

Remarks on the Situation in Haiti

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On June 7, the General Assembly of the OAS -- and I quote from its resolution -- "reaffirmed its solidarity with the people of Haiti and support for their determination to strengthen their democratic system . . ."

Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I would like to address directly through you l'ambassadeur de Haiti, le representant legitime du gouvernement legitime de Haiti, pour lui declarer en nom du gouvernement des Etats Unis d'Amerique que nous sommes solidaires avec le peuple de Haiti, et pour reaffirmer notre appui pour la democratie constitutionnelle dans la Republique de Haiti.

Today we are called to rally to the support of Haiti, its people, and its democratically elected government. We are called to reaffirm the principles of our charter, even, if I may, our position in this changing world, a position which we are earning through democracy, economic liberalization, and security regimes limiting the most destructive weapons.

Unfortunately, the circumstances that bring us here today are much different than those which occasioned our resolution on Haiti last June, when we "congratulate(d) the people of Haiti on their successfully held elections" and took rightful pride in the role played by the OAS in making them possible.

Today the circumstances in Haiti are unclear. But it is evident from what we do know that institutional democratic political order in Haiti is in grave peril.

This morning the United States Government issued the following statement regarding the situation in Haiti:

"The United States strongly condemns the attack on the constitutional order and President Aristide of Haiti carried out by renegade elements of the Haitian army.

"We urge all personnel involved to return to their barracks immediately and urge all elements of the Haitian military to respect the constitutional order and to obey only the legitimate orders of the civilian and military superiors.

"We also urge all parties to refrain from further violence.

"The United States Government reaffirms its unequivocal support for constitutional rule in Haiti and for the democratically elected government of President Aristide."

The OAS and its Member States have been with Haiti in good times and bad; we are with Haiti's people and her beleaguered President today.

On January 7, the Permanent Council acted swiftly:

1. To condemn the attempt to break the rule of law in Haiti.
2. To back the Provisional Government headed by the then President.
3. To support respect for the elections held on December 16, through which Dr. Jean-Bertrand Aristide became President-Elect.
4. To continue to monitor the situation in Haiti, with adherence to the principle of nonintervention, and to request the Secretary General to report to the Permanent Council on the course of events in that member state.

Today, our Secretary General has called our Council together in accordance with his new Charter authority, in accordance with the same principles that prompted this Council to act in January.

In January, the preamble of the Permanent Council's resolution noted that it was "with support from a sector of the army" that the opposition "tried to interrupt the rule of law in Haiti." Ambassador Maisto, speaking for the U.S. government then, underscored that it was a sector of the army which acted dishonorably, that the Haitian military, as an institution -- if not to a man -- was "on the side of right, on the side of constitutional order, on the side of democracy, and with the Haitian people."

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights reminded us in its 1990-91 report that the efforts of the then provisional government and "the Armed Forces were decisive in holding those elections (of December) with the kind of security that allowed

all political forces and the Haitian people in general to express themselves and act freely throughout the election process."

The final returns from today's crisis are not yet in, but it does not appear we can assert the same institutional confidence and optimism tonight. Our understanding is that as we meet, President Aristide is a prisoner in Army headquarters, his authority defiled, his life in danger. I wish to express complete endorsement of the appeal of the distinguished Ambassador of Mexico that President Aristide's life be spared.

Mr. Chairman, what we have heard tonight makes clear that the entire hemisphere is deeply troubled about the course of events. We did not seek this meeting. We did not seek this confrontation. We are all in a sense diminished by what has happened. We are a community of democratic states forced to address again the concerns of a Member State whose people have spoken en masse at the ballot box in favor of democratic government and the rule of law.

The United States, I repeat, did not seek this moment. But we have worked, as has every other government here, on one assumption -- an assumption recorded as fact in our Secretary General's report 6 months ago on the December elections -- that in overwhelming numbers the Haitian people elected not only a man to serve them: they chose a path of political development, based on law, conducted in peace, and aspiring to justice.

Earlier today, I had hoped there would not be an interruption in the exercise of power by the legitimate democratically elected government of Haiti. Tonight, I fear such an interruption has indisputably taken place. Tonight I join this community of democracies to condemn violence against democratic institutions and to express the hope of the United States that Haitians will reject the path of violent confrontation and join ranks to realize their aspirations for enduring justice and lasting peace.

The United States supports the convening of a meeting of Foreign Ministers under the terms of resolution 1080, "Representative Democracy," adopted at the OAS General Assembly in Santiago on June 5, 1991. The Secretary General has our respect for the speed with which he has called this meeting. He will have our full support in the difficult decisions and days ahead.