

"Support for Haiti"
Remarks of Ambassador Luigi R. Einaudi
U.S. Permanent Representative to the OAS
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We are at a critical moment in our efforts to help Haitians restore their democratic constitutional order. Let me summarize what to me seem the key points of the two excellent reports we have heard this morning.

First, Secretary General Joao Clemente Baena Soares has again made clear the democratic principles that motivate our action: in the Western Hemisphere today, coups are not an acceptable way of resolving political differences. The Secretary General notes that the months since the September 30 coup have brought little progress on the central issue that unites the international community (and I say international community because it is useful to remember that the UN has endorsed the leadership of the OAS in this matter): the restoration of constitutional democracy and the return of Jean Bertrand Aristide to the presidency.

The Secretary General recommends, correctly I believe, that the Ministers who set our original course should consider meeting again. I have no instructions from my government to seek a ministerial before the current negotiations are exhausted, but it also seems clear to us that the passage of time suggests it might indeed be useful to bring together our decision-making authorities, if only to be able to better induce progress and reward it if it comes.

Being a seasoned diplomat committed to a solution in Haiti, the Secretary General also stresses that he is willing to make whatever personal effort is necessary in the meantime to advance our search for a just and lasting solution. We welcome his leadership.

Augusto Ramirez Ocampo, who as the Secretary General's personal representative has traveled with various of the distinguished members of his OEA-DEMOC Mission to Caracas, Cartagena de Indias, and Washington as well as Port au Prince, in multiple efforts to facilitate a political solution, reports that he believes the current negotiating track has not yet been exhausted. Certainly acceptance among the most varied of sectors of Rene Theodore as a compromise choice for prime minister can only be seen as a sign of progress. Indeed, the United States embassy in Haiti reports that despite many differences, some of them still major, the desire to seek a dignified and negotiated agreement with the international community is widespread.

I would like to comment, if I may, from two perspectives.

First, I had the privilege in a personal capacity to be an observer, invited by President Aristide, at the meetings January 7 and 8 in Caracas. The agreement among the President of the Republic and the Presidents of the Legislative branch to submit the name of Rene Theodore to a vote for the position of Prime Minister was, as has been noted earlier, an important breakthrough. That Caracas meeting was a privilege to observe because without exception those who participated demonstrated notable qualities of mutual respect, flexibility, and discretion. One notable absence from the meeting was the war of press releases, which has on other occasions both typified and damaged the negotiations. As one deeply committed to supporting any arrangement reached among Haitians to restore the democratic order interrupted violently on September 30, I was genuinely encouraged by the atmosphere in Caracas.

Second, let me say a word explicitly as the representative in this Council of the United States. For my country, Haiti involves major human and material interests as well as questions of principle. Concerned by the interruption of democracy, the presence of major human rights and humanitarian issues, problems of joblessness, trade and displaced persons, the United States seeks the return of President Aristide to Haiti in a manner compatible with the Haitian constitution and as part of a durable and stable solution that will enable Haitians to work with dignity and hope. We believe the objective of the international community should be to provide constructive support and guarantees for a democratic solution agreed to among Haitians. This support must include the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Humanitarian Mission, and in addition, the new democracy supporting measures that OEA-DEMOC will have to negotiate with the Haitian authorities.

From these considerations, I suggest a few simple conclusions:

One is obvious, but needs to be repeated because of the climate of suspicion and doubt that has clouded most discussions of Haiti: the principles that have galvanized our unprecedented solidarity against the interruption of Haitian democracy must be applied with the most absolute respect for Haiti's culture, people, and welfare. The how of the restoration of constitutional democracy to Haiti is fundamentally a Haitian decision for Haitians to make. Our goal can only be, as the Ministerial resolutions make clear, to help create the conditions in which that decision may be taken successfully.

My second conclusion is, in a sense, the obverse of the first: a political settlement -- whatever particular shape it takes in Haiti's particular circumstances -- will not conclude our common involvement in Haiti. Rather, it will set the stage for us to help address long unmet needs of the Haitian people.

Our ministers had the foresight to exempt humanitarian assistance from the embargo which the United States fully supports and respects despite the serious leaks that have taken place. The Secretary General's Humanitarian Mission has made clear the increasing urgency of health and other concerns. The increasing OAS commitment to Haiti has created a framework that has enabled many countries, including my own, to understand the importance as well as the urgency of Haiti's humanitarian and developmental needs. As Ambassador Maisto reported in my absence on January 8, the U.S. Agency for International Development has already responded to the OAS Humanitarian Mission's report and begun heightened food relief for Haiti's neediest. We will be pleased to contribute to the OAS shipment of medicine and food that is being made possible by the generosity of Chile.

But my real point is that we look forward to the day when the embargo will be lifted, when Haitian and foreign businesses will be able to function in an atmosphere of peace and stability, and when developmental as well as humanitarian aid flows can resume. The sooner Haitians resolve their political crisis, the sooner the international community will be able to move to support this vision.

I am not talking about a return to the status quo ante. I am not talking about a return to business as usual. I am talking about better future for Haiti. It is that vision that fortifies us in our present efforts amidst uncertainty.

My final point is this: We cannot and we will not be deterred from our support for democracy in Haiti.

This is a time for statesmanship. Coups unfold in hours. Violence spends itself in hours. But it will take time to put things right. Reconciliation takes time. Bridging deep social divisions takes time. Building and rebuilding institutions takes time. Developing new and positive relationships among civilian and military institutions takes time.

This is a time for the peacemakers to step forward in Haiti. Elected and unelected leaders must talk, listen, and build bridges to those who have opposed them, even at the risk of rebuke from their bases of support. Every sector of Haitian society must join in dialogue. None can be excluded.

The Washington Post noted editorially January 19 that the progress made in Central America toward ending violent conflicts came about not only because of the end of the cold war, but also because of the stubborn commitment of the United States to democracy.

You will find that the United States will stubbornly support the process of reaching a settlement in Haiti. We are stubbornly engaged, stubborn in our commitments to Haiti's struggle for democracy. Stubborn in our solidarity with the democracies of the OAS.

As Secretary of State James A. Baker III said in San Salvador last Friday, the United States seeks "a hemisphere in which democracy is the only legitimate form of government, the rule of law is respected, and human rights are secure."