

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

May 12, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520
May 12, 2025

Dear Secretary Rubio:

I write to urge you to prioritize U.S. efforts to address the security, humanitarian and democratic governance crises in Haiti in light of the continuing deteriorating conditions on the ground that pose significant risks to U.S. national interests. Absent strong U.S. leadership, Haiti is on the path to becoming a failed state overrun by armed criminal groups—a tragedy that would exacerbate an already dire humanitarian catastrophe for the Haitian people, produce a mass migration emergency with huge regional implications and risk consolidating a transnational criminal and drug trafficking hub mere hundreds of miles from U.S. shores. As you consider U.S. policy toward Haiti, I hope you will consider the recommendations set forth in this letter.

Despite some laudable efforts by the United States and international community to address the situation in Haiti—namely Kenya’s leadership over the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission and the establishment of a coalition Transitional Presidential Council – these efforts have failed to change the status quo and the Haitian people are worse off today than they were even a year ago. Significant cuts in U.S. foreign assistance to Haiti and the Administration’s imposition of a 10 percent tariff on Haitian goods only exacerbate these crises.

It is in the U.S. national interest to act before it is too late. Given your strong leadership on issues in the Western Hemisphere, your support in Congress for Haiti, including the Haitian Criminal Collusion and Transparency Act, and your positive comments during your confirmation hearing on supporting international engagement on Haiti, I am confident you understand that Haiti’s security situation has direct security implications for the United States. While there should be a strong emphasis on burden sharing, it is in the U.S. national interest to lean forward, not pull back from Haiti.

As you and your staff engage in a review process to shape the Trump Administration’s Haiti strategy, I encourage you to consider the following five policy areas:

- **Strengthen Support for the MSS:** In the short term, continued political, logistical and financial support for the MSS is the most feasible and realistic option to stabilize the security crisis. To rectify the MSS’ challenges to visibly improve the security situation thus far, the Administration should ensure that the MSS moves beyond a primary focus on protecting critical infrastructure to sustained, kinetic operations against criminal groups and key targets with a strategic focus on gaining and maintaining territorial control. This means developing

plans for bolstering life support areas to accommodate an MSS force of 2,500 – 5,000 personnel, as current force size is not conducive to achieving sustainable security objectives. The Administration should also develop concrete metrics for evaluating MSS progress, expand the number of military personnel with counter insurgency expertise and ensure sufficient staff and budget to create the twelve operational bases established in the 2024 Concept of Operation agreed to by the United States and Kenya. I also recommend that your team engages in productive high-level conversations with Russia and China to lay the groundwork for a UN mission, recognizing that the UN is the only multilateral institution capable of responding to a crisis of this magnitude.

- **Prioritize Sustainable Democratic Governance:** U.S. and CARICOM leadership were instrumental in forming the governing Transitional Presidential Council, whose legitimacy is essential for Haiti’s long-term stability. The U.S. and CARICOM should encourage Transitional Council representatives to address serious, credible allegations of corruption. I urge you to simultaneously ensure that Haitian women, who are disproportionately affected by the ongoing crisis, have meaningful representation within the Transitional Council. As you know, the participation of women in peace processes of this nature increases the probability of such frameworks being upheld in the long-term by 35 percent. I am also concerned that current plans for referendums and elections this year are not realistic given current security conditions, and as such, are highly vulnerable to criminal infiltration, which risks undermining the democratic legitimacy of Haiti’s future constitution and government. Once the conditions are set for elections to be conducted in a safe, free and fair manner, the United States should partner with the Organization of American States (OAS) to send an electoral observation mission and provide capacity building to the Provisional Electoral Council.
- **Ensure Flow of International Assistance:** The United States and its international partners should ensure a steady flow of critical assistance to Haiti, focusing on: 1) addressing acute levels of food insecurity; 2) restoring Haiti’s judicial and prison capacities, including by supporting the newly created specialized judicial units on corruption and mass atrocities and through the development of one or multiple modular prison facilities within Haiti; 3) supporting electoral capacity building; 4) maintaining programs that rehabilitate Haitian youth coerced into joining criminal groups, including through the recently established Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) initiatives established by the government; 5) support services for victims of gang violence and displacement; and 6) protection for internally displaced people and survivors of sexual violence, given escalating rates of gender-based violence against Haitian women and girls. I also urge you to reconsider numerous planned program terminations to U.S. foreign assistance in Haiti. The United States should mobilize an international effort parallel to the MSS focused on both humanitarian support for the Haitian people and efforts to rebuild a functional criminal justice system.

- **Bolster the Strategic Use of Sanctions:** You previously cosponsored the Haiti Criminal Collusion Transparency Act to put an end to rampant collusion between political and economic elites and criminal gangs in Haiti. The bill has already gone through markup in the House, and I am working across the aisle to reintroduce a Senate companion. As Congress works to pass the bill this year, I encourage you to use your existing authorities, including the Global Magnitsky Act, to sanction Haitian armed criminal actors and their political and economic enablers. This includes working within the UN Security Council to propose additional sanctions against elites supporting gangs, an effort that has unfortunately stalled. I am, however, deeply skeptical whether the proposed Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) designations of Haitian gangs is necessary to hold such actors accountable, which may hamper the provision of humanitarian assistance and make it more difficult to rehabilitate Haitian minors coerced into these groups. I am also concerned that some of the Haitian actors calling for FTO designations are the same actors with known links to Haitian criminal gangs.
- **Target Arms Trafficking Networks into Haiti:** There are as many as 500,000 illicit firearms in Haiti's criminal market, the vast majority of which are trafficked to Haiti from the United States. Ending Haiti's gang violence is not possible without taking our own concrete steps to investigate and dismantle this arms trafficking network. I urge you to work with your inter-agency partners and Dominican Republic authorities to improve illicit firearms tracing and recovery in Haiti.

In your confirmation hearing, you praised the extraordinary bravery of the Haitian National Police and the leadership of the Kenyans in leading the MSS, but acknowledged that "there is no easy answer" to solving the crisis in Haiti and that "it is going to take a long time" and additional U.S. engagement with foreign partners. I could not agree more.

We both recognize that the United States needs to be at the forefront of these efforts in sustained coordination with the Haitian people and regional partners. I ask that you take my recommendations into consideration and I look forward to robust congressional coordination on Haiti issues moving forward.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member