

**U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Chairman Richard Lugar
Opening Statement for Hearing on Haiti
July 15, 2003**

Today, the Foreign Relations Committee meets to examine U.S. policy toward Haiti. We are pleased to have two impressive panels to discuss this issue. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, Marc Grossman, and Undersecretary of the Treasury for International Affairs, John Taylor, will represent the Administration. On our second panel we will hear from Dr. Paul Farmer, Co-Founder of the Program in Infectious Disease and Social Change at the Harvard Medical School; Mr. Steven Forester, the Senior Policy Advocate for Haitian Women of Miami; and Mr. Rudolph Moise (MOIS), President & CEO of the Haitian Broadcasting Network based in Miami. We welcome our witnesses and look forward to their testimony.

In recent months, this Committee has examined the problem of failed states and the risks they pose to U.S. national security. We have held hearings on Afghanistan and post-conflict Iraq that underscored how these nations could become incubators of terrorism if reconstruction efforts do not succeed. We also know that failed states can have negative consequences for international security beyond any direct links to terrorism. As we have seen in Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone, failed states usually lead to violence, humanitarian crises, immigration and refugee flows, and illicit economic activity.

In our own hemisphere, Haiti stands out as a continuing tragedy. Its prospects for advancement have been marred by the depredations of authoritarian rule, interspersed with periods of chronic political instability and violence. Haiti is the poorest country in the hemisphere with an annual per capita income of only \$225. According to World Bank statistics, life expectancy in Haiti in 2001 was just 52.4 years and dropping. The Haitian political system has proved incapable of dealing with problems that deepen poverty, such as the spread of AIDS, severe environmental degradation, and illiteracy. Haiti's on-going political crisis has debilitated the state, undermined respect for human rights, and exacerbated an already worrisome humanitarian situation.

For two centuries the American and Haitian peoples have had a close relationship. In contemporary times this relationship has been driven by the hundreds of thousands of Haitians living and working in the United States. Haitian-Americans are making vital contributions to our society and economy. Each year, Haitians living in the U.S. send more than \$700 million back to their home country, an amount that equals an estimated 20 percent of Haiti's gross domestic product.

Although Haiti is a small nation, its troubles have consequences for the United States. Corruption, drug trafficking, and illegal migration are areas of deep concern for our two

countries. Mass migration has the potential to create instability in the region and undermine efforts to improve border control.

The people of Haiti have suffered long, and their chances for improved conditions are slim as long as Haiti's protracted political crisis continues. The current political crisis began with flawed legislative elections in May 2000, where the results of seven Senate contests were decided under questionable circumstances. Subsequent Presidential elections in November 2000 were boycotted by the opposition.

The international community, led by the United States, has designed a guide for Haiti to resolve the latest political crisis. That guide is contained in OAS Resolution 822, which lays out specific steps the Government of Haiti and other political actors must take to fulfill the promise of true democracy in Haiti.

This hearing is intended to give the Committee an opportunity to examine in depth ways that the U.S. Congress and our government can contribute to positive change in Haiti. Among other issues, I look forward to insights into the current Haitian political crisis, U.S. humanitarian aid to Haiti, the role of the OAS and International Financial Institutions in Haiti, and how we can deter illegal migration, while being humane and fair.

The consequences of failing in Haiti are potentially severe. We must work with our neighbors to prevent a further slide to social and political disintegration in Haiti. I look forward to examining this issue with our witnesses and the members of this Committee.

###