

Responding to COVID-19 and addressing human rights in Haiti

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Statement by David Clay, UK Political Coordinator the UN, at the Security Council briefing on Haiti

Friday, 19 June

Thank you, Mr President. And thank you SRSB La Lime and Mr Létang, for your briefings.

Welcome the Secretary-General's second report on BINUH's activities. The UK recognises the extraordinary difficulties faced by Haiti since the Council last met to discuss BINUH. And I want to start by appreciating the hard work of the mission leadership and staff amidst increasingly challenging circumstances.

Mr President, I will make three brief points. First, the UK believes that a coordinated and holistic response to the COVID19 pandemic is critical. Second, urgent steps should now be taken to bolster human rights and accountability. Third, a roadmap out of Haiti's interminable political impasse is more essential than ever.

First, with regard to COVID19, it is clear that this pandemic presents a grave risk to Haiti, both in terms of the impact of the disease itself and its second order effects. As the health, humanitarian and economic effects of the crisis take hold, a coordinated and holistic response by the Haitian authorities and the international community is critical. The UK is encouraged by the quick adaptation of the UN system on the ground, and we call upon the DSRSB/RC/HC in particular to work closely with the Haitian authorities to help guide a coordinated approach.

Second, regarding human rights and accountability, the UK remains concerned about the lack of progress. That the perpetrators of massacres at La Saline and Bel Air continue to escape justice profoundly undermines efforts to build confidence and trust in the rule of law.

We also regret that the Haitian government has yet to honour its commitment to appoint a Minister for Human Rights. This appointment would be a valuable demonstration of Haiti's political will to safeguard human rights.

Finally with regard to the ongoing political impasse: Mr President, session after session, this Chamber [and the UN leadership] has sought to encourage the parties in Haiti set out a roadmap to overcome political deadlock and institutional paralysis. As the SG notes in his report, the collapse in February of dialogue efforts to reach an agreement on the needed roadmap for constitutional, institutional and structural reforms is yet another missed opportunity.

COVID19 has aggravated the existing risks to stability Haiti. The economy is faltering. Elections loom. Now, more than ever, all parties should come together in the national interest. Broad, inclusive dialogue is essential.

Thank you.