

Speech

Organization of American States



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THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
ON THE MISSION OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN
STATES TO HAITI
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THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL: Thank you very much.

I returned from Haiti the day before yesterday from my third trip there in a month. For that reason alone, I have not had time yet to prepare a written report, which I do hope to provide in coming days. It is important I do so, because, as you will see, the parties have requested that I give you some very specific information. Let me at this point, therefore, only attempt to summarize some key highlights.

Last Monday, after three days of shuttle diplomacy, I wrote to President Préval and to the heads of the Fanmi Lavalas and the parties that make up the Convergence Démocratique, asking that they designate representatives to a face-to-face encounter. I asked that they come prepared to discuss seven agenda points. These points were security, what I called the problematique of the elections of May 21, conditions of the elections scheduled for November 26, the restructuring of the Provisional Electoral Council, measures for the reinforcement of democracy, the role of the international community, and, finally, any other points of interest that the participants might wish to suggest.

In fact, the addressees did respond positively. The Fanmi Lavalas, in the person of its leader, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, identified a delegation of five. The Convergence similarly sent me a formal notification of a slightly larger delegation, and the Government responded by sending, as observers, the Prime Minister Jacques Eduard Alexis and the Chief of Staff of the President, M. Fleury.

The face-to-face meeting, which began on Tuesday noon, was remarkable in the sense that it was the first time that the majority party Fanmi Lavalas had sat down with members of the opposition and vice versa. The discussion was constructive; it was disciplined. I had thought that I might have had to exercise strong measures from the Chair; in fact, everything went off very efficiently and well, both in alternating initial presentations and then comments. Clearly, there was mutual respect. And also by the end of the day, on a personal level, it was evident that some icebreaking had taken place. Nonetheless, it was also clear that there were very substantial differences.

And then in a second session, after getting a complete review of all of the issues, I found it very difficult to make headway. I had sought a review of all of these issues, because I thought that if one took them together, it might be possible to develop a global package that could lead to an agreement.

In an effort to bring focus to the discussion and to break the pending impasse, and basing myself on this Council's mandate to the Secretary General and the Mission in Permanent Council resolution CP/RES. 772 (1247/00) of August 4, which in resolute paragraph 1 asked that the Mission identify "options and recommendations," I distributed on October 19 a paper entitled "Éléments de réflexion pour un accord national." And the paper, copy of which I will, of course, distribute in the report I will send the Chairman of the Council for transmission to the Council, took the first six items (it having turned out that the seventh was largely unnecessary, the two parties had in effect agreed that security, the May 21 elections, the November 26 elections, the Provisional Electoral Council, measures for safeguarding democracy, and the international community were in effect the subjects that they wanted to talk about. I submitted a paper covering these points to the parties on Thursday at noon and

requested them to return after six hours to provide their responses.

The written responses revealed two areas of very substantial agreement with the propositions I had put forward. I should note at this point that I had been extremely conscious of the responsibilities I was shouldering by putting forward recommendations on difficult subjects. In examining the responses, I found two areas of very substantial agreement, two areas of very substantial disagreement, one area where there was more agreement than might be expected, and a sixth area which was clearly considered to be dependent on the others.

The two areas of agreement were the importance of security; in fact, there was complete acceptance by both the delegation from Fanmi Lavalas and that from the Convergence on four of the points which I had put forth. The other area of very substantial agreement was on specific measures regarding the strengthening of democracy, points having to do with freedom of information and the press and the rights and security protection of political parties and civil society.

The two areas of very substantial disagreement had to do with the May 21 elections and the projected November 26 election. In essence, one side wanted decisions to hold the upcoming presidential and senatorial elections under the best conditions possible and within a definite timeframe that would allow for the taking of office by a new elected President on February 7, 2001, whereas the other side wanted prior decisions to reconsider and annul the elections of May 21.

The area where there was a surprising amount of agreement was on the need for an Electoral Council to manage these elections and the need to ensure proper representation within that council. Nonetheless, the disagreement caused by the relative weight to accord to the previous elections and to the future elections clearly carried over to the discussion on the Electoral Council.

And the final dependent point was the question of the international community and its role which, obviously, would have to be dependent on there being agreement on among the Haitian parties themselves.

On Friday evening I suspended the fifth session of this rather unusual face-to-face encounter, all sessions of which had, in fact, been attended not just by the two delegations but also by the Prime Minister and the Chief of Staff of the President. I suspended that session sine die and on Saturday, after a final meeting with President Préval, I left Haiti.

Since that time, I have received two letters. Both of them are intended for this Council; both of them thank me for my efforts and express points of view that were based on these discussions. The first, dated Port-au-Prince October 20, 2000, is signed by Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and it contains the following commitments:

. . .Toujours prête à se retrouver autour de la table du dialogue et à la lumière de propositions formulées par les partis politiques et l'OEA tout au long de cette semaine, l'Organisation Fanmi Lavalas

S'engage à:

- Respecter la volonté des électeurs en cherchant, avec l'Opposition, une solution politique et légale aux controverses surgies des élections du 21 mai, en particulier les postes contestés au Sénat;
- Encourager les autorités de l'Etat à créer une Commission d'évaluation chargée d'examiner les postes contestés au Sénat. Cette Commission examinerait la problématique de la méthode de calcul utilisée pour les sénatoriales du 21 mai. Ces solutions ne doivent violer ni la Constitution ni les lois de la République.
- Participer aux élections du 26 novembre prochain avec l'actuel Conseil Electoral Provisoire ou un CEP incluant des citoyens et citoyennes proposés par l'Opposition politique, Fanmi Lavalas et les autorités de l'Etat.
- Encourager le financement des activités électorales des partis politiques reconnus et présentant des candidats aux élections;
- Contribuer au climat de paix et de sécurité, en cultivant la tolérance, la

modération et le respect mutuel;
 - Encourager toutes mesures visant à renforcer la démocratie.

I have not read to you the entire letter. I have read all the points of commitment by former President Aristide in the name of Fanmi Lavalas. The letter also lists a number of hopes, one of which is that the future elections will take place in the presence of national and international observers.

The letter of the Convergence Démocratique is dated Port-au-Prince October 21, 2000, the next day. The letter opens by noting that

... les partis et regroupements politiques membres de la Convergence Démocratique ont fait preuve, vous en conviendrez ... de bonne volonté... Nous avons accepté d'entrer dans le dialogue malgré: le refus... le refus... le refus ...
 All this referring to a series of concerns that, in fact, Convergence preconditions that had not been met.

Nonetheless, and this key portion of the letter I will read in full, as I did that of former President Aristide because it is a similar format of commitments:

. . .Pour sortir de la crise, les partis et regroupements politiques de la Convergence Démocratique se sont engagés à:

- Confier à un nouveau CEP formé de façon crédible, le sort des élections contestées du 21 mai 2000;
- Participer à des élections, à la Présidence et à tous les autres postes à pourvoir, réalisées par un nouveau CEP crédible avec des garanties de sécurité;
- Participer à la formation d'un CEP crédible selon une formule consensuelle;
- Participer au renforcement de la démocratie en coopération avec les autres partis politiques, la société civile, les pouvoirs publics et la communauté internationale;
- Ne pas recourir à la violence et à prendre des mesures pour la prévenir et pour sanctionner leurs partisans qui y ont recours;
- Participer à l'information et à l'éducation civique;
- Coopérer avec les acteurs nationaux et la communauté internationale pour la réalisation d'élections crédibles, la recherche de la gouvernabilité et de la stabilité du pays, son développement socio-économique, sa modernisation et sa démocratisation véritable.

This letter is signed by the leaders of the six major parties within the Convergence Démocratique.

I will make both letters available in my written report.

Let me make five quick conclusions.

First, there was, obviously, no consensus that was broad enough to achieve my objective: namely, the negotiation of a national accord.

Second, just as obviously, there was appreciable progress in defining issues, in identifying areas of agreement and disagreement, and in breaking down at least some interpersonal barriers.

Third, although the current electoral timetable and process continue unchanged because of the lack of an agreement to do otherwise, the parties have expressed their respective intentions to continue their efforts to resolve the crisis. From a practical standpoint, however, let me note that time has become a critical element and a critical enemy. One disturbing indication of the continued polarization is that no opponent from the political parties making up the Convergence has appeared to challenge former President Aristide in the elections. Clearly, there is not much time remaining for that practical solution to the crisis to emerge, although one has to hope that it still may.

I would like, fourth, to record the very important role played in these efforts by Ambassador Denneth Modeste, the Director of the Office of the General Secretariat in Haiti. His professionalism, his relations with all of the parties in the dispute, and his serenity, were invaluable. I think it should be noted that a good representative of this Organization, even if he has no more support than a

secretary and a driver, can make an enormous contribution to our political objectives.

Finally, I think it is important to record and to thank the member states and other international organizations for their very substantial support. I think that the presence in the all five formal face-to-face meetings of the Ambassador of Canada to Haiti, the Ambassador of France to Haiti-who, in addition to their own countries, symbolically represented the concern of this Organization and of the European Union-as well as the Ambassador of my former government, the United States and the Head of the United Nations Office in Haiti, were a visible important symbol of the unity of the international community.

It is clear that if further consensual evolution enables Haitians to reach some form of agreement, that will in turn place very substantial requirements on the international community to assist in two areas. They are the two areas where the parties clearly have already reached some form of agreement, at least in principle, and that is in the important areas of security and of strengthening democracy, including electoral observation. It goes without saying that both will be extremely difficult unless, in fact, the negotiations reach a successful conclusion, or, at least, if the parties involved are capable of following through on their commitments in an effective manner.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Council.

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