Haiti to accompany me, and CARICOM did the mission the honor of sending former Minister Charles Maynard of Dominica as its representative.

On September 29, I left Haiti without an accord and, in fact, without even being able to bring the parties into face-to-face dialogue. This said, all parties agreed on the vital importance and need for a dialogue; the Government and La Fanmi Lavalas repeated some signs of flexibility; and the opposition began to define their positions. A possible framework for negotiation began to emerge, centered around what one might broadly call the problem of freedom and, more specifically, the problems of how to overcome past electoral difficulties and ensure successful current ones. Because of these initial signs of progress, when

I left Haiti I said that we had begun a pause for reflection.

It has been an active pause.

In both Quebec and here in Washington, I've had a chance to meet informally with a variety of Haitian delegations, with the Secretary General, of course, with diplomatic colleagues, including consultations with the United Nations and CARICOM, with members of both the U.S. Executive and Legislative branches, and I attended an informal donors' meeting for Haiti that had been convened by the World Bank. In Haiti, meanwhile, the Convergence has been further refining written expressions of its positions, and former President Aristide and Lavalas are apparently beginning to do so also. And I should note that the current Electoral Council, which is very much under fire, extended the process of registration for presidential candidates.

This activity was and is very badly needed. The differences to be overcome are still great, and time is rapidly becoming an enemy; fortunately, I think, a common enemy for all Haitian parties. In the absence of a political accord on how to resolve the differences arising from the May 21 elections and how to ensure legitimate elections for the presidency and the Senate, the schedule is clearly going to be kept: voting on November 26, which is barely six weeks away. Even if there is an accord, the provisions of that accord will need to be implemented in conformity with the Constitution of Haiti, which calls for an end to the current presidency and a transfer of power on February 7, 2001.

Because of the progress taking place on the ground and in the various contacts here and, frankly, also because of the pressure of time, I plan to return to Haiti this week, leaving tomorrow immediately after the special session of the General Assembly.

I do not know how likely it is that Haiti's political forces will actually be able to reach an agreement, but I would like to draw your attention to one very important point. If the parties do agree on how to approach the very different problems that are posed by May 21 and November 26, that will inevitably have important implications for this organization and for its member states.

We will, for example, probably need to develop and lead a follow-up mechanism to accompany Haiti's efforts, perhaps taking as a model the efforts that the Secretary General and the Foreign Minister of Canada have developed in Peru with a permanent secretary and a mission, though not large, nonetheless of critical importance.

We will certainly also need to prepare active technical and observational support for a new Electoral Council. There will be no agreement without a new Electoral Council, and this in turn will need the support of the international community in order to increase the confidence of all concerned that what has been agreed to will, in fact, be complied with.

Let me just quickly say that I am very grateful to Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United States which, as far as I'm aware, are the only three countries that have made contributions so far to enable this mission to be carried forth and, of course, to the governments of Argentina, Chile, and Venezuela, and to CARICOM, who defrayed the costs of their accompanying the Secretary General in August.

Finally, let me say that the current political difficulties in Haiti come in the midst of an economic downturn and social tensions that are making life there increasingly difficult. The OAS is in the forefront of international efforts to help Haiti, and a great deal is riding on our efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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