



Enhancing rule of law vital for peace and security in Haiti, UN report says



A Haitian girl carries water at a Port-au-Prince camp for people displaced by the 2010 January earthquake

31 March 2011 – Haitians must embrace the rule of law to advance peace and prosperity, **Secretary-General** Ban Ki-moon stresses in a new **report**, adding that the country and its new leadership will require sustained international support to achieve this goal amid a set of daunting challenges.

“I call on all international partners to work with the Government and the United Nations in a concerted and cohesive effort to strengthen the rule of law in Haiti,” Mr. Ban writes in his latest report on the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (**MINUSTAH**).

He notes that the past year has been “deeply challenging” for Haiti, which has faced the difficult task of rebuilding and coping with the aftermath of the 12 January 2010 earthquake in which 230,000 people died and countless more were injured; an outbreak of cholera that to date has killed at least 4,600 people and infected more than 240,000; a close brush with Hurricane Tomas; and political instability and deadlock, and related electoral violence.

In addition, the ongoing displacement and continued precarious living conditions of more than 800,000 Haitians are a daily reminder of the need to accelerate the pace of reconstruction efforts.

“The incoming Government of Haiti will inherit a set of daunting challenges, compounded by the onset of another hurricane season, a severe lack of public sector expertise and a growing disenchantment among the general population with the existing political leadership and class and the long-standing socio-economic order,” he states.

Preliminary results from the presidential run-off election held on 20 March between former first lady Mirlande Manigat and popular musician Michel Martelly are expected to be announced today, while the final results will be announced on 16 April.

“The next President of Haiti may well face a protracted period of difficult cohabitation with a divided and potentially fractious Parliament,” says Mr. Ban. “The executive and legislative branches of Government will have to work together to meet the aspirations of the Haitian people and to deliver the reforms that they have been denied for far too long.”

He states that strengthening the rule of law will require a genuine commitment to creating an independent and effective judiciary, a Parliament that is accountable to the people and not driven by special interests,

and a Government that is transparent, responsive to the needs of the country and truly representative of the Haitian people.

"Haiti will require the sustained support of the international community to bring about systemic rule-of-law reform," the Secretary-General writes.

The return of former president Jean-Claude Duvalier has brought the country's turbulent history of State-sponsored violence to the fore, he adds. "It is of vital importance that the Haitian authorities pursue all legal and judicial avenues in this matter. The prosecution of those responsible for crimes against their own people will deliver a clear message to the people of Haiti that there can be no impunity."

The incoming administration should also build on the achievements of René Préval's presidency, which put an end to State-sponsored political violence and allowed Haitians to enjoy freedom of association and expression, Mr. Ban says.

The overall security situation in Haiti remained generally calm but prone to localized violent episodes of unrest, according to the report. There has been an increase in gang activities in impoverished areas of the capital, Port-au-Prince. Haitian criminals are active in the region's guns-for-drugs trade, which has been boosted by the presence of escaped prisoners seeking weapons.

A considerable proportion of the cocaine originating in South America and delivered to the United States and Europe passes relatively freely through Haiti, where drug traffickers are able to exploit the porous border and use illegal airstrips, boats and private submarines off the coast of the island.

The communities most at risk from insecurity remain those within the densely populated areas in the West Department, including the camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). "Several of the camps are used as bases by escaped prisoners and gangs. Consequently, crime, including sexual and gender-based violence, appears to have increased in the camps," says the Secretary-General.

"Haiti has the chance to make a fresh start under a new administration," he states. "A new leadership must try to heal the wounds of a deeply polarized society and provide jobs, education and services to a population that is economically impoverished.

"The United Nations will work with the new Government and all sections of Haitian society to enhance the rule of law in Haiti, and to ensure that the population can fully enjoy its fundamental economic, social, civil and political rights."

For its part, UN peacekeeping mission continues its vital work in the country, including in delivering critical support for quake recovery efforts; assisting with reform of the national police force; protecting vulnerable groups, particularly those living in the camps; providing support to State institutions; and promoting human rights.

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