



Security Council

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Letter dated 29 October 2021 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Mexico and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Ireland and Mexico, as co-chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council, and in close cooperation with the United Kingdom, would like to share the summary note of the meeting of the Informal Expert Group on the situation in Haiti (see annex).

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Geraldine **Byrne Nason**
Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations

(Signed) Juan Ramón **de la Fuente Ramírez**
Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations

(Signed) Barbara **Woodward**
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 29 October 2021 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Mexico and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council

Summary of the meeting on Haiti held on 29 September 2021

On 29 September 2021, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security convened a meeting on the situation in Haiti. The members were briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti and Head of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), Helen La Lime, accompanied by representatives of the United Nations country team. The meeting concluded with an overview of key recommendations provided by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

Questions from Council members

Members of the Security Council asked questions about gender considerations in the recent political agreement; challenges for women's participation in politics and steps taken to support women candidates; violence against women human rights defenders; plans for the adoption of a national action plan on Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#); gender components in BINUH programmes on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; the mission's engagement with women's organizations; Haiti's new penal code; women's access to justice and services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence; the high rates of pretrial detention for women; sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeepers; gendered impacts of climate-related security risks and lessons learned from the 2010 earthquake; women's leadership in humanitarian efforts, disaster risk reduction, and climate resilience and recovery; women's access to menstrual products during emergencies; actions targeted towards migrant women; gender gaps in the Haitian vaccination campaign; women's participation in the formal and informal economy; access to funding for women's organizations; and the budget of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Rights.

Main points raised in the meeting

- Women are extremely marginalized in politics and public life. The representation of women in the most recent Haitian Parliament was among the lowest in the world, with less than 3 per cent of elected parliamentarians. Violence against women in politics, including during elections, is rampant, and women leaders are often subject to threats and smear campaigns. The violent political climate and prevailing misogyny within political parties limit women's participation in public affairs and campaign funding for women candidates.
- A project of UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme, supported by the Peacebuilding Fund, is building capacity in the Provisional Electoral Council, the Haitian National Police and women's groups to prevent, mediate and manage electoral conflicts and violence. With the support of the Government of Canada, UN-Women is building the capacity of up to 80 potential women candidates running in the upcoming elections.
- The Haitian Women National Forum for Peace and the National Forum on Women, Peace and Political Participation have stressed the importance of developing a national action plan on women and peace and security. One of their

most urgent priorities is the need to strengthen the capacity of the State to ensure security and respond to all types of violence perpetrated against women.

- There is political willingness to enhance women's participation, and in his governance pact of 11 September 2021, the Prime Minister reiterates the requirement for a minimum 30 per cent quota of women in all institutions. However, the current draft of the constitution does not address gender issues adequately. The newly appointed Supreme Court does not include women.
- Opportunistic violence against women and girls, including gang violence, is a constant threat. Over the course of their lives, one out of every three women in Haiti will suffer violence, and at least 12 per cent of girls under the age of 18 will be raped. Furthermore, in the past 12 months, 7,990 cases of gender-based violence were reported by health facilities in the country, 26 per cent of which involved children. The number of rape cases registered by the police and the number of cases of sexual violence registered by service providers differ significantly. Reasons for this discrepancy include a lack of trust in the judicial system, and informal arrangements between the perpetrator and the victim. BINUH has supported the Government in developing an anti-gang strategy, and the Spotlight Initiative has provided assistance to more than 6,000 women and girl survivors of violence. While there has been an increase in funding for sexual and gender-based violence services and women's health, it remains an underfunded area, and the gap in services remains high in rural areas. Only 10.7 per cent of police officers are women.
- The United Nations, with the support of a dedicated trust fund, provides assistance to 31 victims and 37 children born out of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by former peacekeepers, from 17 different Member States. In addition, the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse network is raising awareness within communities. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti urged Member States to give their full support to the survivors and their children to resolve pending paternity and child support claims. The pretrial detention rate for women stands at 90 per cent, among the highest in the world. Through local organizations supported by the Peacebuilding Fund, 60 per cent of women in prolonged pretrial detention are now being legally assisted. UN-Women trained prison staff on the Bangkok Rules and is raising awareness among women detainees of their rights.
- The Special Representative of the Secretary-General called upon donors to respond to the August humanitarian flash appeal for \$187.3 million. Lessons learned from the 2010 earthquake include the importance of supporting the national economy, working closely with civil society, and national ownership and coordination. Local and national authorities, such as the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Rights, must be strengthened.
- According to a rapid gender analysis conducted by UN-Women and CARE, women and girls are the most affected of the 800,000 survivors of the earthquake in August 2021 and are exposed to higher levels of domestic violence owing to open-space living, a higher loss of revenue and a higher risk of negative coping strategies.
- According to the rapid assessment of reproductive health and gender-based violence led by the United Nations Population Fund, 22,000 women are expected to give birth in the earthquake zone, and 4,000 of them will have complications. Over 50 per cent of existing safe spaces are no longer safe after the earthquake, which necessitates the setting up of mobile spaces for survivors. Haiti is the country with the highest maternal mortality rate in the Western

hemisphere, with an average of three women dying per day of causes related to childbirth.

- More than 900 schools have been destroyed or damaged by the earthquake. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and other agencies are supporting the Ministry of Education with an integrated package, including to prevent school dropouts and the abuse of girls.
- UNICEF issued a statement on 23 September 2021 regarding the migrant crisis in which it urged the authorities to refrain from any use of force at borders, to keep families together and to properly assess the protection needs of migrants before any decision on their return was made. Its early estimates indicated that two thirds of migrant returnees were women and children. UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration are providing protection and psychosocial support to children arriving from Mexico, the United States of America and other countries at two airports and the port of Cap-Haïtien.
- The Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund has supported 28 women’s rights organizations in Haiti in implementing programmes ranging from helping internally displaced women affected by gang-violence to reaching disabled women affected by gender-based violence. The Fund approved a new allocation that will result in the launch of a new call for proposals to support women’s organizations in their response to the earthquake.
- High levels of poverty, a lack of security and limited access to basic services, including education for girls, continue to severely affect women’s well-being and their socioeconomic standing. Nevertheless, women play a major role in the formal and informal economies. They make up 48 per cent of the economically active population and 82 per cent of the business sector. The garment and apparel sector, which represents 90 per cent of the country’s manufacturing exports and in which 70 per cent of the workforce are women, was the hardest hit by the economic fallout of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Women also represent a disproportionate share of the informal economy centred on subsistence agriculture, open-air markets and communal kitchens, in which the unemployment rate of women has also increased. A \$75 million World Bank initiative provides immediate support to poor and vulnerable households through regular cash transfers and measures to improve health, nutrition, and access to finance, and builds the capacity of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour to improve the management and governance of social protection programs. UN-Women provides support to rural women in the south affected by the earthquake through an economic empowerment programme financed by the Government of Norway.
- As at 31 August 2021, women make up 38.1 per cent of staff overall, 39.4 per cent of national staff, 34.1 per cent of international staff and 33 per cent of uniformed personnel of BINUH. Of the 21 United Nations entities in Haiti, only two are led by women. The Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator encouraged Member States to push, in United Nations agency boards, for stronger representation of women in United Nations leadership positions.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made by UN-Women, as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group:¹

¹ These recommendations are suggestions from United Nations participants in this meeting or the background note prepared by the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group ahead of the meeting, and not recommendations from the Informal Expert Group as a whole or Council members.

(a) In view of the upcoming negotiations on the mandate of BINUH, the Security Council should retain all existing references to women and peace and security in both the preamble and operative paragraphs of Council resolutions [2476 \(2019\)](#) and [2547 \(2020\)](#), and should consider adding the following:

- (i) Calls for the full participation of women at all levels of the process leading to presidential and parliamentary elections and requests BINUH to support the Government of Haiti in strengthening the participation of women in this process as voters, candidates and administrators;
- (ii) Requests BINUH to work with United Nations agencies to support, engage, and consult with women's civil society organizations in all their diversity, at all levels and in all areas of its work;
- (iii) Calls upon the United Nations and other international partners to support the Government of Haiti in the development and implementation of a national action plan on women and peace and security;
- (iv) Calls upon all Member States to provide funding for the trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse; welcomes the efforts taken by BINUH to address sexual exploitation and abuse and to improve support to survivors; and calls upon troop- and police-contributing countries to hold perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse to account and to facilitate the resolution of paternity and child support claims.

(b) In addition, the Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group and other Council members should do the following:

- (i) Urge that all humanitarian efforts in response to the earthquake be based on gender analysis, be gender-responsive, mainstream protection activities across all sectors and support the Government of Haiti in strengthening the capacities of State institutions in that regard;
- (ii) Urge that women's organizations be included in humanitarian and disaster risk coordination mechanisms at the national, departmental and local levels, and support investments in the capacity and resources of women's organizations in preventing and responding to disasters;
- (iii) 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;
- (iv) Strengthen efforts to enhance women's economic security and rights, including access to finance and other opportunities to rebuild their livelihoods;
- (v) Continue to support the capacity of the State to respond to all types of violence against women and girls;
- (vi) In the lead-up to the postponed elections, Council members and other international partners could scale up investment in women's political leadership through capacity-building for women leaders, the prevention of electoral violence against women, and a national campaign to promote women's political leadership.

The Co-Chairs thanked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti and all participants, and committed to following up on the important issues raised at the meeting.