



## SECURITY COUNCIL INFORMAL EXPERT GROUP ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

### Summary of the meeting on the situation in Haiti, held on June 8, 2023

On 8 June 2023, the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security (IEG) convened a meeting on the situation in Haiti. The members were briefed by María Isabel Salvador, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), accompanied by colleagues from the mission and the UN Country Team, as well as Assistant Secretary-General Jane Connors, Victims' Rights Advocate. Council Members exchanged questions and answers with the briefers, after which UN Women and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict presented recommendations and shared additional observations at the end of the meeting.

#### Questions from Council Members:

Security Council members asked several questions about the linkages between arms proliferation and the increase in sexual and gender-based violence in Haiti, and particularly by gangs in Port-au-Prince, and additional guidance on how the Security Council can help address gender equality issues, including through specific provisions in the mandate of BINUH. There were questions about the capacity needed in the mission for gender equality and women's protection and concerns about delays in filling existing vacancies in these areas. Council Members also inquired about the development of a national action plan on women, peace and security, the measures taken by the UN to address sexual exploitation and abuse, and whether the UN had articulated the parameters that would be required in a non-UN international force to ensure that it would protect women and girls effectively.

#### Main points raised in the meeting:

- The rise in gang violence is impeding progress on women, peace and security. Gang violence is expanding at an alarming rate in areas previously considered relatively safe in Port-au-Prince and outside the capital, particularly the Artibonite department, north of the capital. According to data collected by the Haitian National Police and by BINUH, violent criminal incidents in the first quarter of 2023 almost tripled the number registered in the same period in 2022.
- Almost all the documented cases of gender-based violence concern women and girls, and half of them concern girls. Women and girls living in areas under the influence of gangs are at constant risk of rape, including collective rape, and other acts of sexual violence, as documented in detail by a joint report by BINUH and OHCHR published last October. In some instances, the victims were raped in front of their children, after having witnessed the execution of their husbands, to instill fear or punish civilians in areas controlled by other gangs. Women and girls also become victims of gang violence while moving across neighborhoods on foot or in public transport to carry out their daily activities, or are forced to become sexual partners of gang members in exchange for food, water, or protection for themselves or their families. Kidnapped women and girls are often victims of sexual violence in captivity. In some cases, the kidnappers use recorded videos of the rapes to extort ransom payments from the victims' relatives.
- Multisectoral assistance to survivors of sexual violence remains limited, as the very few national partners lack resources and poor coordination and difficult access to affected areas further

hampers the effectiveness of service delivery. However, the humanitarian appeal's component on gender-based violence prevention and response remains one of the most chronically underfunded. Impunity remains the norm for most cases of sexual violence, fueled by insecurity, corruption, and lack of means. For example, the specialized police units lack the capacity or training to successfully tackle sexual crimes.

- For the first time, the annual report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence featured a dedicated section on Haiti and has listed a party in its annex: the G-9 Family and Allies gang led by Jimmy Chérizier, also listed by the sanctions committee. It is important that the Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence in Haiti are strengthened to be able to provide a more detailed picture to both the Security Council and the sanctions committee.
- Forced displacement of thousands of people because of the gangs' turf wars is depriving women and girls of the family and community safety nets and exposing them to more abuse and sexual violence. Women and girls represent 58 per cent of the internally displaced persons and are exposed to greater risk for their life and health. 52 per cent of shelters have no toilet facilities.
- Despite a provision in the Haitian Constitution requiring a minimum 30 per cent quota of women at "all levels of national life," representation in political institutions remains one of the lowest in the world. For example, in the most recent legislature (2016-2020), there were only 4 women among the 149 Members of Parliament. The situation is substantially better at the local level.
- The Government led by Ariel Henry includes 5 women among its 16 ministers and, for the first time, a woman was appointed Minister of Justice and Public Security, though on an interim basis. One of Haiti's most recognized constitutional experts, a female law professor (and presidential candidate in 2010), Mirlande Manigat assumed the chairmanship of the High Transition Council, a three-member body established to help strengthen national consensus and steer Haiti through the transition towards the restoration of democratic institutions following elections. Several women's organizations and women leaders actively participated in the Political Forum on security, reforms and governance organized by the High Council for the Transition on 23 and 24 May. However, in closed doors negotiations and consultations women's representation remains weak.
- While women magistrates and lawyers often remain confined to secondary roles, positive developments were seen in the Haitian judicial system with more women appointed at the highest level. The Court of Appeal of Port-au-Prince is currently presided by a woman and various public prosecutor's offices have more women substitutes and clerks. In addition, on 26 February, three women judges were appointed to fill the eight vacant positions of the Court of Cassation.
- Women account for only 11.7 per cent of members of the Haitian National Police, and amongst senior ranks the percentage drops below 5 per cent.
- With BINUH support, the Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Disarmament, Disengagement, Reintegration and Community Violence Reduction (DDR-CVR) extended its cooperation to community-based civil society, including youth and women's organizations, for the implementation of the national strategy, including its specific pillar on protection and sexual and gender-based violence. In addition, a dedicated working group was established to enhance the participation of women and women's organizations under the joint leadership of the Ministry for Women Rights and the Ombudsman.
- Other UN interventions mentioned include the Peacebuilding Fund's support for women's participation in community dialogue platforms in neighborhoods affected by gang violence, and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund's support to projects led by local women's organizations.
- The mission has a limited role in arms control, although UNODC leads the UN's work in this area in Haiti and women participate in UN-supported trainings on Weapons and Ammunition

Management. However, the presence of high-caliber weapons and ammunitions in Haiti is not an issue that can be resolved by the UN, or even fully by the national authorities, but at the point of departure of the weapons trafficked into Haiti. The UN noted that this is something that they expect the panel of experts and the chair of the sanctions committee, visiting later in June, to look deeper into, as one of their points of emphasis will be the role of economic elites supporting the trafficking of arms and their connection with the gangs.

- The UN is filling the vacancies for a women’s protection adviser and a P4-level gender advisor soon, but will be seeking support for additional capacity for these functions.
- If deployed, a non-UN international force should receive extensive pre-deployment training on both sexual exploitation and abuse and conflict-related sexual violence. There is a growing consensus among national stakeholders and UN colleagues in Haiti that such an international force should not be a military force, but a specialized police force, and that democratic elections should only be pursued once the situation has stabilized.
- The UN, under the leadership of UN Women, is working on the adoption of a national action plan on women, peace and security, but this is currently not a priority for national authorities and is further hampered by the absence of elected institutions. At the moment, UN Women is focusing on consultations with women’s groups and local stakeholders in different departments, to ensure that support for such a plan is broad and not restricted to discussions in the capital.
- Progress is being made to expedite the resolution of pending paternity and child support claims relating to MINUSTAH personnel, including through a new framework of cooperation and the approval of a new project supported by the Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Trust Fund, which will provide assistance to 40 mothers and caregivers and 48 children. This support will be in addition to the dozens of victims already coordinated by the Senior Victims’ Rights Officer in Haiti, including school fees for children fathered by MINUSTAH personnel years ago and left behind. However, progress is slow due to legal hurdles, uneven commitment of States and the fathers, and insufficient support for the victims, the children, and their caretakers in Haiti, and addressing paternity cases one by one, Member State by Member State, will not result in the best possible outcome for the victims and children nor the Organization.

### **Recommendations:**

The following recommendations were presented by UN Women, as the secretariat of the IEG.<sup>1</sup>

In the negotiations on the mandate renewal for BINUH, the Security Council should retain all existing references to women, peace and security in the preamble and operational paragraphs of its resolutions on Haiti since 2019, and consider adding the following:

- Demand the full participation of women, including young women, in all political dialogues and transitional arrangements, and request that the UN report periodically on their level of representation in key decision-making and conflict resolution processes, including any initiatives to reform the constitution or conduct elections, and all efforts to fight corruption, to curb the illicit flow of weapons into Haiti, and to reduce violence in the community.
- Request the UN to ensure that the panel of experts of the sanctions committee can consult systematically with women’s organizations, have regular access to gender expertise, and integrates a gender perspective in all aspects of its reporting.

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<sup>1</sup> These recommendations are suggestions from UN participants in this meeting or the background note prepared by the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group ahead of the meeting, in consultation with other UN entities, including the Office of the SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict. They are not recommendations from the Informal Expert Group as a whole or Council Members.

- Ensure that gender equality issues and attention to sexual and gender-based violence are prioritized in any additional deployments or international support to help the Haitian government tackle the armed gangs.
- Call on the United Nations and other international partners to support the Government of Haiti in the development, financing, and implementation of a national action plan on women, peace and security, and urge that women's civil society organizations have a lead role in its elaboration.
- Recall that all humanitarian efforts must be based on systematic gender analysis, collect age-, sex-, and disability-disaggregated data, ensure that local women's organizations are meaningfully involved at all stages, and strengthen the capacities of state institutions in this regard.
- Urge that women's organizations are included in humanitarian and disaster risk coordination mechanisms at national, departmental, and local level, and support investments in the capacity and resources of women's organizations in preventing and responding to disasters.
- Provide direct financial support to women-led local peacebuilding initiatives, including through long-term and flexible funding for civil society organizations, and support coalition-building among women's networks and the mobilization of women as peace mediators at the community level.
- Encourage international partners to scale up their support to reproductive health and gender-based violence services, including to address gang-related violence, and urge humanitarian and development actors to provide holistic and victim-centered services that encompass medical and psychological support, and legal, socioeconomic, and reintegration assistance.
- Urge the government and its international partners to strengthen capacity and coordination efforts in the relevant units within the Haitian National Police and the justice system working on sexual violence.

The Co-Chairs thanked the participants and encouraged all Council Members to follow-up on the important issues raised in the discussion.