

STATEMENT BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE

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Mr. Chairman, it is a pleasure to appear and to speak before this Subcommittee today on the topic of Haiti.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members:

A chapter in the history of Haiti has just come to a close and the Haitian people are preparing to write a new one. The resignation of President Aristide on February 29 marked the end of a process that in its early days held out a bright promise to free Haiti from the violence, authoritarianism, and confrontation that has plagued that country since its independence two hundred years ago. Sadly, that hope remains unrealized. While responsibility for this failure resides largely with Aristide himself, the task before the United States, working with the international community, is to help the people of Haiti break the cycle of political misrule that has caused so much misery.

As we move ahead, it is important that we understand where the problems lie. The Haitian people are not to blame for the country's poverty and lack of development. Rather, the absence of good governance, even the WILL to govern fairly and effectively

lies at the heart of the problem. Aristide's legacy of frustrated hope was caused as much by what HE DID NOT DO as by the steps he took. At the end, even his supporters in the international community realized that his rule had undermined democracy and economic development in Haiti rather than strengthened it.

Mr. Chairman, let me be clear. The history of Mr. Aristide's misrule in Haiti proves what we all know to be true -- that a democratically elected government can forfeit its democratic legitimacy by the manner in which it governs. Said another way, being democratically elected does not give a leader free license to rule as he sees fit. Nowhere is that principle more firmly enshrined in this Hemisphere than in the Inter-American Democratic Charter itself. By his actions and failures to act, Mer. Aristide undermined his own ability to govern Haiti.

Let's be very clear. U.S. policy in Haiti and throughout the Western Hemisphere -- indeed the world -- is to support democracy and the strengthening of democratic institutions. On September 11, 2001, the United States joined the 33 other members of the Organization of American States -- including Haiti -- in signing the Inter-American Democratic Charter. The creation of the Democratic Charter owed much to the hemispheric concern against the undermining of democratic institutions by elected governments. It acknowledges that the essential elements of representative democracy go well beyond merely holding elections and that governments have the obligation to promote and defend democratic principles and institutions.

The commitment to strengthening democracy has been the cornerstone of our policy in Haiti since the restoration of Aristide to power – by the international community led by the United States – in 1994. This process was set back by the highly flawed parliamentary elections of June 1995, badly run local elections in April 1997, and fraudulent parliamentary elections once again in May 2000. This series of bogus electoral exercises and the Haitian government’s unwillingness to govern fairly opened the door to many subsequent acts of political violence and intimidation by Aristide against his opponents. Our approach in encouraging respect for constitutional processes and good governance in Haiti focused on working with our hemispheric partners through the OAS and with other friends of Haiti. In June 2001, the OAS General Assembly approved Resolution 1831 calling on the Government of Haiti to take steps to create an environment conducive to free and fair elections as a means of resolving the political crisis created by the tainted elections of 2000.

On December 17, 2001, the Government of Haiti lashed out at its opponents with a series of brutal attacks by pro-Aristide thugs on persons and property. This led to OAS Resolution 806, which called for the creation of an OAS Special Mission to Strengthen Democracy in Haiti and for the Aristide regime to take vigorous steps to restore a climate of security.

When the Government of Haiti failed to comply with the terms of Resolution 806, the OAS responded with another resolution – 822 – in September 2002. In this resolution, the Government of Haiti again committed itself to take a series of actions to promote a

climate of security and confidence leading to free and fair elections in 2003. I was Chairman of the OAS Permanent Council when Resolution 822 was approved and the U.S. delegation did the heavy lifting in negotiating the document. Resolution 822 took the key step of calling for the normalization of economic cooperation between the GOH and the international financial institutions – as a means of providing Haiti with further incentive to develop its institutions and promote sustainable development.

In the face of the Haitian Government's non-compliance with the terms of these resolutions, the Caribbean Community – CARICOM - and the OAS sent a high-level delegation, which included President Bush's Special Envoy for Western Hemisphere Affairs, to Haiti in March 2003. In September 2003, the United States facilitated the OAS effort to send another special envoy to Haiti, Ambassador Terence Todman, to help broker a breakthrough in the political stalemate. While all this was taking place, the United States donated \$3.5M to the OAS Special Mission in Haiti to support its work.

These impressive efforts came to naught. Rather than taking steps to build political consensus, reign in the rampant corruption that robbed Haitians of their already meager resources, or promote an atmosphere of security, Aristide continued to recruit and arm gangs of thugs to be unleashed against his opponents. In the process, he undermined what little legitimate law enforcement capacity remained in the already corrupted and weakened Haitian National Police. U.S. law enforcement assistance was essentially limited to support of the Haitian Coast Guard, a rare and largely autonomous police unit that continued to have professional and competent leadership.

Further undermining the rule of law and the effectiveness of his government, Aristide turned a blind eye to the rampant corruption and drug trafficking of those within his circle of power.

It is no wonder, therefore, that when one of the largest pro-Aristide gangs turned against him and rose in open rebellion in the city of Gonaïves last month, the Government of Haiti had no effective, let alone legitimate means with which to respond. The rapid collapse of Government authority throughout Haiti bore testimony not to the strength of the thugs and gangs who sought to bring him down, but to Aristide's own failures. By gutting respect for the rule of law and reverting to authoritarian practices, he undermined his own legitimacy and demeaned the word "democracy."

Under these circumstances, Aristide agreed to what he had steadfastly rejected before, a plan that would open the door to consensus government and a way forward to resolve Haiti's political crisis. This was, of course, the CARICOM Prior Action Plan, with its own Plan of Action and endorsement by the United States, France and Canada. For Aristide, this change of heart came too late to save his government. Nor did his eleventh-hour appeal for foreign military intervention garner support in the international community. No country, the United States included, was inclined to send forces to sustain the failed political status quo in Haiti. In what may eventually be considered his finest hour, Aristide decided to resign, initiating a constitutional process that transferred power to the President of the Supreme Court.

There are several key points that I wish to make regarding U.S. policy toward Haiti – as we move forward with our international partners to help the Haitian people:

1. the United States has been and will continue to be a firm supporter of democracy in Haiti. That is a cornerstone of our policy.
2. Aristide's departure was never a U.S. demand. We continuously worked with our international partners to break through the political impasse and allow democracy to have a chance. Even France, while calling on February 25 for Aristide's ouster, remained supportive of our efforts to find a negotiated solution. While we were convinced that Aristide was a key obstacle in these efforts, we sought to work with him up until the very end. These efforts were conducted at the highest levels of the United States Government, with Secretary Powell in the forefront.
3. The United States has been and will almost certainly remain Haiti's leading provider of economic aid. This aid was never suspended or cut off, as some have claimed. Between 1995 and 2003, the United States provided over \$850 million in assistance to Haiti.
4. Our leadership at the OAS in negotiating Resolution 822 in September 2002 helped to open the door to normalized relations between Haiti and the IFIs and

since then IDB loans have begun to flow. We will continue to support IFI loans to Haiti based on their technical merits.

Looking forward, our goal is first to stabilize the security situation and provide emergency humanitarian assistance to Haitians, promote the formation of an independent government that enjoys broad popular support, and work with that government to restore the rule of law and other key democratic institutions in Haiti, while encouraging steps to improve the difficult economic condition of the Haitian people. The United States is not alone in this process. Under the terms of a UN Resolution approved unanimously by the Security Council on February 29, U.S. forces are already in Haiti, participating in a Multilateral Interim Force to contribute to a secure and stable environment. The key elements of the international plan initiated by CARICOM are, as we speak, being carried out to name a new Prime Minister who will in turn form a consensus government to lead Haiti forward. A Tripartite Council and Council of Eminent Persons, both preliminary steps to naming the new Prime Minister under the plan, were formed within a week of Aristide's resignation. We expect the Council of Eminent Persons to nominate the new Prime Minister within a day or two. The Prime Minister will form a government, in consultation with the Council of Eminent Persons and in agreement with President Alexandre, to begin the laborious process of rebuilding Haiti's democratic institutions. This rapid progress is a positive sign of commitment on the part of Haiti's political leadership to a constitutional transition and the return of full democracy.

As the Multinational Interim Force ends its mission, we will support the UN stabilization force called for by the Security Council and will work with the UN and OAS to help the Haitian people rebuild their institutions, starting with the Haitian National Police. As I speak, the Administration is engaged in intensive efforts to achieve these goals.

We are forming an inter-agency working group to meet 2-3 times per week to forward the many policy initiatives we are pursuing:

- Complete multilateral coordination to define the mission and end state of the Multinational Interim Force (MIF) now deployed in Haiti.
- Follow up with UN Member States on voluntary contributions to help defray expenses of the MIF.
- Address urgent need for disarmament by working with the new Haitian government and the MIF or follow-on UN stabilization force (peacekeeping operation).
- Set strategy for reform of police and justice institutions. An integrated approach is the best solution – pursue simultaneous reform and strengthening of police, justice system, and prisons.
- Coordinate with and support the UN and OAS Special Mission in efforts to implement reform strategies for police and justice system.
- Participate in UN, OAS, and international community efforts to rebuild democratic institutions through human rights training, support of independent electoral commission, political party building, development of legislative capacity.

- Consider feasibility of forming a truth and reconciliation commission to examine human rights abuses.
- Continue U.S. leadership in forming Haiti's transition government.

In the shorter term, we are acting to meet the humanitarian needs of Haiti's people. My colleague Adolfo Franco of USAID [has testified] [will testify] about the varied and comprehensive actions his agency is taking. Speaking from the Department of State perspective, Ambassador Foley issued a disaster declaration on February 18. In response, the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, a component part of USAID, provided approximately \$487,000 to support the distribution of emergency relief supplies and provide emergency medical supplies. Our total direct bilateral assistance for the period 1995-2003 was \$850 million, with \$71 million for fiscal year 2003.

The Administration has also acted to shore up the Haitian National Police. In a larger sense, our participation in the Multilateral Interim Force (by far the largest of those countries now participating) and the follow-on UN stabilization force will serve as a security umbrella for the Haitian National Police (HNP) while we help to reform and strengthen it. But we have also acted in the short term. President Alexandre has appointed a new police chief, Leon Charles, a man of proven integrity and ability, and we will continue to encourage positive change and reform within the HNP leadership. We have provided material assistance and supplies to the Haitian Coast Guard, which has proven to be a reliable partner with the U.S. Coast Guard in conducting repatriations and cooperating on security matters.

President Bush has called for a “break from the past” in Haiti. Indeed there MUST be a break from the past if Haiti is to move forward. That break will not come in the form of a new autocrat or demagogue but by unleashing the incredible potential of the Haitian people in positive and productive directions. Nowhere is there written that the Haitian people must be poor or ruled by tyrants. They deserve leaders worthy of their trust and respect, who favor the common good over personal gain. The rule of law must be upheld. Those responsible for crimes and abuses must be punished. Gangs and thugs cannot be allowed to hold sway. Support from the United States and the international community can help – and they will have it -- but the long-term job of building Haitian democracy is up to the Haitians themselves. They, above all people in our Hemisphere, deserve some success.

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