



## Security Council

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### **Letter dated 23 August 2023 from the Permanent Representatives of Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates, 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)* Pascale **Baeriswyl**  
Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations

*(Signed)* Lana Zaki **Nusseibeh**  
Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates  
to the United Nations

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



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**Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security of the Security Council: summary of the meeting on the situation in Haiti, held on 8 June 2023**

On 8 June 2023, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security convened a meeting on the situation in Haiti. The members received a briefing from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti and Head of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), María Isabel Salvador, accompanied by colleagues from the mission and the United Nations country team, as well as the Victims' Rights Advocate, Jane Connors. Council members exchanged questions and answers with the briefers. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (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 Council can help to 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 and peace and security, the measures taken by the United Nations to address sexual exploitation and abuse, and whether the United Nations had articulated the parameters that would be required in a non-United Nations international force to ensure that it would protect women and girls effectively.

**Main points raised at the meeting**

- The rise in gang violence is impeding progress on women and 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 were almost triple 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 in a joint report by BINUH and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights published in October 2022. In some instances, the victims were raped in front of their children, after having witnessed the execution of their husbands, to instil fear or punish civilians in areas controlled by other gangs. Women and girls also become victims of gang violence while moving across neighbourhoods 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 hamper 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, fuelled 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 G9 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 internally displaced persons and are exposed to greater risk for their life and health. Fifty-two per cent of shelters have no toilet facilities.
- Despite a provision in the Constitution of Haiti 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 the 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, albeit 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 Transitional 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 Transitional Council on 23 and 24 May. However, in closed-door 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 among senior ranks the percentage drops below 5 per cent.
- With BINUH support, the Interministerial Task Force on Disarmament, Disengagement, Reintegration and Community Violence Reduction 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 United Nations interventions mentioned include Peacebuilding Fund support for women's participation in community dialogue platforms in neighbourhoods affected by gang violence, and Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund support for projects led by local women's organizations.
- The mission has a limited role in arms control, although the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime leads the United Nations work in this area in Haiti and women participate in United Nations-supported training on weapons and ammunition management. However, the presence of high-calibre weapons and ammunition in Haiti is not an issue that can be resolved by the United Nations, or even fully by the national authorities, but at the point of departure of the weapons trafficked into Haiti. The United Nations 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 United Nations is filling the vacancies for a women's protection adviser and a P-4-level gender adviser soon, but will be seeking support for additional capacity for these functions.
- If deployed, a non-United Nations international force should receive extensive predeployment training on both sexual exploitation and abuse and conflict-related sexual violence. There is a growing consensus among national stakeholders and United Nations 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 United Nations, under the leadership of UN-Women, is working on the adoption of a national action plan on women and 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 United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) personnel, including through a new framework of cooperation and the approval of a new project supported by the trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, 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 or the Organization.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were presented by UN-Women, as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group.<sup>1</sup>

In the negotiations on the mandate renewal for BINUH, the Security Council should retain all existing references to women and peace and security in the preamble and operative 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 United Nations 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 United Nations to ensure that the panel of experts of the sanctions committee can consult systematically with women's organizations and have regular access to gender expertise and integrates a gender perspective in all aspects of its reporting.
- 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 Government of Haiti 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 and 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 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.
- 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-centred services that encompass medical and psychological support and legal, socioeconomic and reintegration assistance.

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<sup>1</sup> 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, in consultation with other United Nations entities, including the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. They are not recommendations from the Informal Expert Group as a whole or Council members.

- 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 Security Council members to follow up on the important issues raised in the discussion.

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