



The Bahamas

**STATEMENT
BY**

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OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS
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CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)**

**AT THE
OPEN DEBATE OF THE
UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL
ON THE SITUATION IN HAITI**

**UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK**

27 MARCH 2006

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Mr. President,

The Caribbean Community appreciates the opportunity to participate in this debate, which is taking place during a critical phase in Haiti's transition to constitutional rule.

On 7 February 2006, after two years of calamitous trials, the people of Haiti in large numbers demonstrated their yearning to be governed by persons of their choice. The tremendous courage, determination, discipline and patience they displayed in exercising their franchise is commendable, and underscores the importance of democracy for the Haitian people. The Member States of the CARICOM congratulate His Excellency Mr. Rene Preval on his election to the post of President of the Republic.

There is no room, however, to be complacent about the process that led to this result; the electoral season in Haiti has not yet ended. Every effort must be made by all involved to rectify the organizational shortcomings which bedeviled the presidential and legislative elections of 7 February, and which have led to the delay of the second round, as well as the postponement of the inauguration of the President-elect. The attachment of the people of Haiti to the democratic process demands no less.

Similarly, the preservation of the integrity of the electoral process is of paramount importance for the legitimacy of the new government, the future stability of the country, and the development of the Haitian society. The importance of the local and municipal elections, essential building blocks in Haiti's constitutional system of democratic governance, should not be allowed to fade from our awareness.

In the past, the Caribbean Community has offered its own electoral expertise; it takes this opportunity to reiterate its offer. It is ready, and intends, to field again an electoral observation mission for the second round of the legislative elections and for the local government elections, in company with other international support groups.

Mr. President,

The principled position adopted by CARICOM two years ago is well known. We were of the view that the fundamental tenets of democratic practice and behaviour had been compromised in the process of seeking a resolution to the Haitian political impasse. As the Caribbean Community emphasized in this very Council Chamber during the debate of 12 January 2005 on the situation in Haiti, "We cannot vacillate on principle since it is essential to our security as small states".

From the outset, the Caribbean Community indicated its willingness to welcome the return of Haiti to its Councils, once constitutional rule had been restored. In his recent letter of congratulations to the President-elect, His Excellency René Préval, the CARICOM Chairman intimated that that process was well on the way to being achieved since President-elect Preval's victory "...opens the path to the re-engagement of Haiti at the highest levels of the Councils of the Community, given the all-embracing endorsement of [his] election as a reflection of the will of the people".

The Chairman also emphasized that the Caribbean Community stands ready to accompany the government and people of Haiti as they confront the many challenges in their quest for the sustained political, economic and social development of their country. In this regard, the Community proposes to meet soon with the President-elect to better determine how best it can contribute, and continue to make good, on its commitment to the people of Haiti.

Mr. President,

A new dawn of hope is rising in Haiti. This opportunity must not be squandered. The people of Haiti, the regional community, and the international community will have to coordinate their respective roles and inputs. Yet ultimately, the responsibility for coming together, for working together, for transforming hope and expectation into uplifting reality lies ultimately with the Haitian people themselves.

Stability and security are imperative. Without these essential cornerstones there can be no social and economic progress, there can be no revitalization of the fundamental institutions of governance, the judiciary and police in particular.

Reconciliation, bridge-building, compromise and respect for each other must become key elements of a new Haitian ethos and polity, if the people of Haiti are to overcome the deep social and political divides which have historically impeded progress, if Haiti is to rise to the multiple, complex and deep-seated challenges that await; if the country is to find consensus on the direction it must take in order to grasp the opportunity of transformation. Towards this end, the Interim Administration has a primary rule of law obligation to fulfill before relinquishing office, as well as an opportunity full of symbolic resonance to contribute to the new dawn by bringing to urgent completion the judicial processes that will ensure the release of the numerous persons arrested arbitrarily and kept in detention without legal justification or adjudication over the past two years.

Stability and security will also require a renewed emphasis, adapted to the realities of Haiti, on disarmament, demobilization and social reinsertion. In this regard, the peacekeeping mission has a key role to play in collaboration with the relevant Haitian authorities. The multiplicity and activities of illegally armed groups of all persuasions constitute an ominous impediment, certain to thwart the best intentions and efforts aimed at fostering a peaceful environment, economic recovery, and political renewal.

Mr. President

As Haiti moves towards the post-electoral phase and the establishment of a new constitutional government, it will be necessary for the United Nations to reaffirm its commitment to Haiti and to review the role of the peacekeeping mission, MINUSTAH, with greater emphasis being placed on peacebuilding aspects. In this context, the Government of Haiti, under President-elect Preval, will no doubt wish to consider whether the newly-established Peacebuilding Commission can make a useful contribution

to Haiti's recovery. We believe that the coordinated efforts of the relevant actors evolving from the advice to be proffered by the Peacebuilding Commission could provide Haiti with invaluable assistance for its reconstruction and institution-building processes, by ensuring integrated strategies and predictable financing, among other things.

At their meeting last month, the donor community renewed their commitment to long-term engagement with Haiti. This is extremely encouraging, as Haiti will require both the resources that the donors can provide, as well as collaborating with the international community over the long-term for its recovery and development.

The proposed stocktaking between the donors and the new authorities should facilitate whatever adjustments are necessary in the ongoing Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF) to take into account the new governance arrangements and priorities. The review should also help to identify the accomplishments and strengths, as well as the gaps and weaknesses that need to be addressed, in order to increase the effectiveness of the international financial assistance. Though some \$780 million dollars pledged in the context of the ICF had been disbursed as of the end of December 2005, the lot of the ordinary Haitian has not improved appreciably. The return to constitutional rule and democracy must produce early, visible dividends, in order to promote further stability and to keep hope alive.

Mr. President.

Helping Haiti to overcome the difficulties it previously experienced in seeking to become an integral part of the Caribbean Community will constitute a priority for CARICOM in its assistance to Haiti. An important aspect of this effort will involve facilitating the smooth integration of Haiti into the various programmes and institutions that coordinate and underpin the functioning of the Community. With the green light of the new constitutional authorities, the Community will also seek to build on the activities it set in train during the transition period in the areas of institutional development for the establishment of a permanent electoral council; completion of a study, with recommendations, of Haiti's energy and fuel needs; an academic conference on the transition to democracy bringing together the region's universities; and the provision of French translations of key CARICOM documents of a technical nature. CARICOM's contribution will be constrained only by its lack of resources and not by a shortage of political will.

Mr. President,

The road ahead for Haiti will be long and difficult. Building democracy and creating the conditions for stability and for social, political, and economic development will require the dedicated engagement of the Haitian government and people. A long-term horizon of commitment from the international community will also be required. In this connection, the support in the field provided to Haiti by the United Nations peacekeeping mission (MINUSTAH) and its key contributing nations, the Organization of American States, and the donor community must be commended.

Haiti is a small but complex society. The nature of the problems to be overcome is such that expectations on all sides – Haitian and international – should be tempered and remain realistic. Success may have to be measured in small increments. However, the opportunity for Haiti to move from instability and deprivation to peace and development is once more present. It should not be lost.

I thank you Mr. President