

Speech

Organization of American States



**LUIGI R. EINAUDI, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL OF
THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
PROTOCOLARY SESSION IN HONOUR OF THE PRIME
MINISTER OF THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT OF
HAITI, H.E. GERARD LATORTUE
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Mr. Prime Minister,

Secretary General Gavia has asked me to welcome you, on his behalf and on behalf of the entire General Secretariat, to this House of the Americas. The Chair has well described the difficult and complex situation faced by both Haiti and the international community, especially this Organization. The progressive crisis that began with seriously flawed local and parliamentary elections in May 2000 ultimately led to a series of open breaches of Haiti's constitutional order with regard to both the legislative and executive branches. This Organization, and the Secretary General, who asked me to assume the day to day lead, made every effort to forestall these breaches. Conditions were such that we could not come to a successful conclusion.

Out of the political crisis of late February, you became the consensus choice of a remarkable cross section of Haitian society, which recommended you to the provisional president for designation to the post you now hold. Indeed, you were chosen as the candidate considered best capable of reconciling acute differences and bridging the polarized situation existing in the country.

As a development economist with a distinguished record of international service, in particular with the United Nations you bring to bear a lifetime of experience with the intractable problems of development that are at the heart of Haiti's pain.

The fact that you were not identified with any political party and that you made clear that your only desire was to place the best technical service that you could at the disposal of your country, added to the confidence that Haitian political and civil society placed in you.

These elements also served to bolster the general hope that you would focus the government you head on the immediate technical needs, of Haiti without attempting to take decisions that rightly belong to the Haitian people and that must be made manifest through the democratic expression of their electoral rights.

Mr. Prime Minister, the OAS has worked for democracy in Haiti over the past decade and more. To help solve the political challenges arising out of the May 2000 elections, the OAS exhorted the Government of Haiti, continuously, to spare no effort to guarantee the effective participation of all the country's political currents. We repeat that exhortation today. The OAS supports the democratic rights of expression and the freedom to organize and compete in elections of all citizens in all countries of these Americas. We expect that in the spirit of the Inter American Democratic Charter, and in the spirit of the CARICOM Charter on Civil Society, the interim government of Haiti will apply the same principles to all, regardless of political persuasion or of political perspectives of the past. All law abiding citizens are entitled to these rights and freedoms.

It is against this background, Mr. Prime Minister that you will appreciate the extent to which the remarks attributed to you in Gonaives on March 20 surprised and disturbed many. Our member states favor inclusive and non-violent solutions. They believe that there can be no place in the national task of reconstruction and reconciliation for groups armed outside the law and convicted

criminals.

When in June of 1988, as Foreign Minister of an elected but ultimately itself transitional government you addressed a Protocolary session of this council, you said that Haiti was determined to emerge from the isolation in which it had found itself, stressing « nous avons été complètement en dehors de la scène politique internationale, tant au niveau de l'ensemble de l'amérique latine, qu'au niveau de l'ensemble de la caraïbe ». Those sentiments were to be repeated sixteen years later by the Prime Minister Patterson of Jamaica when, last January, at a time that he was serving as chair of the conference of heads of government of CARICOM, he told me that breaking that isolation and effectively integrating Haiti with its Caribbean Community neighbours would prove vital to the stability, democracy, and peaceful development of Haiti. And, I would add, that equally vital now are Haiti's relations with the only other country in the Americas whose independence preceded its own, the United States, with whom Haiti has historical reciprocal influences. And knowing the unique character of Haiti, we feel sure that she is capable of making a success of integration, with the Caribbean, with North, South and Central America without abandoning or sacrificing either her sovereignty or her rich African and French heritage.

Mr. Prime Minister, the OAS looks forward to full participation by Haiti in the inter-American system. Since you assumed office, we have welcomed the participation by your Minister of Women's Affairs in the Fourth Meeting of Ministers and High-Ranking Authorities Responsible for Policies on Women in the Member States (REMIM) and by your Minister of Justice at the Fourth Meeting of the Ministers of Justice of the Americas (REMJA). We are pleased to note that Haiti will also be represented in the seminar on the identification, collection, stockpile management, and destruction of small arms and light weapons which the government of Nicaragua will host next week with support from the OAS and with funding from Brazil, Canada, and the United States.

Mr. Prime minister, the Chair has indicated that this Permanent Council intends to continue its discussions on the precise parameters for OAS involvement and particularly, that of the OAS Special Mission for Strengthening Democracy in Haiti, in the months ahead. Since April 2002 when it was established, the Chief of Mission and his staff have developed working relationships across the entire spectrum of Haitian political, organizational and institutional life in the mandated work areas of justice, security, governance and human rights. It also created a framework for police professionalization and support for a neutral Haitian National Police.

With resolution 1542 adopted last week, the UN Security Council has set out clearly and thoroughly the tasks that need to be carried out in Haiti, and offers a course for doing so. The UN resolution again calls upon the international community "to continue to assist and support the economic, social and institutional development of Haiti over the long term", and welcomes the intention of the Organization of American States and CARICOM, among others, to participate in those efforts. In this new phase, we in the General Secretariat await our Member States' early consideration of how best to continue the regional role of the OAS and the Organization's tested experience in Haiti in elections, governance and human rights.

Perhaps, Mr. Prime Minister, it would indeed be a sign of emergence from isolation, if, at the conclusion of the mandate of the UN Stabilization Mission, among other achievements, Brazil and France would have done such an excellent job that they would also have helped to develop a solid Haitian rival in the race for the football World Cup, or if, say, the United States inspired Haiti to produce baseball players like the Dominican Republic, or CARICOM participation could have the added effect of developing among Haitian youth an interest in cricket.

Mr. Prime Minister, we are fully aware that in the time which you have set for what you have described as your government's « titanic task », you will only be able to establish the bases for positive movement in the right direction. But we are confident that you understand what is required of your government and that you can and will exert the required leadership and lay solid groundwork for those who will inherit your mantle.

In this the year of Haiti's 200th anniversary of independence, it is our wish that the international community and the people of Haiti demonstrate that they can overcome the barriers of class and race, history and geography, and culture, thus enabling the country and its people to enter a modern process of free and fair development that will prove as inspiring as the seminal exploit we celebrate this year.

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