

Speech: “Today we are all witnessing Haiti turn a corner. Days of violence and instability have begun to fade. The ultimate thanks go to the people of Haiti”

Thank you Mr President.

And thank you Special Representative Honoré for your briefing. As MINUSTAH draws to a close after 13 years in Haiti, I would like to start by thanking you for your dedicated service. I also want to pay tribute to all who have been involved with the mission and its work; the civilian staff, troops and police who have served, and, in particular, the 186 men and women who died in MINUSTAH’s service.

MINUSTAH’s legacy is clear when we compare the Haiti of today to the Haiti of 2004. There is less violence. The security environment is more stable. The Haitian National Police are more effective. And a more democratic political culture has emerged, accompanied by transitions of power.

Of course, we cannot be complacent. The gains made must be protected. MINUJUSTH represents a transitional stage for the UN’s future support for Haiti. The Haiti of today still needs help to ensure its police can soon stand alone, that justice institutions can soon function effectively, and that human rights are afforded the protection and priority they require.

While we note that the Status of Forces agreement has not yet been signed – and we urge the government to do so as soon as possible – we welcome that the transition to MINUJUSTH is on track. We must ensure the mission has access to the most appropriate personnel and equipment and that this is underpinned by high quality training, skilled and robust leadership, and with clear accountability for underperformance and misconduct.

If the UN is to maximise the impact of its support to Haiti, MINUJUSTH must work closely with the UN Country Team, which has a critical role to play in sustaining peace. For example, through its support for the 2030 Agenda, the UN Country Team will be able to bring a long-term developmental focus to the major challenges Haiti faces today. Joint planning, analysis and capacity mapping exercises will be needed from day one so that responsibilities are handed over sequentially well ahead of MINUJUSTH’s closure.

Indeed, Haiti does not need an indefinite peacekeeping operation. The planned exit strategy to guide a two year transition from MINUJUSTH to the UN Country Team – and also, critically, Haiti’s own national institutions – marks an opportunity for the UN to set precedents for peacekeeping missions around the world.

We regret that the good work of MINUSTAH was tainted by the spectre of cholera and sexual exploitation and abuse. Here too there are lessons to be learned. The new approach to cholera has helped to put Haiti on a path towards eradication but this came too long after the damage had been done. As for sexual exploitation at the hands of peacekeepers, the tragic experience of Haiti demonstrates why we cannot abide any backsliding on the commitments made through Resolution 2272.

Mr President,

There is much that the UN can do better. But the single most important guarantor of the progress achieved in Haiti lies within its own leadership. The gap left by MINUSTAH is not primarily for MINUJUSTH to plug, but for Haiti's government, politicians and institutions to begin to fill.

For example, security cannot be achieved unless the government protects the independence of Haiti's police and gives them the resources they need – rather than diverting money on the creation of new armed forces. Justice cannot be delivered until parliamentarians pass legislation critical to empowering the judiciary. Human rights cannot be protected without proper institutionalisation within the state. And pronouncements of progress will continue to ring hollow until we see more women empowered as political leaders – and fewer becoming victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

In conclusion Mr. President, today we are all witnessing Haiti turn a corner. Days of violence and instability have begun to fade. The ultimate thanks go to the people of Haiti. Without question, they have displayed remarkable resilience. But the courageous efforts of MINUSTAH have also played their part. We salute their successes and look forward to the UN's continued assistance to the Haitian people.

Thank you.