

“The Haitian People must not feel alone or abandoned”
Statement by Sir Ronald Sanders, Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda at Special Meeting
of the Permanent Council on Haiti
10 February, 2023

The Antigua and Barbuda delegation has been pleased participate with other colleagues in drafting and negotiating the text of the Resolution that is now before this Permanent Council.

The situation in Haiti is grave.

The activities of more than 200 gangs and their control of large parts of Haiti, including more than 60 per cent of the Capital; their utter contempt for the rule of law; and what amounts to their reign of terror cannot be tolerated by any of our member states.

Action must be taken urgently to address the situation.

My delegation deeply regrets that the United Nations Security Council has failed to respond to the security and humanitarian crises that now engulf Haiti and the Haitian people.

At the same time, we are also concerned that the authorities in Haiti – and other parties – have not been able to achieve the unity of purpose and common cause that Haiti urgently needs.

While my delegation welcomes the Accord, which was signed on December 21st, 2022, by representatives of the Haitian governments and some representatives of the private sector, political parties and civil society, for an “Inclusive Transition and Transparent Elections”, we are troubled that the process is not inclusionary enough.

We are also troubled by reports of collaboration between some politicians and members of the private sector with some of the criminal gangs.

If, indeed, these reports are true, they do not bode well for a swift end to the rule of crime and terror that now overwhelms the country, especially its law enforcement agencies.

We are worried that Haiti no longer has an elected legislature and that its judiciary is dysfunctional.

That there is no oversight or accountability by the those who form the government is unhelpful to the building of national confidence and national consensus.

This situation cannot continue.

For without national confidence and strong national support for the institution of government, it will be extremely difficult – if not impossible – to challenge and overcome the criminal gangs, and their collaborators, who now hold the entire country hostage.

And, we caution Haitian leaders, from all sectors, that the world expects them, acting together, to create the blue print for Haiti’s future.

Friendly governments can help, but Haitians must do the necessary and constructive work.

This Resolution before our member states commands the support of Antigua and Barbuda because of the concern it strongly shows for the plight of the Haitian people, and the readiness of member states – each within their own capacity – to act urgently in providing assistance to efforts of the Haitian authorities to restore order and security.

The Resolution acknowledges that not all of our states have the same capacity, but within the means of each of us, we are prepared to help.

In this regard, my delegation places on record its appreciation to the Governments of Canada and the United States of America, which are giving logistical and other support to Haiti's law enforcement efforts.

We would remind other states, that are permanent observers of this Organization, that they, too, have an obligation, born of their historical role in Haiti, to be generous in their help.

Under the provisions of this Resolution, this Permanent Council will not sit on its hands.

We will establish a Working Group which, with the assistance of the General Secretariat, will convene a Security, Humanitarian, Electoral, and Democracy Assistance Dialogue with the participation of the Government of Haiti and the High-Level Transition Council that was recently established in Haiti.

The purpose will be to gather information, on the priority assistance that is required, so that each of our member states and permanent observer countries, could determine how best each can help to enable, and ensure, inclusive participation of Haitian stakeholders in arrangements for free, fair and credible elections and democratic transition in Haiti.

Five million people in Haiti currently experience food insecurity; reported kidnappings soared to more than 1,200 last year, more than double the number in 2021; and there were 2,200 homicides in 2022, a dramatic increase over 2021.

We cannot ignore this appalling situation.

The Haitian people must know that the eyes of the world are upon Haiti, and that the international community is anxious to see democracy established and nurtured in their country for their collective benefit.

That is why, this Resolution by the Permanent Council of the OAS is vitally important.

It is imperative that the people of Haiti, who have suffered much under self-enriching dictatorships, and from historical conditions of external exploitation, should not feel alone or abandoned.

They must not feel alone or abandoned.

To the extent that each of our countries has the resources and capacity to help, so must we act... and act urgently.