DISCUSSION PAPER

Haiti

Lessons Learned

Lama Khouri-Padova

Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit

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Haiti: lessons learned

Purpose

The paper reviews involvement in Haiti

This paper reviews the international community's involvement in Haiti and identifies some lessons to be learned from United Nations engagement between 1994 and 2001. Owing to time and space limits, it focuses on selected peacekeeping aspects of such involvement. It does not address other important issues such as socio-economic development, agency funding and the role of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. The study is a discussion paper only and does not represent the views of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Its recommendations are solely for the consideration of mission planners, and have no directive weight or intent.

Executive Summary

Past engagement failed to bear fruit and several lessons can be drawn:

International engagement in Haiti during the 1990s, including a series of United Nations peace operations, did not lead to the establishment of a stable polity. In part, this was the result of factors beyond the capacity of the international community to change. There were, however, weaknesses in the international engagement, and lessons can be learned from those weaknesses in the development of new United Nations missions. Those weaknesses included the following:

Mandate duration was too short;

- Time horizons for the United Nations missions were short and finite, leading them to focus on transition and liquidation instead of mandate implementation;

… the Group of "Friends" limited the Secretariat's independence;

- While the "Group of Friends of the Secretary-General in Haiti" played a supportive role in the field and the Security Council, having such a strong group at times sapped the creativity of the leadership in the Secretariat;

…pressure from member states undermined efforts of the Secretariat;

- There was pressure from key governments to 'spin' results positively, in order to deliver good news to domestic constituencies. This spin undermined efforts to deal with an unraveling situation;

… lack of cooperation of the Haitian leadership eventually led to project failure;

- Absence of examples of good governance from Haiti's history, the circumstances of Haiti's birth, and differences in ideology with international actors, eventually led to lack of cooperation of the Haitian leadership. Consequently, ownership of projects was not assumed, self-reliance did not materialized, project implementation lagged and those that were implemented collapsed shortly following the departure of the international presence;

… financial aid was ill-timed leading to ineffective use of resources; and

- Financial aid was ill-timed arriving before absorptive capacity was in place; and

…lack of coordination led to duplication and lack of coherence

- Coordination mechanisms of rule of law activities among technical assistance donors came too late, leading to duplication of effort and lack of coherence.

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This paper draws on these lessons and suggests recommendations.

This paper expands on some of these problems and identifies ways in which they might have been avoided. It concludes that difficulties could have been overcome by strengthening the role of civil society; exploring measures to engage representatives of this society, the Haitian local and central government and the political class in formulation of policies and strategies; strengthening the education system; clearly articulating the need for long-term engagement across a wide spectrum of activities, ideally through a single chain of command, to enhance coordination; solidifying cooperation with regional organization, in particular the Organization of American States (OAS), and strengthening their capacity; and benchmark progress of development of Haitian capacities and Haitian institutions.

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Recent Developments

Jean-Bertrand Aristide returned to power in 2000, with the majority of votes of the 10 per cent turnout. A dispute between Aristide's Lavalas party and the opposition, including the Popular Lavalas Organisation still allied with Lavalas, flared-up. The latter claimed that the 1997 and 2000 elections had been rigged – a contention most international observers believe to have been well founded. The protracted political crisis brought the government to a halt. In 2003, the dialogue between the Haitian Government and the opposition broke down. By late 2003, a newly united opposition movement comprising political parties as well as representatives of civil society and the private sector was calling for the resignation of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

In early February 2004, armed conflict broke out in the city of Gonaives, and in subsequent days fighting spread to other cities. Gradually the insurgents, comprised of former paramilitary, military, police and others took control of much of the northern part of the country and were poised to enter Port-au-Prince. On 29 February, with the armed opposition threatening to march on the Haitian capital, President Aristide resigned and left the country. Later that day, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1529 (2004) authorizing a Multinational Interim Force (MIF) to enter Haiti and declaring its readiness to establish a follow-on United Nations stabilization force. In that resolution, the Security Council also declared its readiness to "establish a follow-on United Nations stabilization force to support continuation of a peaceful and constitutional political process and the maintenance of a secure and stable environment". On the same day, the initial deployment of the MIF to Port-au-Prince began in order to secure key sites.

Tensions that have been brewing since 1997 finally erupted in early February 2004, when armed conflict broke out in Gonaive.

On 29 February the Security Council authorized a Multinational Interim Force and declared its readiness to establish a UN stabilization force.

The International Community in Haiti

In 1990, the country's provisional Government requested the United Nations to observe the December presidential elections. Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected.

But in 1991, a coup headed by General Cédras, ended democratic rule. Following extensive shuttle diplomacy, in 1993, General Cédras agreed that Mr. Aristide would return to Haiti in October. The United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) was established to assist in modernizing the armed forces and in creating a new police force. The military Government did not comply. Diplomatic measures were reinitiated and eventually, when Cédras was threatened with impending invasion, the military regime resigned.

Pursuant to Security Council 975 (1995) UNMIH took over in 1995 from the US-led multinational force to assist the Government in maintaining the secure and stable environment established by the force, and to help create a national civil police force.

In June 1996, UNMIH was replaced in its functions by the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti (UNSMIH), which was followed by other operations -- the United Nations Transition Mission in Haiti (UNTMIH) in July 1997 the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH) in November 1997 and the Civilian Support Mission in Haiti (MICAH) in March 2000 and terminated in 2001.

Peacebuilding in Haiti

In 10 years of effort by the international community, including deployment of successive United Nations missions between 1994 and 2001, there were a number of positive accomplishments, but also considerable frustrations.

On the positive side: the Haitian National Police (HNP) was established; the elected leadership was restored in 1994; the political violence engulfing the country was stopped; the first ever democratic transfer of the presidency in Haiti's history took place in 1996; autonomous civil society – unions, peasant organizations, human rights groups, and trade and professional associations – began to evolve; and elements of traditional elites – Catholic and Protestant church hierarchies and the Chamber of Commerce – were taking an active role in supporting the development of democratic political culture.

There were, however, many setbacks. The Haitian political context[1], the divergence of ideology, objectives and instruments between the Haitian government and the international community, the stakes the United States had in Haiti, "donor fatigue" and frustration at the protracted political crisis, led bilateral and multilateral donors to suspend aid.

Ultimately, several international actors shifted their attention from Haiti. The impact on rule of law institutions and the economy was devastating. Increasing political polarization led to a heightening of political intimidation and violence. The HNP came under political pressure. Certain elements of the police were subverted or purged. The partisan conduct of some police during the electoral period further blemished an institution already diminished by low morale, criminal and corrupt activities within its ranks and, later, allegations of coup-plotting. Corruption and human rights abuses became the rule rather than the exception. Many police officers became involved in drug trafficking and in the summary execution of presumed criminals.

The situation in the judicial system was broadly similar. There was no internal disciplinary mechanism for judges, partly owing to the suspension of foreign aid, and many of those trained during the period of United Nations involvement were not working because of low pay and cronyism. Of those who remained, many were corrupt. Additionally, incarceration rates remained very high and the duration of pre-trial detention was long in Port-au-Prince, although it was shorter outside the city. The lamentable state of the local judicial system continued to impede the HNP's efforts to combat crime and judicial reform and did not keep pace with the building of the HNP. [2]

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[1] The circumstances of Haiti's birth as an independent state imposed potentially destructive legacies on Haitian society[1]. The capture of Toussaint in 1802 passed the reins of the country to the hands of local Creole aristocracy. The precipitous and brutal changes of leadership during the formative years became the model for a history of turbulent transitions through 1996. The notoriously violent tactics of Haiti's founding leaders and the practice of "winner takes all" helped shape a culture of political repression that has repeatedly blocked the emergence of democratic institutions.

[2] S/1998/796, 24 August 1998

Sustainable economic development never materialized. The economy remained vulnerable. Between 1990 and 2001, Gross Domestic Product per capita declined at an average rate of 2.5 per cent[3]; 80 per cent of the rural population lived below the poverty line[4], and while there are no official figures on unemployment, some estimate it at almost 80 per cent[5].

Drug trafficking, which is linked to trafficking in firearms and facilitated by corruption, was at an all time high. Haiti became one of the main hubs for drug trafficking in Central America and the Caribbean. It is estimated that 15-20 percent of the cocaine trafficked in the region passes through Haiti. The lack of adequate control over the legal trade in drugs and chemicals led to the development of a vast parallel market for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, which are used to treat mental illnesses, in the country. Such substances are the main drug abused by children in Port-au-Prince. The drug problem in Haiti may have been exacerbated by the shift of US attention from drug trafficking to the war on terrorism[6].

In this light, Haiti needs support in the following areas:

1. **Stability and Security:** to allow return to normal life so that peacebuilding can take place[7].

2. **Institution building:** including professionalism and strengthening of the Haitian National Police and judicial system;

3. **Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Rehabilitation [8]:** of armed groups and gangs; and

4. **Socio-economic development**: including establishment of short, medium and long-term national strategies to create job opportunities, reduce poverty, build economic and social infrastructure and institutions, create an enabling environment for private investment, control drug trafficking, etc.

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[3] United Nations Development Programme, 2003, Human Development Report, Millennium Development Goals: A compact among nations to end human poverty

[4] The World Bank Group, June 2000, Country Brief: Haiti.

[5] International Peace Academy, 15 March 2004, "Policy Forum Series: State Failure in Haiti: An International Responsibility?" New York.

[7] It is noteworthy here that while there were no significant incidents threatening stability and security in the 1990's, the situation is different now. There remains a possibility, at the time of writing, that Aristide may incite in-country supporters to acts of violence.

[8] DDR was not the focus of the United Nations peacekeeping missions. The buy back programme that was implemented by the United States support group in Haiti in 1994 was not successful. Indications are that the task will be ominous and will require the support of the MIF**.**

Lessons Learned

Duration of mandate

A military operation with an eye on a quick exit does not and will not work for Haiti. [9] Any strategy must address the core causes of the conflict, which are largely social and economic and require sustained long-term commitment.

It might have been more appropriate to have an operation of this nature authorized by the General Assembly, where it could have been given a two-year renewable mandate. However, since both the civilian police and the military components were armed, owing to security concerns, and the United States desired to exercise sufficient control over Haiti-related decisions, the operations were mandated by the Security Council under Chapter VII.

In the mid-1990s, some Council members questioned this arrangement. The Russian Federation was not content that the costs of the United States' operations in its backyard were partially paid for by member states, while Russia's operations were not. China was displeased with Haiti's recognition of Taiwan. Accordingly, they both repeatedly held that an operation of this nature did not fall within the purview of the Council, which is primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security and not economic and social development. Although the objections of Russia and China were based on domestic issues, there is an important underlying point. Council members are required to pay the larger share of the cost of operations they authorize and, therefore, are often reluctant to commit to long-term peacebuilding activities under peacekeeping missions.

Consequently, the United Nations missions in Haiti were given finite mandates, ranging from 2 to 6 months. They were, therefore, unable to focus their full attention on attaining their wider goals and were diverted to draw-down and transitional activities. The short-term extensions also meant that the missions were unable to recruit highly qualified experts, since most such experts were unwilling to take on short-term assignment.

It was suggested in the 1990s that technical assistance in the rule of law and institution-building be authorized by the General Assembly, thus providing it with the long-term foundation it requires. In this regard, in 1997 the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of UNSMIH suggested that a two-year (renewable) technical assistance project could be the most convenient course of action, when that mission's mandate terminates. The project could be jointly financed and staffed by UNDP and the OAS. Should a security force have been deemed necessary, and if an armed civilian police element were required, that component could be authorized by the Security Council, with both missions under the leadership of a single Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

There were positive observations. The OAS has maintained presence in Haiti since the early 1990s (except when its personnel had to evacuate for security reasons), where it has been involved in elections and human rights monitoring, institution building and other projects. It has also played an important role in the international political arena.

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[9] Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, 27 December 1999, "Building Peace: Challenges and Strategies after Civil War". The World Bank, Washington DC.

For example, in the aftermath of the military coup against Aristide, Venezuela convinced the ousted President to mobilize the international community through the OAS. It is noteworthy that the OAS has an added advantage owing to similarities in culture and tradition, it might be easier for them to relate to and communicate with Haitian interlocutors. However, they do not have sufficient capacities to undertake peacebuilding tasks.

Recommendations:
1. *A General Assembly/Security Council mandate;*
2. *Insist on a longer-term mandate; and*
3. *Strengthen cooperation with Regional Organizations*

Recommendations:
1. *Consider a General Assembly/Security Council* as suggested above, to ensure longer-term arrangement for the technical assistance element.
2. *Explore ways to engage Member States over the long haul* perhaps by encouraging bilateral arrangements; and
3. *Strengthen cooperation with regional organization,* such as the OAS and the Caribbean Community and to strengthen their capacities.

Haitians did not assume ownership of policies and projects.

Ownership of projects was not encouraged
Owing to lack of engagement of Haitians in the development and articulation of policies and strategies that were advocated by the international community, ownership of projects was not assumed and Haitians remained dependent. As a result, implementation of projects lagged and those that were established collapsed shortly following the departure of United Nations missions and agencies.

This was partly due to differences in ideology and lack of deep understanding of Haitian culture.

There were differences in ideology between international actors and the Haitian leadership, which did not seem to concur with the principles of democratization or privatization. In addition, international interlocutors seem to have lacked deep appreciation of the intricate Haitian cultural dynamics[10]. As a result, there was a striking disconnect between the objectives and plans of the international community and the Haitians. This lack of appreciation not only complicated interaction with the Haitian government, but also led to the elaboration of goals that were far too optimistic. Moreover, it led to loss of confidence in the UN mission among Haitians. Consequently, Haitians did not take ownership of projects and placated international interlocutors.

Difficulty engaging civil society led to absence of public support.

Furthermore, it appears that the mission did not succeed in engaging either Haitian government officials or civil society representatives in development of policies and projects, particularly at the local level where they are most effective. Not only was civil society not sufficiently organized, but also successful engagements were eventually sabotaged by the leadership. Lack of engagement exacerbated Haitian alienation from the development and democratization process. For example, there was no consultation at an early stage on the police reform process, which led to an absence of public support when the initiative was collapsing.[11]

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[10] Haitian society is marked by sharp political and ideological divisions, which were not fully appreciated by the international community. Accordingly, while bilateral and multilateral donors as well as the United Nations related only to the "formal Haiti", which is based on the constitution, the Haitians were basing the objectives on the "real Haiti", which was divorced from the latter.

[11] To encourage ownership, representatives of civil society, local and central government offices as well as the political class could be co-opted to formulate a 20 year programmatic framework to eradicate poverty and development, which would be approved by Parliament.

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Both the Haitian leadership and the opposition were uncompromising.

The absence of good governance examples from Haiti's history and the structure of Haitian politics, framed by the constitution and the electoral system which stipulates a "winner takes all" outcome, resulted in no power sharing, an absolutist style of leadership, and no incentives for compromise. With obliviousness to the Haitians' plight, both the ruling party and the opposition were uncompromising during the political crisis, which brought the government to a halt and had serious repercussions on the economy. Moreover, with impunity, the Haitian leadership politicized the police, manipulated the justice system and contributed to paralyzing parliament.

Peacekeeping staff were not always able to integrate well in Haiti

Several of the staff of the peacekeeping missions did not speak French or Creole and were unfamiliar with Haitian culture. Moreover, local mission staff at times were not aware of the missions' mandates and roles. In contrast, the MICIVIH human rights observers, many of whom spoke both languages and had familiarity with the culture, had excellent relations with the Haitian community. An important practice was the training programme MICIVIH provided. It included education in Haitian society and religion by Haitian teachers, classes in Creole, interviewing techniques and report writing, as well as prison visits.

Recommendations:

1. *Engage Haitians in policy development;*
2. *Implement a training programme for mission staff.*

*Recommendations***:**
1. *Engage Haitians in policy development.* Emphasis should be placed on engaging Haitians in the development of policies and strategies in the areas of institution-building and socio-economic development; and
2. *Implement a training programme* for mission staff.

Implementation

Absence of absorption capacity led to inefficient use of resources.

Owing to absence of absorptive capacity, much of the international aid which poured in following the restoration of Aristide was not used effectively.

The huge surge of international aid was ill-timed, since the institutional capacity to use it well was not in place. It is estimated that some $2 billion were spent in Haiti between 1994 and 1997. This soon dried up owing to the protracted political crises and as attention shifted to other crises, including the war on terrorism.

Building capacities will take time.

It is noteworthy that some Haitian experts state that building institutional capacity could take generations. Haitian institutions, for example, do not have sufficiently trained personnel to undertake routine tasks. Therefore, it would be necessary to look closely at the education system, to provide appropriate technical support to Haitian Ministries and to consider engaging the diaspora. In this regard, it has been demonstrated that engaging the diaspora was not always welcome by the Haitians. However, if integrated discriminately the diaspora could contribute to capacity building. For example, credible and respected expatriates could be invited to take part in debate forums for policy developments.

The long awaited "peace dividend" did not come through leading to disillusionment in the democratic process.

Furthermore, much of what was spent was not visible or tangible to the average Haitian, which led to disillusionment with the democratic process, as demonstrated in the 10 percent voter turnout in the 2000 elections. This situation contributed to the failure of state, because the public was not interested in

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mobilizing resources to effect change.[12]

*Recommendations***:**
1. *Strengthen the education system:* consider measures to strengthen the education system throughout the country;
2. *Establish training of trainers programmes* in key areas;
3. *Where appropriate, engage the diaspora.* Those who have credibility in Haiti, could be engaged;
4. *Establish initial priorities,* with the Haitians leading the process;
5. *As well as further priorities.* Once donor contributions are received, establish priorities and a spending plan, in close consultation with Haitian partners; and
6. *Benchmark progress.* Take periodic assessments of activities, by an outside body, to evaluate mission's progress, within the context of a mandate implementation plan, and report the results candidly.

Divergence in objectives led to lack of local commitment and also limited international community's manoeuvring space.

Divergence in Objectives and Instruments
Differences in objectives and instruments among bilateral and multi-lateral donors, the Haitian authorities and the United Nations were important factors that eventually contributed to state failure.

Owing to the differences in ideology explained earlier, the objectives and plans of the international community and the Haitian leadership did not match. As a result, local will was absent and several institution building projects were either not followed or completely ignored.

For peacebuilding to succeed, regional neighbours and other significant international actors must offer genuine support.

Few peacebuilding plans work unless regional neighbours and other significant international actors offer genuine and sustained support to the process. The role of the "Friends of the Secretary-General in Haiti" (Canada, France, the US and Venezuela later joined by Argentina and Chile) was significant. While the "Group of Friends of the Secretary-General in Haiti" was helpful in the field and in the Security Council, having such a strong group at times sapped the creativity of the leadership in the Secretariat. Consequently, the Secretariat was often unable to report or make recommendations freely. Despite blatant electoral fraud and judicial corruption, the international community, including the United Nations, was often reluctant to voice its concerns clearly. In part, this may have been at the behest of the United States, which was eager to portray Haiti's experience as a success, particularly in view of the failure of its efforts in 1993 in Somalia.

United Nations involvement in Haiti was driven by US domestic interest.

Much of the United Nations' involvement in Haiti was driven strongly by the domestic interest of the United States to contain refugee flows to Florida.[13] However,

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[12] . It could be useful to implement infrastructural and quick impact projects and other such initiatives to create jobs and training opportunities as well as demonstrate a "peace dividend". However, such an approach could undermine self-reliance and capacity building, both of which take time. For such projects be implemented effectively, they need to be coupled with a long-term strategy. (23 March 2004, Haiti Contact Group meeting, Washington DC). Of course, implementation of quick impact projects requires immediate funding that is often not available. In this respect UNDP is advocating for the establishment of a stand-alone, multilaterally managed post-conflict fund, for Haiti as well as other countries, which would draw on the resources and expertise of all the agencies, could that routinely respond to these crises.

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the policy of the United States was not consistent. For several reasons, including the war on terrorism, US support of Aristide and interest in Haiti eventually disappeared.

While the United States' dominance of the issue at the United Nations was moderated within the Group of "Friends of the Secretary-General" and, occasionally by interested Latin American counties such as Brazil, once Washington lost interest and became increasingly hostile to Aristide, there was little these other countries could do to sustain peacekeeping or credible peacebuilding in Haiti[14].

Although many bilateral and multilateral donors were appalled at the outright abuse of authority and the mismanagement of resources in Haiti, still the lid remained on in the hope that the volcano would not erupt. This situation, coupled with "Haitian fatigue" and the lack of long-term commitment by the international community, particularly the Security Council, led many donors to suspend financial aid.

Recommendations:

1. *Consistently articulate obstacles:* As recommended by the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, the Secretariat must tell the Security Council what it needs to know, not what it wants to hear. The Secretariat must be clear in articulating the obstacles to achieving that success;
2. *Strengthen role of member states:* consider measures to enlist member states in implementation of the mission.
3. *Stress long-term requirements:* The Secretariat must also be clear in stating the scale and duration of commitment required to achieve success in Haiti; and
4. *Consider measures* to strengthen the role of civil society.

Coordination

Overall coordination was good. However, delays in the establishment of coordination mechanisms for technical assistance to rule of law institutions led to duplication of efforts and lack of coherence. [15]

Mechanisms for such coordination were not established in a timely manner. When attempts were made to bring some coherence to donor support programs, the assistance provided was already fragmented. In legal reform, for example, the United States promoted structures modeled on the United States legal system while France attempted to use another paradigm. Since the United States model had no foundation in existing Haitian law, it was later abandoned.

However, a 1996 DPKO lessons learned study observed that coordination between the United Nations and the OAS in the joint MICIVIH worked effectively overall. This success demonstrated how, with a clear and unified mandate, and a rational division of labour, the United Nations can work well in partnership with regional organizations. In addition, the appointment of the Resident Coordinator as deputy SRSG proved fruitful. Another effective coordination

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[13] David M. Malone and Sebastian von Einsiedel, "Haiti: 1991-2001," in: Mats Berdal et al (eds.), The New Interventionism, 1991-2001 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).
[14] Ibid

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mechanism was the weekly coordination meeting among donors, international actors and Haitian officials.

***Recommendations*:**

1. *Consideration could be given to:*
2. *replicating the Deputy SRSG/Resident Coordinator arrangement;*
3. *holding weekly coordination meetings; and*
4. *planning for transition as early as possible.*

Conclusions

Haiti's problems are deep. Its economy is bankrupt; its institutions are broken; local capacity is limited; organized crime – built up on the back of narcotics trafficking – is putting down deep roots; the political culture is not conducive to the emergence of a stable and equitable political order.

The weaknesses of earlier international engagement were principally two-fold: engagement was not planned and sustained for the longer term; and local capacity, political will, and commitment to Haiti's transformation were not present.

Earlier difficulties could be overcome by the following:

- Strengthening the role of civil society;

- Engaging civil society, local and central government as well as the political class in the development of short, medium and long-term policies and strategies and having such strategies approved by Parliament;

- Strengthening absorptive capacity with special focus on education and use of the diaspora;

- Clearly articulating the need for long-term engagement across a wide spectrum of activities, ideally through a single chain of command, to enhance coordination;

- Working closely with regional organizations, particularly the OAS, and strengthen their capacity; and

- Benchmark progress in the development of Haitian capacities and Haitian institutions.