



Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5377th meeting

Wednesday, 22 February 2006, 3.55 p.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Bolton	(United States of America)
<i>Members:</i>	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Congo	Mr. Biabaroh-Iboro
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Greece	Mrs. Papadopoulou
	Japan	Mr. Omura
	Peru	Mr. De Rivero
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Bye
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi

Agenda

The question concerning Haiti

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The meeting was called to order at 3.55 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The question concerning Haiti

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 37 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Gérard Latortue, Interim Prime Minister of the Republic of Haiti.

It is so decided.

I request the representative of the Protocol and Liaison Service to escort His Excellency Mr. Gérard Latortue, Interim Prime Minister of the Republic of Haiti, to a seat at the Council table.

Mr. Gérard Latortue, Interim Prime Minister of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Juan Gabriel Valdés, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Valdés to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I give the floor to Mr. Gérard Latortue, Interim Prime Minister of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Latortue (Haiti) (spoke in French): Allow me at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for having invited me here today, which will allow me not only to provide the Council with firsthand information on Haiti but also give me the opportunity to correct the wrong impression that is sometimes given by the headlines of the international press, which has long been accustomed to projecting a negative image of Haiti and

which sometimes has trouble grasping and conveying the real and deep-seated changes that have been taking place in that country, especially during the last two years of democratic transition.

I should like to thank in particular the Security Council, as well as the international community, which, in two years, have not once hesitated to come to the rescue of my country. Indeed, the Council adopted a number of resolutions that made it possible to set up the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and enabled cooperation with Haiti. I wish in particular to thank the Council for its most recent resolution — resolution 1658 (2006).

I should like to convey the gratitude of the Haitian people to the 43 countries, representing all continents, that are contributing troops and police to ensure the country's stability. I take this opportunity to reiterate once again the condolences and to convey the sympathy of the Haitian people in connection with those MINUSTAH soldiers — those soldiers of peace — who gave their lives in the accomplishment of their noble mission. I should like in particular to express my condolences to the Government and the people of Brazil in connection with the death of the Brazilian general killed in circumstances we are familiar with.

This spirit of solidarity on the part of the Haitian people has a real value, especially in times of tension, such as when accusations were made that led to an improvement in the relations between MINUSTAH forces and the Haitian national police and helped us in particular to make their joint action more effective.

I must also congratulate in particular the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdés, who, as the civilian Head of MINUSTAH, was able to establish relations with the various segments of Haitian society — in the public and private sectors alike — that have made it possible truly to achieve the highest level of effectiveness in the work that MINUSTAH is doing in Haiti.

After two years of a transition that was more eventful than we would have liked, the time of reckoning has come. The Council is aware that the main task facing the Transitional Government was to organize free, fair, democratic, transparent and, most important, inclusive elections with the participation of all Haitian political actors.

I can inform the Council this afternoon that that mission was accomplished even more successfully than we had hoped. There were many threats to the holding of the elections — primarily institutional and organizational problems, which made people fear, until the very last minute, that it would be impossible successfully to hold the elections.

I should like to thank the Security Council, which last month issued a statement by its then President, the Ambassador of Tanzania. Indeed, the Council supported the holding of the elections, which were scheduled to take place on 7 February at the latest.

There were other problems as well, such as insecurity, which affected a number of neighbourhoods in the capital. For a long time, we were afraid that that insecurity would lead to a very low participation rate, which, as the Council can imagine, would have undermined the legitimacy of the process. Fortunately, however, once again MINUSTAH did a wonderful job, and, thanks to cooperation with the national police, under the leadership of Mr. Mario Andresol, we were able to maintain a level of security that made it possible for the people to go and vote in large numbers.

Press reports all stated that Haitian people from every walk of life voted in large numbers on the day of the elections. Of course, they did so because there was security, but there was another reason as well: the Haitian population trusted the Transitional Government, which, on many occasions, had reaffirmed its neutrality vis-à-vis the electoral process. The Haitians knew that their votes would count and that there would be no attempt on the part of the Government to manipulate the expression of their will.

Once again, we have to say that the results exceeded all of our expectations. The participation rate was greater than 65 per cent of registered voters. As the Council knows, this percentage is rarely achieved, even in countries with a long democratic tradition.

But the Haitian people understood — and the Government told them as well — that the only way that we could bring about change in Haiti was to vote. Personally, on many occasions I reminded the Haitian people that there was only one really effective weapon to bring about the desired change, and that was their ballot. The Haitian people showed this in a remarkable way.

Elections took place smoothly, with a bit of a delay at the start of the operations. This was due primarily to a lack of organizational ability, which exists in all Haitian institutions. Instead of beginning at 6 a.m., the voting really began around 8.30 or 9.00. In spite of everything Haitian voters proved to be very patient. Imagine this — voters who left home at 3 a.m. and sometimes walked for two hours in order to arrive at 5 a.m. at a voting centre that did not open until 9 a.m. And still, all you had to do was see the conviviality in the faces of the voters. There was no sign of impatience, there was no sign of violence. In fact, a large number of foreign journalists who were expecting to see blood and violence in Port-au-Prince that day wondered, “Well, what did we come to look for in this country? Nothing is happening” — as if something only happens when that something is bad. Well, to the world’s great surprise, Haitians showed their good faith and, above all, their confidence in the democratic process, and that they had recognized the need to vote for the candidate of their choice.

The concern for transparency in organizing the elections almost led to a lack of understanding on the part of the people. Why? Because using rather advanced technology for the first time in an election campaign, the Electoral Council, with the help of the Organization of American States and MINUSTAH, decided not to proclaim the results at one time, when all of the ballots had been gathered. They decided to provide partial results, and this led to enormous problems.

How did this happen? Well, the partial results began in Port-au-Prince, where one of the candidates, Mr. René Préval, was unquestionably the most popular. In some neighbourhoods in Port-au-Prince he managed to get almost 80 or 85 per cent of the votes. But as one moved away from Port-au-Prince and as the votes came in from the interior, this percentage decreased. Then too, the Director of the Provisional Electoral Council had announced that the results would be proclaimed in three days. Five days went by without the Council being able to get the final results, and Mr. Préval’s percentage declined every time. This created a problem. The population thought that the time beyond the three days was time that the Government wanted to use in order to steal Mr. Préval’s victory.

Despite a message to the nation in which I pointed out to the people that the Government was completely neutral and would respect the people’s will,

people did not believe this, and things almost turned sour. But happily the Provisional Electoral Council, in its wisdom, was able to find a formula that made it possible to announce the results, by sharing the blank ballots in a proportional way. Here, perhaps, an explanation is needed.

Our Constitution demands that all blank ballots have to be counted, without specifying how they are to be counted. At some voting stations, there sometimes were almost 40 per cent of blank ballots. Now, I am sure that all members know that blank ballots are a way for a sophisticated electorate to express rejection. But that is not the case in Haiti. Imagine, as I said a few minutes ago, these voters who left their homes at three o'clock in the morning, who sometimes walked two or three hours and who waited three hours to vote. One can guess that they did not do that in order to submit a blank ballot. It was to express their will.

The results of the presidential election were finally announced, and Mr. René Préval, former President of the Republic, leader of the Lespwa party and former Prime Minister under Mr. Aristide, was declared the winner of the elections, with 51.2 per cent of the votes that were cast. The second candidate, after him, obtained barely 11 per cent of the votes. I think that the choice of the Haitian people was clear, unambiguous and in accordance with a legal interpretation of the Constitution.

And so, we have a President-elect who will be sworn in on 29 March, Constitution Day. For us, this is the way of symbolically showing that Haiti is returning to a constitutional order. A second round of elections will take place on 19 March to elect deputies and senators, and the President of the Republic will be sworn in before parliament. We hope that there will be no problems and that the second round will take place on 19 March, as planned, and that power will be transferred on 29 March.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite the Security Council to visit Haiti — just as it did some months ago. If the Council could only be with us in Port-au-Prince to celebrate this victory for democracy, I am sure that it would be an important sign of the international community's support for the democratic process. We will need that support, because today the Haitian people, who wanted to express their devotion to the principles of democracy, need the support of the international community to be able to continue to move

in that direction. As Council members know, elections are only a first step along the long path that can lead us to stability, to democracy and to economic and social development.

Democracy, as members know, is not simply the organization of an election, however free it may be. Now we need to work to establish and strengthen democratic institutions. I call for the understanding and the solidarity of everyone here. We will need to be accompanied by the international community for some time yet. The international community should not make the same mistake that it did 10 years ago by abandoning Haiti to its fate once an elected Government was in place. Democracy is taking its first steps in my country. It needs to be accompanied and supported in order to grow, to develop and, above all, to become irreversible.

I welcome the Security Council's decision to extend the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for six months. But I believe that possible new changes to support MINUSTAH will have to be considered, in particular with the new Government. Indeed, resolution 1658 (2006) states that very clearly.

But that does not prevent us from beginning to think now about a certain number of post-election activities — particularly the assistance that will need to be given to the new democratic institutions, such as the parliament, whose members will need training, the municipalities and communities. True democracy must begin with the communities, continue at the level of the commune, arrive at the Senate and the department level and finally reach the President of the Republic if we are to have democratic management of public affairs.

The United Nations already has a mission in Haiti that is studying changes to be made to ensure that there will be a certain number of post-election activities to bolster the new parliamentarians, newly elected officials and new mayors. Then we will have to set up a permanent electoral council and thus make permanent the gains of the process now under way.

We will also need such assistance in the area of justice. If there is still a weak spot in Haiti today, it is surely the judicial system and the need to professionalize the national police. Those are the two important points that I would like the Council to think about a bit as it takes decisions concerning Haiti in the

future: professionalization of the police and reform of the judicial system.

We in the Transitional Government have tried very hard to improve the quality of good economic governance. I hope that the new Government will go in the same direction, but it will need the support of the international community in that area as well. From the information that I learned last night, after the World Bank meeting on Haiti's future held yesterday in Washington, I believe that all donors have recognized the need to establish a programme to support democracy in Haiti beyond the elections.

Already, in Brussels, at our most recent meeting with the European Union, we have agreed to extend the Interim Cooperation Framework beyond the date initially planned, September 2006, to December 2007. Here again, I appeal urgently to the international community to review the mechanisms for international assistance and cooperation. We must, at all costs, avoid sprinkling little projects here and there and must come up with a comprehensive development plan that could be discussed with the newly elected Government.

I am already convinced that, in Haiti in the coming months, we will need fewer military personnel but many more engineers — many more men and women dedicated to solving the problems of economic and social development. I wish to reiterate what many

others have said before me: the root cause of the problems of instability in Haiti does not have only military solutions. We must search for the deep-rooted cause of instability in the poverty, unemployment and social inequality that exist in Haiti.

Because today is surely my last opportunity to speak before the Security Council, I would like all members to take note of these points so that, in the programmes to be established, high priority will be given to the basic infrastructure that is essential for the economic and social development of Haiti.

Finally, I simply wish to tell the Council how pleased I am with the cooperation that the Security Council has extended to my country over the past two years — cooperation on the part of all Council members in support of the actions we have taken. I hope that it will continue and that the entire international community will continue to support Haiti.

The President: I thank Prime Minister Latortue for his statement.

Before adjourning the meeting, I should like to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Security Council, our appreciation to the Interim Prime Minister of the Republic of Haiti for coming to address the Council.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.