

Statement of Ambassador Luigi R. Einaudi
U.S. Permanent Representative
to the Organization of American States
at the
SPECIAL SESSION OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL
ON HAITI

February 23, 1990

Mr. Chairman:

The end of the Duvalier regime in February of 1986 raised hopes throughout the world that the democratic destiny first articulated for Haiti by Toussaint l'Ouverture was coming closer to fulfillment.

Since then, the slow pace of the transition to democratic government and the numerous human rights abuses that have occurred have caused initial optimism to give way to serious concern.

In the wake of the events of January 20, there is strong skepticism in my country concerning the Avril Government's commitment to fair and free elections and to respect for human rights. The United States welcomed the actions taken to lift the state of siege, but we note that these actions alone have not restored the confidence of the Haitian people in the Avril government's commitment to genuine democratic reforms and respect for human rights.

Consequently, we urge the Government of Haiti to take the necessary steps to restore the confidence of the Haitian people and the international community in its commitment to democratic reforms. In particular, we urge the government of Haiti to work with political, business, social, and religious leaders in Haiti to reestablish a credible democratic process. We call on General Avril to bring to justice those were responsible for the unjustifiable acts committed during the January state of siege, and to bring to justice those responsible for the political murders in Haiti over the past several months. We ask that Haitian Government publicly acknowledge the need for free and fair elections in the presence of international observers and that the Army of Haiti clearly demonstrate that it is prepared to guarantee that elections will be held in a climate free of fear and intimidation. The United States Government sees such elections as a necessary first step in solving the longstanding social, economic, and political problems in Haiti.

I would therefore like to commend Jamaica and the other co-sponsors of this resolution for their timely initiative. It

is fitting that the West Indian nations of the CARICOM have taken the lead on this issue. Their concern for a sister Caribbean state is enhanced by the fact that, as representative democracies with outstanding human rights records, the CARICOM nations have much to offer us in our efforts to fulfill the Charter commitments to representative democracy and respect for human rights.

The new regional, and indeed global, evolution toward democratic, pluralistic societies is based on fundamental truths, truths that are enshrined in our Charter. The first is that representative democracy is "an indispensable condition for the stability, peace and development of the region." Its sister and equally important truth is that "the true significance of American solidarity and good neighborliness can only mean the consolidation on this continent, with the framework of democratic institutions, of a system of individual liberty and social justice based on respect for the essential rights of man."

As we have seen in this debate, the issue at hand is not a negative one. We have come to strengthen our hemisphere and its Organization by cooperating with one of its members.

I note that the resolution "recommends to the Secretary General the organization of a mission of observers to the next election in Haiti, if requested by the Government of Haiti."

The Secretary General and his staff are, as we speak, intensely involved in an elections observation program in another country; surely their experience and expertise could be put to good use in Haiti at the appropriate time. I would add in this connection that the 1989 General Assembly, in its resolution AG/RES 991, invites the Secretary General to organize and send observer missions to monitor the electoral process in all its stages when requested by members of the Organization. Finally, as we are all aware, financial resources are available through the Inter-American Fund for Priority Assistance to Haiti.

I would hope that the Government of Haiti will promptly ask our Organization for its participation in the observance of the elections in Haiti.

Undoubtedly the most important element in this resolution is operative paragraph no. 3 which requests the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to make a further in-situ visit to Haiti. The Commission has made an enormous contribution to a regional understanding of the human rights situation in Haiti. Its integrity, its impartiality and its dedication to the cause of human rights throughout the hemisphere have made the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights one of the

Organization's most valuable resources. I believe that it is incumbent on all OAS members to support the Commission which has truly become the "conscience of the inter-American system." I take this opportunity to once again express my Government's support for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and its work and to state that we look forward to the Commission's report on its upcoming visit to Haiti.

We hope that the Government of Haiti will join with other nations of the hemisphere in cooperating in this effort to advance democracy and human rights in Haiti. Monsieur le Representant, we hope that your government's willingness to participate in this act of solidarity with the people of Haiti will contribute to the transition to democracy and restoration of human rights to which your government has committed itself, and we hope all delegations will cooperate with you and with the people of Haiti in their transition to democratic government through the adoption of the proposed resolution.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would like to reiterate a simple fact. The people of this hemisphere have chosen to embrace the principle of democratic organization and life. The people of Haiti, from Toussaint L'Ouverture to the leaders of today's democratic opposition, also desire democracy. The Haitian people cannot and will not be denied what other peoples in the hemisphere, and in other regions, have already achieved. Our Organization can play a key role in assisting the people of Haiti to fulfill their democratic aspirations and in ensuring that the process of transition to democracy is a peaceful one. I sincerely hope that the actions we begin today will help bring the people of Haiti closer to their dream of a new democratic Haiti where freedom and respect for the rights of man will prevail.