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Chair: Mr. Sameer Zuberi





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Friday, November 18, 2022

• (0845)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair (Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.)):** I will call the meeting to order.

Good morning, everyone.

Welcome to meeting No. 19 of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

[*English*]

Thank you to all the members and witnesses for being here

This meeting is taking place in a hybrid format in conformity with the June 23, 2022, order.

Members are participating by Zoom and in person.

For the benefit of witnesses and members, please allow yourself to be recognized before speaking. We have a very good system in this committee that works well, but for the witnesses who are here, that's how we operate.

If you would like to have interpretation, for the witnesses in person you can use this little thing in front of me, and for those participating by Zoom just go to the globe icon. You can choose French or English, as you like.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), and the motion adopted on April 26, 2022, we're continuing our study on Haiti. Each witness will have five minutes for opening remarks, and then we will have a series of questions and exchanges with the members.

[*Translation*]

Today we have with us Frédéric Boisrond, a sociologist, and Andréanne Martel, a humanitarian program evaluation consultant and researcher, who are both appearing as individuals, with Ms. Martel participating by videoconference.

[*English*]

We also have, from the Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale, Michèle Asselin, executive director, by video conference.

Without further ado, we'll start with Monsieur Boisrond, who is here in person for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for being with us.

**Mr. Frédéric Boisrond (Sociologist, As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, everyone.

How can we talk about human rights when democracy in Haiti is still at the starting gate?

Since the fall of the Duvalier regime in 1986, Haiti has known only very short periods of democracy, too short for a culture of democracy to develop. Today, we are witnessing the failure of democracy to take root. It is the continuation of a dictatorship by another name.

After the fall of the Duvalier regime, Haitians adopted a constitution that guaranteed them freedom of expression, justice, freedom of association, the right to an education and the right to life. Even so, we have lost count of the number of journalists, activists, judges, lawyers, political adversaries, trade unionists, students, opinion leaders and ordinary people who have been compelled to flee or have been executed since 1987.

The biggest disappointment to Haitians, however, is certainly having their right to vote stolen from them. Chilean diplomat Juan Gabriel Valdes, a member of the Global Leadership Foundation, said that the crisis Haiti is experiencing is the result of a decision made by the Core Group in 2010. That decision was to fabricate the results of the presidential election in order to hand power to Michel Martelly, the candidate for the Haitian party PHTK.

The theft of the vote was confirmed by Pierre-Louis Opont, the president of the provisional electoral council of Haiti. Ricardo Seitens, who was the representative of the Organization of American States, the OAS, in Haiti between 2009 and 2011, said he lost his position because he opposed the falsification of the results. According to American special envoy Daniel Foote, Haiti will never recover if the Core Group continues to vote instead of Haitians. In other words, by putting its lackey in power, the Core Group has made Haiti its ward.

Throughout his term, Michel Martelly, whom Canada helped to steal power, did not hold a single election and managed his country by decree. He received all the help he needed from his sponsors in order to hand power over to his protégé, Jovenel Moïse, who pursued the same policies as Michel Martelly and used the same tactics as the Duvaliers.

Like the Duvaliers, like Michel Martelly and like Jovenel Moïse, the present Prime Minister of Haiti, Ariel Henry, also a PHTK politician, is governing the country with no countervailing forces. The PHTK has made sure that it has no opponents and has succeeded in shutting down opposition through its mafioso tactics.

As the Duvaliers' Tontons Macoutes did, the PHTK has financed and armed thugs to protect its stranglehold on the country. It is these same lowlifes who have turned against the regime, who have formed gangs, and who are creating a security crisis that fuels the humanitarian, economic, social and health crises. They are doing everything they can to transform the ideal of a democracy into mob rule.

In order to talk about human rights in Haiti, there must be compliance with article 149 of the Constitution of the Republic of Haiti. That article provides that a person who replaces a president who is unable to perform their functions has 90 days to restore power to elected representatives. After more than 17 months in office, Ariel Henry is in fact no more than a usurper of power and a dictator.

In order to talk about human rights in Haiti, the country would have to have state bodies that allow everyone to exercise their citizenship. Ariel Henry's regime cannot guarantee a supply of drinking water and food or access to healthcare, any more than he can enable children to go to school and working people to earn a living without being humiliated.

The main reason that the rights of women and girls are still a crucial problem is that Michel Martelly, who is also a popular singer, has indoctrinated an entire generation with his misogynistic, violent and hateful words and his rape apology language. Canada, the United States and France have banned his performances in those countries so that he can't spread his obscene ideology.

Haiti is still at the starting gate of its transition to democracy.

To get started, what will be needed is a vast program of public education, one of the aims being to make sure that people understand the rights, duties and responsibilities that come with citizenship.

To get going, there has to be a renewal of the political class, which today is mainly composed of old men who are out of sync, disconnected, fossilized and hoary, and have known nothing other than Duvalierist culture.

Pierre-Louis Opont, the president of the provisional electoral council of Haiti, had added that the fraud by which the Core Group appointed Michel Martelly to the office of president of Haiti was made possible because no one challenged the false results.

If Canada and the Core Group are responsible for this crisis, the Haitian political class, in its role as a cheap, docile and hungry collaborator, betrayed its fellow citizens and must bear full responsibility for this neo-Duvalierist dictatorship being put in place.

In closing, I would like to point out that in 2010, when Haitians' vote was stolen, Canada, a member of the Core Group, was the first to set the process in motion. Canada was the first one to impose that affront to representative democracy. The person who initiated that breach of a fundamental Canadian value was the minister of foreign affairs at the time, Lawrence Cannon.

• (0850)

I must also point out that the present Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mélanie Joly, has unfortunately done everything possible to legitimize Ariel Henry and make him her only interlocutor in seeking a solution to the Haitian crisis. How can Canada, a country governed by the rule of law, put Ariel Henry, a dictator, front and centre in the solution to a crisis that is depriving Haitians of their fundamental rights?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Boisrond.

Ms. Martel, you have the floor.

[*English*]

You have five minutes. I'll give you a sign when there's one minute left, and then 30 seconds, so you can conclude.

We have Madame Martel, please.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Martel (Humanitarian Program Evaluation Consultant and Researcher, As an Individual):** Thank you.

Mr. Chair, members of the subcommittee, thank you for giving me this time to speak today.

My testimony is based on several years of research into the coordination of international aid in Haiti and on various assignments I have been given as a humanitarian program evaluator for international organizations working in Haiti.

At a time when the country is facing a particularly difficult political, economic and humanitarian crisis and Canada is questioning its role, I am first going to make a few remarks and talk to you about the lessons learned from recent interventions in Haiti. Second, in light of those remarks, I am going to make recommendations regarding the possibility of a military, political or humanitarian intervention in Haiti.

I am going to start with the consequences of recent interventions, particularly the post-earthquake response, for what is happening today and for what we can learn from it.

At the previous meeting, other witnesses said that the last 20 years of foreign intervention in Haiti had not enabled us to avert what is happening today. I would add that the effect of the way in which international interventions have been carried out in the past, particularly in the years following the earthquake, has sometimes been to exacerbate the problems and even to undermine both Haitian institutions and certain elements of civil society, rather than to support them.

I am going to make two brief observations.

First, strengthening institutions works best when the support of the international community is based on a long-term vision, and when that support focuses on financial and logistical support. As well, expertise in the sector, coordination and regulation in Haiti must be handled by the Haitians who work in those institutions. When, on the contrary, the support of the international community sidesteps and sometimes competes with local authorities, as was the case in the healthcare sector in Haiti between 2010 and 2015, those sectors are weakened.

• (0855)

[English]

**The Chair:** Madame Martel, just for the interpretation in English perhaps you could go just a little bit slower. Thank you.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Martel:** Of course.

A second observation is that Haitian civil society has too often been ignored, with very significant consequences in terms of the understanding of issues and the appropriateness of interventions. One of the well-known examples is the effort to combat sexual violence after the earthquake. The analyses and guidance on how to respond to sexual violence were done at the time by the international community without consulting Haitian feminists and women's organizations whose efforts keep the fight against gender-based violence in the country going. The effect of that was to produce erroneous observations that did not take the decades of struggle into account.

As a result, the massive influx of international aid into Haiti over the last decade has often had negative consequences for local structures that were already underfunded and for development initiatives in the long term. This suggests that we should think in these terms: rather than asking whether we should intervene in Haiti, we have to ask ourselves how to be allies for the Haitian people, who are experiencing some extremely hard times.

That brings me to the second part of my testimony: Canada's role.

Given the crisis facing Haiti today, Canada has at least three possible avenues for supporting Haiti: the military avenue, because it is being talked about these days, the political avenue, and the humanitarian avenue. I am going to conclude my presentation by offering some thoughts on each of these avenues.

The option of undertaking a military intervention, as a number of witnesses have said, is rejected by one part of Haitian civil society. It is not the solution, according to the Quebec member organizations of the Association qu b coise des organismes de coop ration internationale, AQOCI, that work in Haiti, and their Haitian partners.

It must be admitted that the UN's international missions in recent years, and the efforts to reform the security sector, in which Canada has been particularly invested, have not succeeded in lifting the country out of insecurity and averting the present crisis. On the contrary, the foreign military presence and the impunity granted to soldiers in sexual abuse cases or in the introduction of cholera merely fanned the distrust and anger. That does not mean that

Canada does not have a role to play, however, but that role must take the more political or humanitarian route.

Regarding the political route, as Mr. Boisrond has said, there is rising dissatisfaction with the foreign governments in the Core Group, to which Canada belongs, which supports the government of Ariel Henry, the government that Haitian civil society is openly opposing. A starting point would be to listen to Haitian civil society and recognize the Montana accord for installing a transitional government.

Canada's support must also include combating impunity, since the gangs are acting in an environment where impunity reigns. As the Concertation pour Haiti group suggests in its recommendations, Canada could, for example, support an international commission to investigate the assassination of Jovenel Mo se and, more broadly, support the Haitian justice system in combating impunity.

Last, with respect to humanitarian aid and international solidarity, there is a long history of solidarity between organizations in Canada, particularly in Quebec, and Haitian civil society. Those organizations work in tandem, recognizing Haitian expertise and the sovereignty of its institutions in fields that include sustainable agriculture, strengthening the justice system, education, and the rights of women and LGBTQ+ people. This support for civil society is essential, particularly during the current crisis, which is exacerbating other primary needs...

• (0900)

**The Chair:** Ms. Martel, I have to interrupt you, but you will have an opportunity to say more during the question period. Thank you.

Ms. Asselin, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Ms. Mich le Asselin (Executive Director, Association qu b coise des organismes de coop ration internationale):** Good morning.

The Association qu b coise des organismes de coop ration internationale, AQOCI, is composed of 70 Quebec organizations, 34 of which have been active in Haiti for many years, and even decades. AQOCI is also an active member of Concertation pour Haiti, a group of Quebec solidarity and cooperation organizations and groups from the Haitian diaspora in Quebec.

My testimony is based on the analysis of the situation shared by the members of AQOCI and Concertation pour Haiti and, especially, by our Haitian partners.

Haiti is currently facing the exacerbation of a multidimensional crisis. Insecurity caused by armed gangs is growing. The gangs engage in extreme violence in their conflicts with members of rival groups. They commit kidnappings and cruel murders. According to the UN, the gangs use sexual violence as a weapon to terrorize the population and thus conquer territory and maintain control of it.

Almost 100,000 people have been displaced after fleeing the violence that has gripped the country since June 2021. At the end of October, the news was full of kidnappings, murders and attempted murders of politicians and media figures. The territories controlled by the gangs are constantly expanding. There are almost no neighbourhoods or regions of the capital and the area around it that are not directly or indirectly affected by the actions of the armed groups.

The explosion in the price of fuel is also a very important dimension of the current crisis. Oil is the only energy source available in Haiti. A severe shortage of gasoline has disrupted the water supply, in addition to shutting down the economy as a whole. The Haitian national police announced on Friday, November 4, that it had regained control of the most important oil terminal, which had been in the hands of armed gangs since mid-September. The supply is still problematic, however, and this continues to exacerbate the crisis.

Food insecurity is growing and is alarming. According to the UN, 4.7 million people, nearly half the population, are experiencing high levels of food insecurity, while 19,200 people are affected by the highest level of food insecurity, a first in the recent history of the country.

Humanitarian aid is not enough for Haiti, however. Cooperation and solidarity organizations are well aware of this. Haitians have to be supported in producing the food that will enable them to subsist and plan their future. At present, food production is endangered by the difficulties involved in moving about and accessing inputs.

In addition, lack of access to fuel has caused an acute shortage of drinking water, and that has led to an outbreak of cholera after more than three years with no reported cases. On Tuesday, the United Nations launched an appeal to collect \$145 million to support Haiti, because 1.4 million people are living in areas that are hard hit.

On Friday, October 14, AQOCI held an emergency meeting with the member organizations of our association that are active in Haiti. A number of Haitian partners were present. They offered emotional testimony about the Haitian people's living conditions.

What I want to tell you is that every one of them is firmly opposed to an armed foreign intervention in their country. They believe a Haitian solution to a Haitian crisis is needed. For that reason, Canada must strengthen its position of not sending an international force to Haiti and persuade the UN and other countries that are still tempted to choose that solution...

• (0905)

**The Chair:** I have to interrupt you, Ms. Asselin, as we have to move on to questions.

Mr. Genuis, you have the floor for seven minutes.

[*English*]

Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

Oh, we'll pass it on to Mr. Aboultaif.

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses. Good morning, all.

We are facing a multifold crisis that doesn't end in one way or the other. There is the political situation. We have very dire humanitarian, security, economic and food situations—you name it. Anything Haiti is going through is really hard to break out of.

Mr. Boisrond was focusing on the political change most needed there. Our last witness, Ms. Asselin, said that humanitarian aid is not enough to the country.

The question is, what is the low-hanging fruit here? Where can we at least start to have a plan or road map? How can we ensure the effectiveness of NGOs taking on some solutions outside the political solution, and interference in the country from outside? How can we find the conditions for a more effective NGO role in Haiti?

I'd like to start with Ms. Asselin, then move to Mr. Boisrond.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Michèle Asselin:** Thank you for your question.

First, we could continue our support for civil society, which is extraordinarily well organized. Ms. Martel talked about the Montana accord. I want to remind you that that accord, which was signed on August 30, 2021, was signed by 418 civil society organizations, 105 grassroots organizations, 85 political parties and groups, and 313 public figures.

Canada has to support that accord, which proposes a transitional government that would have two years to prepare for democratic elections. There is already a joint transition body that brings together civil society organizations and political parties and represents a model for consensus and work. Haiti has therefore made an effort. We know that there are very diverse views in that country.

I therefore hope that Canada will support the Montana accord. That is the plea that we are hearing from our partners, because this democratic crisis has to be resolved. So Canada could hear the signatories to that accord in order to support them more directly.

We could get started immediately on supporting the Haitian police, which needs resources so it can play its role. We can certainly continue to support humanitarian aid, and even increase it, and continue to support international cooperation. In fact, when Canada supports international cooperation, it supports Haitian NGOs directly.

Thank you.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Boisrond.

**Mr. Frédéric Boisrond:** I think the key word in your intervention is “road map”. The government of Haiti has asked Canada—well, the UN asked Canada—to take leadership with a military intervention in Haiti. In fact, I believe Canada has already taken that leadership. The thing is that Canada has not made, up until this very moment, any kind of proposal, any road map, so people don't know what stand we are talking about.



As for military intervention, of course I agree with other *intervenants* on this. Military intervention has never had any kind of positive response, not only in Haiti but in Libya, Afghanistan and Iraq as well. It's obvious to all of us.

The situation in Haiti right now, we have to agree, is not acceptable, but, at the same time, getting rid of gangs is not a solution in itself. It's getting rid of conditions that make people get into gangs. The road map or whatever Canada has to put as a proposal has to help prevent this kind of situation happening again; otherwise, Canada is going to go in with allies for six months, and six months later there will be gangs again.

I think the road map is what we should be discussing, not who can handle it. At the same time, I'd like to emphasize what I have said already: There is no government in Haiti right now. There is no government; there is no state of law. We need to come up with a global solution— not one thing, which would be a military intervention.

● (0910)

**Mr. Ziad Aboultaif:** Thank you.

Ms. Martel, I heard the answer from Ms. Asselin when she was talking about the Montana accord, and she mentioned the Canadian role in implementing and working on the Montana accord.

How would you assess Canada's role at the moment regarding the Montana accord and the overall situation there? I would like to hear your viewpoint on this. Thank you.

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Martel:** Right. I will be very brief.

The other two witnesses said that Canada unfortunately did not choose to support the Montana accord; it chose to support a government that is disputed and is considered to be illegitimate.

We would hope to see Canada throwing its support behind establishing a transitional government, which is suggested by the Montana accord and the organizations that have mobilized in Haitian society to propose a solution other than the situation that has prevailed for the last 12 years.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Martel.

[English]

We will continue with our second questioner, Mr. Dubourg, but, before that, I'd like to recognize a number of high school students in the room who came from Experiences Canada.

I'm really happy that you're here to witness this committee, and I hope this is beneficial for you in your future.

[Translation]

Mr. Dubourg, you have the floor for seven minutes.

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to say hello to the witnesses. Thank you for being here with us this morning to study this very important subject.

Mr. Boisrond, we have read it in the media and you said it: Ariel Henry's request is not a request. Rather, it is a foreign order. You also said that Canada has already decided to intervene in Haiti.

Why do you think Canada has still not sent its military to Haiti, more than a month after that request? Would it not be to allow Haitians to find a Haitian solution for Haiti?

**Mr. Fr d ric Boisrond:** The first part of your question was whether this was a request or an order. I would like to remind you that before the Ariel Henry government carried out the order, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, Luis Almagro, was the second person to say that Haiti needed foreign military assistance and that he wanted it to happen. Pamela White, the former American ambassador to Haiti, was the first to say that that is what it took.

Mr. Almagro made his request on November 3, and Ariel Henry complied on November 4. The following Sunday, November 6, on France 24, the Secretary General of the United Nations said that this was in fact what it took. He then confirmed that he had indeed received that order through the other two people.

Now, I did not say that Canada had agreed. I said that Canada had taken the initiative on the issue of Haiti, as it was asked to do. I need only look at all the consultations you have done, including this one. I participated in a consultation with you, Mr. Dubourg. Mr. Trudeau had a meeting at the UN about Haiti, and Ms. Joly has had several meetings. That all suggests to me that Canada has apparently taken it seriously.

I do not believe that the American secretary general, Mr. Blinken, would have come to Ottawa to ask Ms. Joly to take that initiative if it had not been discussed beforehand. Consequently, yes, I am persuaded that Canada has already taken that direction. That is good news to me, because that gives us, the Haitian community in Montreal, among others, the opportunity to have some influence over things.

● (0915)

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** Thank you, Mr. Boisrond.

All three of you talked about the Montana accord. You also talked about the Core Group, to which Canada belongs.

Ms. Martel, the Core Group is criticized for choosing a president or a prime minister in Haiti. Now you are talking to us about the Montana accord, which Canada should support. However, while I recognize that they have made efforts, the signatories to that accord are now tearing one another apart. As well, Canada has imposed sanctions on two members of the Core Group.

How do we get out of this? How do you see the situation? Why are you telling us that Canada has to support that accord?

I would also like to point out that the accord provides for a transition. I have always said that this accord did not offer a way out of the crisis, because it aims simply to install a transitional government to replace the prime minister and find a president, that's all.

What makes you believe that the present situation won't continue, regardless of what political party formed the transition government?

**Ms. Andr anne Martel:** Thank you for your question.

If there is one thing I have learned over the last decade that I have taken a particular interest in Haiti, it is that in order for solutions to last, they must always be endogenous. They must always come from the community. They must come from civil society. Whether the issues are humanitarian or political, they must absolutely emerge from organizations, political parties and movements. As we have seen, very little has remained of all the aid given to Haiti in the last 10 years, because it was not done with the necessary consultations.

To come back to the Montana accord and a political solution to the crisis, we can't say today that this accord is going to solve all the problems. This crisis is multifactorial, as has been said. However, that accord represents the voice of a large number of civil society organizations. I therefore think that it has greater legitimacy in terms of political solutions than support for a government that obviously has no real consensus in Haiti.

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** Thank you.

I did not hear anything in the presentations about a corrupt economic elite in Haiti.

Mr. Boisrond, I know you have written several books on democracy, in particular. You said just now that the political class needed to be renewed. How can democracy be permanently and unequivocally installed in Haiti?

**Mr. Fr d ric Boisrond:** Canada has invested in aid programs, including for democratic development. Canada makes a practice of doing that.

The rules have to be changed, because the people who are in power in Haiti and are leading the country are people my age, 60 or 65 or 70 years old. Those people have never known anything but dictatorship. So it is time to help develop a new political class and bring younger people closer to the reins of power.

● (0920)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** We will continue with Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe for seven minutes.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank all the witnesses who are participating in this extremely important study. I am proud that it was the Bloc Qu b cois that proposed it.

Mr. Boisrond, I was interviewed yesterday with Jean-Ernest Pierre on radio station CPAM. One of the things that kept coming up was that Canada has never apologized for what happened in the past. It seems to me that it is important to the Haitian community to do that.

The apologies have never come, and yet we know that Canada is capable of apologizing in many cases. I think it is important to admit wrongdoing in order to start off on a new footing. Do you think this is important or just symbolic?

**Mr. Fr d ric Boisrond:** It is not important to me. The situation in the country is too serious to dwell on symbols. There are lives at stake. Women, girls, people are being raped, children are becoming child soldiers. We are not there.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** We are not there at all.

**Mr. Fr d ric Boisrond:** We shall see after.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Right.

**Mr. Fr d ric Boisrond:** I prefer that we express thanks.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** That's fine. That is exactly why we are here: to tackle what is most important.

You had harsh words for Mr. Cannon and Ms. Joly. We have no choice but to work with Ms. Joly, because she is part of the solution. As I heard you say, you are happy for Canada to take the initiative.

What should Canada tackle first, as a matter of urgency?

We have heard a number of witnesses over several meetings, and some tell us that the security aspect absolutely has to be resolved first. Does this mean intervention by foreign police, by foreign military? Not everyone agrees on that.

You also said we had to tackle the conditions that make the situation what it is. Does that mean there is a solution that is ultimately more humanitarian?

**Mr. Fr d ric Boisrond:** If we wanted to eliminate the gang leaders in Haiti, we would not need to send anyone in, since I have seen on the news that it is possible to eliminate Al Qaeda people from the comfort of one's balcony.

When I look at the situation in Ukraine, I see that it is not really the Ukrainian army that is winning the war. And yet the country is receiving aid, intelligence aid in particular. I would leave it to the military people to comment on this, but from what I see in the news and what I have learned from history, it is possible to help the Haitian police without necessarily sending boots on the ground to Haiti. That is fairly obvious.

On the whole question of general aid, it has to have a structuring effect, to help the country start over and ensure that this kind of situation never recurs.

Mr. Dubourg mentioned my books. I have always argued that Haiti's future depends on strengthening its trade capacity. If we don't help the country to develop its presence in the market economy, the capitalist economy, it is condemned to poverty.

A series of projects were in place to that end, in the PetroCaribe fund. I think it was Ms. Asselin who mentioned that project, which was to be used to develop the agri-food industry in Haiti. If the agri-food industry had been developed, if the PHTK party had not squandered that money, Haiti would not have the level of poverty that it has today. The reason why people join gangs, and children join gangs too, is because they are too poor and they have no other prospects.

So it calls for structuring aid that will strengthen the country's trade capacity.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you. I'm going to ask you some more questions, because this is too interesting.

For information, what is the relationship between the Haitian diaspora in Montreal and the people living in Haiti at present?

**Mr. Frédéric Boisrond:** Keep in mind that 40% of the economy of Haiti depends on transfers from the diaspora. The Haitian diaspora, particularly in Canada, is therefore extremely important, since it directly supports the economy of Haiti. Everyone knows someone who is suffering insecurity, be it a family member, a friend, or the friend of a friend. Everyone is aware of what is happening and everyone is worried.

I would repeat that the Haitian community in Montreal is worried. We feel that Canada is taking the initiative and our community can have an influence. We have had many, many opportunities to meet with you. I am here today, and I mentioned my meeting with the member for Bourassa. So we would like the community to be part of the solution too.

• (0925)

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Does Mr. Henry still have support in the diaspora in Montreal?

**Mr. Frédéric Boisrond:** I have not seen any support for Ariel Henry in the diaspora, and I believe everyone has understood that his government is illegitimate. Personally, I say it is not a government.

However, I want to point out that whatever solution is put in place, whether it be the Montana accord or something else, it will be outside the Haitian constitution, because of the assassination of Jovenel Moïse.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you.

Ms. Martel, given that the situation is an emergency, what role do you think international cooperation organizations have in the crisis going on now?

Again, I am using the word "emergency", because that really is the word we have to use for Haiti.

**Ms. Andr anne Martel:** First, we have to learn from the errors of the past and make sure the aid provided is part of a long-term vision and is adapted to the needs of the people, and, if possible, that it is aligned with existing initiatives in Haiti. Many organizations, particularly in Quebec, have been in Haiti for years, and partnerships have already been established with Haitian organizations. So the way to provide effective aid that genuinely meets the needs of the people is by working to strengthen the projects and programs that are already in place.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you.

[English]

**The Chair:** That's the bulk of the time.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[English]

We'll continue with Ms. McPherson for seven minutes.

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's a great pleasure for me to have our witnesses with us today. Thank you for your testimony.

I've had the privilege and pleasure of working with both Ms. Martel and Ms. Asselin in my previous life before I was elected.

Ms. Martel, I'm going to start with you, if I could.

I'm very interested in how you are talking about that humanitarian response and what it should look like. Every one of us is horrified about what we are seeing in Haiti right now and we're trying to find those ways to provide the support in the most effective way possible.

I'm hearing things like half of the population is food insecure. We've been hearing all of the things that you've said about needing to have indigenous solutions and long-term, predictable funding.

Are we finding ourselves in this situation because the responses the international community has provided to Haiti in the past have not been indigenous-led, long term, predictable and working with civil society? Is that why we're here?

Is there a risk that will happen again and we will provide a band-aid system of development?

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Martel:** I would not want to say that the present situation is essentially a result of the way aid has been provided in the past. Obviously, it is much more complex than that. However, the way aid is coordinated and provided on an emergency basis unfortunately has negative consequences in the longer term for the development projects that are already in place in the country.

We have seen this in the past, after the earthquake. Aid arrived in massive amounts with no coordination on the part of the Haitian authorities, and that meant that the priorities were not established by the Haitian actors.

We also saw it in the case of the United Nations clusters and when various coordinating bodies got involved. The effect was to weaken the aid, unfortunately, because they left it much too late to seek out Haitian help.

So I question the idea that when there is an emergency, the international humanitarian actors have to be brought in because they are the ones that have the expertise. Even if the situation is an emergency and there is food insecurity, the solutions have to be local. There are civil society organizations that specialize in these areas and in emergency aid, and they are the ones that the Canadian non-governmental organizations have to listen too first, and with whom they have to establish partnerships.

[English]

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you.

So perhaps, then, something that we could say, or that we could say as a committee in one of our recommendations, is that now going forward [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] our development aid needs to be increased. It needs to be long-term and predictable. It needs to engage with civil society and Haitian communities. That's how Canada should be looking at providing their aid.

You talked a little bit about the UN coming in and doing this work. Do you think the UN mission at this point, if it were given a very strict mandate and some very strict guardrails, would be an appropriate response at the moment, if it then did use the indigeneity and the local expertise?

• (0930)

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Martel:** We are talking about a humanitarian intervention. That means the United Nations agencies would play a more active role, as was the case in the last decade. The United Nations' role was to coordinate humanitarian aid in various sectors, including food, the purification of drinking water, and health. If the United Nations decides to play that role, it will have to work collaboratively with the Haitian Ministry of Public Health and Population and the National Directorate of Potable Water and Sanitation, which was not the case in the past. There will have to be assurance that the way aid is coordinated strengthens and supports the leadership role of the Haitian institutions.

[English]

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you, Ms. Martel.

Ms. Asselin, you spoke quite a bit about the Montana accord. I know that you have a great deal of information representing so many organizations that work in Haiti. We know that not all Haitians support the Montana accord. There is this risk that this could be a divisive thing to be supporting that, or that there are some people who are supporting it publicly but perhaps not behind closed doors.

Can you talk a little bit more about the Montana accord and Canada's role with regard to moving forward on the Montana accord, please?

[Translation]

**Ms. Mich le Asselin:** Our Haitian partners tell us that if Canada continues to work with an illegitimate government, there is a high risk that it will prolong the current democratic crisis. As was said this morning, there is a strong consensus: people do not believe that the present government is legitimate. To resolve the immediate humanitarian crisis, the United Nations representatives are already on site and are taking measures to combat cholera, and the Food and Agriculture Organization, the FAO, is trying to solve the major food crisis.

There is a democratic crisis. This is a key element for managing the crisis. We think we need to focus on the Montana accord. Will it be perfect? Will there be disagreement? Certainly, but what else will we do? Will we continue supporting an illegitimate govern-

ment that is still not prepared to call an election? In fact, in what circumstances would it do that?

However, there is a strong consensus, one that was renewed in January, about the creation of a joint governance structure that is very much worth considering. That structure would include civil society representatives, in particular women's groups and churches, and all parties on the political chessboard. The Montana group knows that it is essential that a consensus be built, and that the objective is not to keep the government in office, but to have elections in two years. There is a signed, public commitment in writing to that. We believe that rather than supporting a totally illegitimate government, the Government of Canada must support that accord, meet with the signatories, and work with them to see how to proceed.

That risk has to be measured.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. McPherson and Ms. Asselin.

[English]

We will now continue for five minutes with Ms. Vandenberg.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of the witnesses for their testimony.

I would like to address my first question to Ms. Martel.

I want to pick up on what you were saying about the fact that whatever we do, we need to be listening to Haitian feminists and Haitian civil society. You mentioned the sexual violence in the context of the international forces. It sounds like you're saying that the women in Haiti are not asking for an international force. It's more along the humanitarian lines.

You know that Canada is the second-largest humanitarian donor to Haiti after the United States. We also just contributed \$10 million to the UNDP basket fund, which is specifically on building capacity of the police and security forces. Is this the right direction? Should we continue on the humanitarian side and on building up the capacity of Haitian authorities to be able to bring back law and order? Is that what the women in Haiti are asking for as opposed to an international force?

• (0935)

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Martel:** Thank you for your question.

Before answering, I want to point out that I am not speaking on behalf of Haitian feminists. They are fighting their own battle and they discuss it in public.

However, I can answer that it is civil society groups, including women's groups, that are opposing the government. They are the ones who have organized the most and who mobilized strongly at the time against the MINUSTAH, when there were cases of sexual assault. It really was women's groups in Haiti who denounced the situation and spoke out against the impunity granted to soldiers and members of the military who were sent to their country and did not have to submit to the Haitian justice system.

Given that background, certainly an international military intervention like the ones we have seen in the past is not really the solution to the sexual violence happening at present. There are organizations in Haiti that have existed for decades. In fact, the women's movement is one of the first to have really risen up and mobilized after the dictatorship. The women's movement in Haiti is extremely strong. There are organizations that work for women's health and against spousal violence.

Unfortunately, the last times the international community intervened, it did not take that expertise into account. Today, we hope it will be done differently. As Ms. Asselin said, there are many cases of sexual violence. We absolutely have to work with these organizations, because they know how to respond, they know what to do to support the survivors.

I hope that answers your question, Ms. Vandenbeld.

[English]

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** Yes, thank you.

That is the essence of our feminist international assistance policy, to make sure that we are listening to the expertise of local women.

My second question is for Madame Asselin.

You were talking about the gangs and their violence. We've heard at this committee from a children's rights advocate in Haiti. We heard that the gangs are also made up of victims. They are children who have been forcibly separated from their families then recruited into these gangs. So they are victims too.

My question for you is what do we do about that?

Obviously, the answers are not simple when the very people committing the violence are victims themselves.

[Translation]

**Ms. Michèle Asselin:** That's actually a very complicated question.

Our Haitian partners say they know the gang leaders. The reason the gangs are armed is that guns are coming into Haiti. If we're able to control the borders, we should be able to put an end to the trafficking of weapons from Miami, among other places. Organizations are very upset about this, and they want us to take action. If there are no more guns coming into the country, that will help reduce the explosion of gang violence.

We don't think military intervention is needed, but rather a strengthening of the Haitian police. In fact, Canada had begun to do this by training police officers in Haiti. Now we should step up our efforts so that the police in Haiti can play their role and arrest those responsible. The impunity they are granted only strengthens their power. If you want to take care of victims, you have to fight poverty. This is done through education, but it's very difficult to go back to school right now because the roads are blocked and there are too many dangers.

So we have to support the political transition and support the police, so that they can play their role without being threatened, but it's not easy.

• (0940)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Asselin. Perhaps the next speaker will ask you about this.

[English]

Mr. Genuis, for five minutes.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Thank you, Chair.

It's great for me to be back visiting this committee.

I want to start by just asking any or all of the witnesses about these armed gangs themselves. What do we know about their possible motivation, political motivations or otherwise?

Do they have specific goals they want to achieve? Are they organizationally sophisticated or are they chaotic?

What's going on in terms of how the gangs are organized and what they are trying to achieve?

**Mr. Frédéric Boisrond:** If I may, I'd like to answer that question by saying that what we're seeing in Haiti right now is a civil war. One of the gangs, which is named "Mouvement révolutionnaire G9", has an objective of overthrowing the government.

In the past months, they have, in the first place, asked for seats in the government of Ariel Henry; but since the beginning, their idea has been to overthrow the government. Of course, there are ransoms and kidnappings for money and stuff, but the main objective of that group, which was sanctioned by the UN and Canada—Jimmy Chérizier—is to overthrow the government.

I'd like to make sure that we all understand that, because what we are seeing in Haiti is war crime. It's crime against humanity, but also war crime. If we don't put that into the equation, we are going to miss lots of things going on in that country right now.

I'm going—

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Sorry, but can I just probe that point? You mentioned one gang. It sounds to me that understanding it as a rebel force is maybe a more useful frame for our understanding it. Is it representative of the various gangs? Do you have this gang that's trying to overthrow the government and others that are simply using criminal means to enrich themselves, with no specific political goals, or do they all have some kinds of political goals?

**Mr. Frédéric Boisrond:** The one that we talk most about is "G9 en famille", the "Mouvement révolutionnaire".

One of the senators that was sanctioned by Canada, Joseph Lambert, had said at one point, "If ever we want to dismantle the gangs, we also have to keep in mind that there are some of them who are revolutionary gangs."

I have said previously in my speech that the actual political class in Haiti has transformed that country into a *voyoucratie*. This is what I mean. This idea, this ideology of criminal actions in Haiti, comes from the top to the bottom. Keep in mind that what we're seeing in Haiti right now is war crime and war against humanity.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Okay, for our frame we need to understand. I'm getting the impression that we have one prominent revolutionary gang, as well as some purely criminal gangs. Is that correct?

**Mr. Frédéric Boisrond:** Yes, you're correct.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I'm assuming that people would have very different motivations for joining these different gangs, depending on what objectives they're motivated by?

**Mr. Frédéric Boisrond:** Yes. But I want to emphasize that their definition of "revolutionary" is not the way I see a revolution. I just want to make sure that.... They are still criminals, not people who want the good for their country.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** I'm a Conservative, so the idea of "revolution" has a very negative association for me, in general, but thank you for helping for making that distinction to clarify this.

Perhaps I have time for this question, a longer term consideration. Prior to this conflict, I spoke with a lot of people who've had concerns about the challenges with attracting foreign investment into Haiti, saying that there are so many people willing to give development assistance, but not willing to actually invest and try to build businesses and create jobs in Haiti. Is this a long-term challenge? How can we encourage more economic growth through investment as coming alongside development assistance as a tool for building up the country?

• (0945)

**The Chair:** You have 10 seconds.

**Mr. Frédéric Boisrond:** We agree on this. If we want to work on trade capacity-building, security has to be the first item that we have to solve. Why would you invest in a country where you might lose all your investment because of gangs?

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll continue on with Monsieur Brunelle-Duceppe, *pour cinq minutes*.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Mr. Chair, today's panel of witnesses is extremely interesting. I really want to thank everyone. Their testimony is going to help us with the report. Our analysts are taking note of all of this.

Ms. Asselin, I imagine you're aware of the situation. What's happening on the ground right now for the safety of aid workers? We don't hear much about it, and I think it would be important for you to give us a brief summary.

**Ms. Michèle Asselin:** For several years now, Quebec co-operation organizations have set up projects that are supported by Haitian workers. Unfortunately, there are few aid workers from the Quebec co-operation on the ground. It's very difficult now to participate in missions and to be welcomed by our partners, because they are threatened.

There are a whole host of rules related to security, particularly with respect to travel. We need to move all kinds of humanitarian supplies. I was talking about agriculture, which is a huge challenge. We are forced to take alternative means of transportation, such as

small planes, because we can't get from one area to another. This is a big concern.

It's impressive that we can still hold meetings. Thanks to technology and Zoom, we're able to talk to our partners on a regular basis. We realize that they continue to do the work.

I was saying earlier that there were 100,000 displaced people. They are being displaced in the countryside and to their places of origin, and that creates enormous pressure. That's why there is a food crisis, which farmers are also experiencing. There's still great capacity in Haiti, but for the time being, people don't have what they need to produce. It's clear that insecurity threatens everyone in Haiti, including the staff of all the organizations we work with.

On the humanitarian front, there are large non-profit organizations, such as those that are organizing the fight against cholera. I won't be able to go on at length, but I think that these are organizations with great resources, such as the United Nations, that are working to provide an immediate response to cholera and the humanitarian crisis.

We will distribute food, but it's very short term. Our main concern is to ensure the safety of farmers so that they can meet the needs of the population. They can do it, but they need to have the inputs, they need to be able to work safely, and they need to be able to move food around the country.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Are aid workers in Haiti sometimes forced to negotiate with gang leaders and pay them bribes just to have access to the population or a certain territory? Are you aware of that reality?

**Ms. Michèle Asselin:** I'm not aware of the specifics of this reality. I can say one thing, though, because of the lack of fuel everywhere, everybody is forced to buy it on the black market, including Global Affairs Canada staff. This is truly a major crisis.

How far does the influence of gangs extend? According to NGOs, they aren't working with gangs. However, there is certainly a black market for basic necessities, such as fuel, which is the only source of energy. It's not an easy situation.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you very much, Ms. Asselin.

Mr. Boisrond, I only have a minute left, but I really want to hear what you have to say about the civil war, a term you used. I think that's the first time we've heard that here at the committee.

I'd like you to elaborate on that because it'll be helpful for us when we write the report.

• (0950)

**Mr. Frédéric Boisrond:** Most of the gangs wanted to overthrow Jovenel Moïse's government from the start. After that, they always maintained that Ariel Henry's government had to be overthrown. What I'm telling you can be verified: these gangs even publish videos in which they say they want to overthrow this government. Jimmy Cherizier is one of them. The newspaper *Le Nouvelliste* published an article referring to the demands the gangs made to the government. The article stated that they were going to propose a transitional government, a roadmap for the transition—

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** It was like the Montana agreement, and they were basically taking back the government.

**Mr. Frédéric Boisrond:** In fact, the Montana agreement wasn't part of the deal; they would be the ones forming the transitional government. It's all documented, there's no doubt about it.

So it's a civil war because the goal is to overthrow the current government.

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** That's the definition of a civil war. Thank you very much for your answer.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

We'll continue now with Ms. McPherson for five minutes.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** [Technical difficulty—Editor]

**The Chair:** We can't hear you, Ms. McPherson.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Is that better?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** Thank you. I'm sorry about that.

I was just saying, thank you, again, to the witnesses for their testimony. This will be very helpful for us as we put forward recommendations.

Mr. Boisrond, I have some questions for you.

You were speaking about the ways we need to get a level of order in Haiti, before we can do those next pieces in developing the democracy process. One thing you talked about was education for Haitians on democracy. Right now, in Haiti, we know the media has been attacked and journalists have been murdered. There is no capacity for the media to do that.

Is that a role you see countries like Canada playing? Could Canada step in and be part of that portion of the solution? Could we be providing those supports?

**Mr. Frédéric Boisrond:** I have been asking for that, for many years—that Canada be part of this. I have talked about it with Monsieur Carrière, who is the ambassador in Haiti. What Haiti needs, right now, is popular education in democracy.

Overnight, we went from a dictatorship to a democracy, which ended up, in fact, with the people having only one real power, which was the power to vote. The right to vote was stolen right away. Right off the bat, it was stolen. People in Haiti have no idea what living in a democracy is like, because they have not lived in it—at least, right now—for almost 60 years. I am 65 years old. I was born in 1958, the year Duvalier came to power, so anybody my

age has known only dictatorship and only a few episodes of democracy. This is a country where people have never been exposed to what democracy is.

I encourage Canada and ask, one more time, that we help popular education in democracy, not only for the political class but also for regular citizens, so they understand what is right and what the responsibilities are.

Democracy is built on the trust we have in each other. When you have been living, for 65 years, in a country where you don't know who you can trust...this is living in a dictatorship. Dictatorship is not only a structure but also a culture. If we don't help Haitians get rid of that culture, we are only going to see this over and over again.

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** That is well said. Thank you very much for that.

The other thing that we know needs to happen in Haiti, right now, is stopping the gang violence, so that some of these things can move forward.

The Canadian government has sanctioned some Haitians. Do you think there is a need to increase that list of sanctions? Should we be doing more, using those tools for sanctioning individuals—not countries, of course, but individuals? Would that be useful?

**Mr. Frédéric Boisrond:** Yes, it would be useful and I hope you're going to put some more names on the list. This is going to send a message straight to the political and business classes that things done in that country....

In fact, putting people on the list is a message to Canadians. It tells Canadians that Canada is not ready to deal with criminals. It is not ready to deal with people who are keeping Haitians in poverty and terror. This is a message to Canada—to ourselves. What are we, as Canadians, ready to do, not only to help Haitians but also to protect our image as a country? Are we ready to make that change? I hope the list is going to go up.

• (0955)

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I know I don't have very much time, but I would also say the list is important. The enforcement is, of course, more important. I always wonder if the enforcement is as strong as it needs to be.

I promise you that I will continue to push on that end, from my side.

Mr. Chair, I believe I am done.

**The Chair:** Exactly, but thank you, Ms. McPherson. You timed yourself amazingly well.

We'll now continue with Mr. Ehsassi for five minutes.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Allow me to start off by thanking all three of our witnesses for their expertise and insights. This has been a really valuable session.

As all three of them have made it abundantly clear, we're watching a confluence of crises going on in Haiti. The one that really breaks anyone's heart is the conditions on the ground in Haiti. As I understand it, many of the banks, schools and hospitals are closed.

If I could start off with Ms. Asselin, how do we fortify the efforts of organizations on the ground in Haiti, so that they can do a better job of doing what they are there to do?

As you know, the conditions are very chaotic. What do we do, as a country, to lend them a helping hand to stabilize the situation?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Michèle Asselin:** I'll repeat what Ms. Martel said.

Every day on the ground, we're seeing that Canada's co-operation needs to be strengthened, and it needs to be done with flexibility. The funding we have from Global Affairs Canada has to adapt to a reality that is very much in flux.

We have volunteer-sending programs that last seven years. We have medium- and long-term programs, and we applaud those longer-term programs. However, the current co-operation programs in Haiti need to be very flexible in order to continually adapt to the situation. It's not always easy for a big machine.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Ms. Asselin, what I'm talking about is capacity-building on the ground.

How do we do that to ensure that all those organizations that may be on the ground in Haiti have the capacity?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Michèle Asselin:** That's what I was trying to answer. Perhaps I misspoke.

Canada is providing aid currently. More can be done, but for this aid to be as effective as possible, we must work with non-profit organizations in all areas, including health, education, justice and agriculture. We need to be able to respond quickly to needs, and flexibility is important. We are in discussions with Global Affairs Canada to try to find solutions.

As I said before, and I'll say it again, we need to provide support to the Haitian police to ensure some security. The Canadian government must take action.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Thank you very much.

Now, if I can, I'll go to Mr. Boisrond. I also found your testimony very compelling, especially what little faith you have in the old political elites. You seem to have much greater confidence in younger Haitians who are, obviously, on the ground and familiar with all of the challenges.

What do we do to support younger leaders in Haiti, to make sure that we can move forward?

**Mr. Frédéric Boisrond:** Let's work with them. Let's invite them.

I was listening to those two senators who were sanctioned by Canada. That was a surprise, because they said they have always

been allies of Canada. They were invited by the Government of Canada and by the Government of Quebec.

Maybe Canada should start inviting the younger leaders in Haiti, have some leadership school and help them build their leadership through some programs. I think this would be very helpful.

• (1000)

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** Absolutely. You have certainly highlighted that dynamic.

I understand I'm out of time.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** You have 30 seconds, but it's up to you.

**Mr. Ali Ehsassi:** I will concede my 30 seconds.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Ehsassi.

We will continue with Mr. Genuis for five minutes.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you, Chair.

There may be a bit of background noise where I am, so I will mute myself in between asking the questions.

I wonder if our witnesses could share a bit about how, in particular, Canada could build security capacity. What steps can we take to support the development of strong armed forces and police forces that are able to provide Haitians with the security they need over the long term?

**Mr. Frédéric Boisrond:** There's a sociologist in Haiti. Her name is Michèle Oriol. She said that one of the really big problems of the national police in Haiti is not necessarily the materiel they have. She said the recruitment of the police in Haiti is part of the failure of this organization. The people who are recruited for the police don't have the capacity from the beginning, from off the bat. They don't have the capacity to accomplish the work itself.

Another thing that I think is important is that the salary paid to a policeman or woman in Haiti, at this very moment, is about \$325 Canadian a month. This makes the police in themselves very open to corruption. In fact, Barbecue Jimmy Chérizier is an ex-policeman. Many of the people who are in the gangs, all the gang leaders, were policemen. Why? First, they weren't prepared for that very sensitive position; and second, they are underpaid; and third, even if you train them, they might not have the capacity from the beginning to absorb the training.

This must be considered in the solution. How do we hire? How do we train and how do we pay?



**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Just building on that, and I'd love to bring in some of the other witnesses as well, I think in some countries—I think of Georgia and Ukraine—at points in the past they pursued very dramatic police reform programs. It was explained to me by a previous Georgian ambassador that basically they realized that the existing police were doing more harm than good, and so they fired them all and replaced them with a whole new group.

I'm not suggesting being too specific, but are there things that we can learn from those models and is this now a time for a dramatic reform of the security apparatus in Haiti?

**Mr. Frédéric Boisrond:** Yes, I would like to leave room to the other two witnesses, if they want to take the floor on this, but still, what I'm saying is that whatever it is, the police in Haiti need reform because there is a small army in the country that is not relevant in the solution. So the solution that was picked by Canada and the international community is to work with the police. Actually, what I'm saying is that the police are too weak to be part of the solution the way it is.

In fact, what we're seeing now is the failure of the police in themselves. So whatever the solution that's going to be picked, the police have to be reformed under the three elements that I mentioned: recruitment, salary, and equipment, of course.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Thank you. Let's bring in the others.

**The Chair:** We have a last minute and then we'll conclude our panel.

Please go ahead for one minute, Mr. Genuis.

• (1005)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Yes, I'm very curious for the reflections of the other witnesses.

Go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Martel:** I'll be brief so Ms. Asselin can answer as well.

I just want to say that Canada has a long history of involvement in security sector reform in Haiti. The mandate has changed. At the time, it was perhaps more integrated. Since then, Canada's involvement has been more in the form of technical assistance or training.

We should think about the importance not only of training and arming police officers, but also of ensuring that this goes hand in hand with the fight against impunity and the strengthening of the judicial system. How can police officers be motivated to move forward in their work if impunity is then granted? All of this must go hand in hand.

**The Chair:** Ms. Asselin, you have 15 seconds.

**Ms. Michèle Asselin:** My comments were very much along the same lines. We must also reach out to groups that are involved in justice, the justice system and human rights to discuss this issue.

I agree with Mr. Boisrond and Ms. Martel on this point.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

[*English*]

I'd like to thank the witnesses for being here today, in person and online. A sincere thank you for your testimony. It will be reflected in our work. We have hand-clapping on Zoom and, again, thank you for being here.

Members, we are going to move into a closed session. I will ask those who aren't part of the committee to allow us to have a closed session meeting, and those online, please do go as swiftly as you can to that closed session link.

*Merci beaucoup.*

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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