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United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2476 \(2019\)](#), by which the Council established the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) beginning on 16 October 2019 for an initial period of 12 months and requested me to report to the Council on the implementation of the resolution, including any instances of mandate implementation failures and measures taken in response to them, every 120 days starting from 16 October 2019. The document covers significant developments that have occurred since the issuance of my previous report ([S/2020/123](#)) and provides an update on the implementation of the BINUH mandate and the operationalization of United Nations support for the Government of Haiti in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

2. BINUH and the 19 United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in Haiti have further strengthened their partnership and are working as one United Nations, as advised by the Security Council. BINUH has delivered on its mandate through the provision of strategic good offices, advisory and advocacy efforts in support of political stability, inclusive governance processes and violence reduction initiatives, thereby complementing the provision by the United Nations country team of programmatic and technical support.

II. Political and good governance (benchmark 1)

3. On 19 March 2020, the first cases of COVID-19 in Haiti were confirmed. The preceding 18 months had been characterized by turmoil and unsuccessful attempts to forge a negotiated agreement, stemming from a protracted crisis that had paralysed the country's institutions. The Government faced the challenge of developing and implementing an ambitious reform agenda while attempting to restart a failing economy in the midst of an evolving pandemic that the country's health system was not equipped to handle. Notwithstanding the decrease in sustained violent civil unrest that had characterized the demonstrations held in 2019 against *peyi lòk* (a forced countrywide lockdown), as well as a temporary political truce called for by the moderate opposition, acute levels of political uncertainty and polarization persist owing to the absence of a legislature, a lack of clarity regarding the electoral calendar and uncertainty over the timeline for constitutional and structural reforms. The



dynamic continues to unfold against a backdrop of increasing gang activity and a prevailing sense of insecurity.

4. In February 2020, efforts to reach consensus on a political agreement that would have paved the way for structural reforms, spearheaded by the President of Haiti, Jovenel Moïse, before the end of his mandate, fell short of success. From 11 to 14 February, following a number of exploratory meetings, BINUH and the Haitian Patriotic Initiative Committee facilitated, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a new round of negotiations among representatives of the presidency, signatories of the “Kinam Accord” and the “Marriott Accord”, the non-aligned opposition parties and civil society, which resumed where the negotiations held at the Apostolic Nunciature in December 2019 and January 2020 had ended. Discussions came to an impasse on 14 February, when representatives of the opposition tabled a proposal that contained questions on issues already addressed in previous rounds of talks. Notwithstanding that setback, informal consultations among Haitian actors continued, leading to a session in a smaller group setting among representatives of the presidency, non-aligned opposition parties and civil society, held on 28 February. However, key political forces associated with both the ruling coalition and the opposition chose not to attend, and as a result, an agreement could not be reached.

5. Following those efforts, and in the absence of a functioning legislature, Mr. Moïse issued a decree on 2 March appointing a former Minister of the Environment, Joseph Jouthe, Prime Minister. On 4 March, Mr. Jouthe presented his Government, composed of 19 ministers, 4 of whom were women, and nine secretaries of State, two of whom were women, and citing insecurity, social inequalities and a relaunch of the economy as his priorities. Although the new cabinet was introduced as representing some degree of political inclusion, a number of opposition representatives claimed that its composition did not take into account progress in recent efforts towards dialogue and undermined prospects for its resumption. While the opposition had announced plans to resume street demonstrations at the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, several opposition parties, including factions that had previously conditioned their participation in political talks on the President’s immediate departure, declared that they would refrain from any action that could undermine national cohesion and an effective response to the pandemic.

6. After a slow start, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 began to climb rapidly in mid-May, reaching 3,072 cases and 50 deaths by 7 June. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) projected that the number could reach 127,000 cases and 5,000 deaths, with 25,000 hospitalizations. The Government has undertaken an outreach campaign, informing citizens and key sectors of Haitian society of its efforts to mitigate the effects of a pandemic, to which Haiti could be particularly vulnerable. In seven speeches to the nation, the President called for national unity and urged the population to follow directives issued by the Ministry of Public Health and Population. He cautioned against the stigmatization of infected persons and promised to address the crisis efficiently and transparently while also responding to socioeconomic urgencies. On 6 April, the President announced the formation of a multisectoral commission to coordinate a national response to the pandemic, headed by a renowned medical doctor and founder of the leading HIV research and treatment centre in Haiti, les Centres Gheskio, Jean William Pape – and the Director General of the Ministry of Public Health and Population, Lauré Adrien. While the formation of the commission was viewed positively by most Haitians, a number of accusations against the Government regarding a lack of transparency in the purchase of equipment and material to respond to the pandemic gained resonance in the national media. Within the region, Haitian authorities and their counterparts in the Dominican Republic have strengthened their cooperation in response to the pandemic. The

Ministers for Foreign Affairs have held regular videoconferences, and the two Heads of State met virtually on 19 May to discuss synergies in their response to COVID-19, as well as other matters of common interest.

7. Notwithstanding the additional challenges posed by the pandemic, BINUH, together with the United Nations country team, continued to assist with national efforts towards governance reform. Such efforts included planning for a constitutional review process and for the holding of overdue legislative and local elections, as well as presidential elections. The Mission relies on virtual platforms to communicate with Haitian partners, including the presidency, which remains actively engaged in advancing work that can be accomplished in the current context. Hence, the Provisional Electoral Council, with United Nations support, is currently exploring measures that would preserve the integrity of the electoral process and, in the light of the traditionally low number of female parliamentarians in Haiti (4 of 149 in the fiftieth legislature), is seeking to achieve a quota of 30 per cent for women in elected posts, as provided in article 17.1 of the Constitution – a commitment that the President made during an International Women’s Day address. Moreover, with support from UNDP and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the Council organized the fourth session of an eight-module training on electoral administration and continues to upgrade its electoral information technology infrastructure. In addition, staff received seven months of salary arrears resulting from delays in contract approvals by the Superior Court of Auditors and Administrative Disputes as part of government measures to ease the economic impact of the outbreak on civil servants. However, the Council’s activities have slowed owing to the uncertainty generated by the absence of an electoral calendar and the ongoing health emergency.

8. Progress towards a revised voter registry, which will be drawn from citizen registrations for new biometric identity cards, initially slowed following the announcement of the state of emergency. Widespread criticism on social media of the size of crowds gathered in front of the National Identification Office in Port-au-Prince prompted the adoption of additional crowd control measures, which also improved social distancing guidelines. As of 22 May, the Office had registered some 2.1 million citizens out of an estimated 6.8 million Haitians of voting age and distributed 1.1 million new biometric identity cards, which were essential for voter identification used for elections. However, the Government also extended the validity of old identity cards indefinitely, reversing an earlier decision to phase them out by 31 March.

9. Using the good offices and convening power of my Special Representative for Haiti, BINUH engaged relevant national stakeholders to encourage constructive relations between the executive branch and the opposition and promote multi-stakeholder efforts to address the health emergency. The Mission also disseminated messages of prevention and tolerance and sought to foster widespread support from international partners for the Government’s response. Its efforts are closely coordinated with those of the United Nations system in support of national action in three distinct but complementary areas, namely, the health response, led by PAHO and the World Health Organization (WHO); the humanitarian response, coordinated by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; and the socioeconomic response, led by UNDP. My Deputy Special Representative, also serving as the Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, is ensuring an integrated response that maximizes the comparative advantages of each component of the United Nations system in Haiti.

III. Community violence reduction (benchmark 2)

10. Haiti experienced an overall increase in criminality and gang-related activity in the first months of 2020, even as the protests of 2019, which had increased insecurity, largely abated. While only 30 protests were recorded in the first quarter of 2020, violence was particularly evident in the context of police protests over labour issues. The protests culminated in clashes on 23 February between a group of some 100 mostly off-duty protesting police officers and their sympathizers and members of the Haitian Armed Forces. Between 1 January and 31 May, the number of reported intentional homicides increased by 33 per cent, with 616 cases reported (591 of the victims, including 11 police officers and 19 minors, were male, and 25, including 4 minors, were female). A total of 75 per cent of the cases were recorded in the West Department, where criminality is traditionally more prevalent owing to gangs vying for control over the marginalized neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince. Haiti also experienced a 200 per cent increase in reported abductions, with 92 cases reported to the Haitian National Police between 1 January and 31 May (57 were male, including 11 minors, and 35 were female, including 8 minors). Abductions peaked in February, with 50 reported incidents, prior to decreasing to 25 between March and May. There were 34 reports of sexual and gender-based violence in the first five months of 2020, down from 31 in the five preceding months.

11. The need for local gangs to generate alternative sources of revenue following the end of *peyi lòk* reignited inter-gang clashes and led to ongoing reorganizations and shifting alliances. The phenomenon was particularly striking in Port-au-Prince (West Department) and in the Artibonite Department, with regular spikes of gang-related incidents reported in Cité Soleil, Croix-des-Bouquets, Martissant and Village de Dieu over the first two months of 2020, as gangs tried to expand their respective areas of control. The renewed focus on mobilizing resources in a post-*peyi lòk* scenario may have contributed to the rising incidence of kidnappings in February, which prompted Canada, France and the United States of America to issue advisories discouraging travel to Haiti.

12. Amid the public outcry over the increased incidence of abductions, the Haitian National Police launched large-scale police operations, employing improved intelligence and targeting strategies to reverse the kidnapping trend. Arrests of gang members and leaders rose, from 169 in January and February to 232 in March and April, while abductions have declined significantly since March. Anti-gang operations continued, even as the police were mobilized to enforce government measures in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak. Gang violence peaked in the second half of April, however, with a series of inter-gang clashes and confrontations with the police in the Port-au-Prince neighbourhoods of Bicentenaire, Grand Ravine, Martissant and Village de Dieu as gang members began to oppose police deterrence measures put in place to impede their ability to carry out abductions.

13. The Haitian National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration is asserted its role increasingly as the national entity that provides strategic leadership for the implementation of community violence reduction interventions. On 4 May, it submitted a national strategy to the Prime Minister for his endorsement. The document was drafted in consultation with national and international partners and with technical advice from the United Nations. The Commission was instrumental in reaching a temporary one-month-long truce among rival gangs in the Port-au-Prince neighbourhood of La Saline and adjacent areas. Moreover, the Commission is to play a key role in the disbursement of the first \$17 million tranche of a \$40 million Inter-American Development Bank project, which includes a significant cash-for-work component in neighbourhoods under gang control.

14. As part of the response to the pandemic, the Commission is working with relevant government institutions, the United Nations and international partners involved in the distribution of food and protective equipment in areas under the influence of gangs to facilitate contacts with local communities, thus allowing such distribution to proceed unhindered. In addition, it is involved in awareness-raising efforts, including to address the stigmatization of individuals perceived to be infected, a phenomenon that has led to attacks on some health facilities preparing to receive cases.

15. The proliferation of illicit weapons and ammunition continues to exacerbate insecurity. BINUH and UNDP are working closely with national authorities in the framework of a Peacebuilding Fund project and in close cooperation with the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean to develop arms control legislation consistent with international standards. In addition, the Mission is working with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research to conduct a baseline assessment of the life cycle of weapons and ammunition in Haiti. Although those initiatives will require that work in situ, preparations are being conducted remotely.

IV. Justice and the rule of law (benchmark 3)

16. Despite the challenging conditions during the reporting period, progress continued to be made in the police, justice and corrections sectors. BINUH, along with relevant United Nations agencies and other actors, advocated the acceleration of prisoner and detainee releases as part of efforts to reduce the potential impact of the pandemic on the overcrowded prison and detention system. At the onset of the crisis, the Minister of Justice and Public Security mandated the 18 jurisdictional public prosecutors to reduce the number of detainees through special accelerated hearings. In two jurisdictions where judgments have been tainted with irregularities, the process was revised, at the suggestion of BINUH, to include special judicial hearings on the basis of collective motions for individuals qualifying for early release, thereby ensuring the legality of the procedures and reducing the potential for corruption leading to the release of dangerous criminals.

17. To further advance releases, the United Nations, together with international partners, assisted in establishing a steering committee on detention, composed of government and justice officials and the Ombudsperson (the national human rights institution of Haiti), as well as human rights advocates. On the basis of six eligibility criteria identified by the committee, the Minister of Justice and Public Security approved guidelines for the release of detainees in all jurisdictions, including those in prolonged pretrial detention, (who account for 74 per cent of the overall prison population and 85 per cent of children in detention, or who qualify for early release on humanitarian grounds. Through the special hearings and limited implementation of those criteria, approximately 750 individuals, including 68 women and 22 juveniles, were released from the Haitian carceral system, which held 10,708 detainees (including 341 women and 126 juveniles) as of 3 June, a 2.9 per cent reduction in the prison occupancy rate, compared with the figures cited in my previous report. However, the number of detainees released falls short of the estimated 5,000 discharges necessary to allow prisons and detention centres in Haiti to better manage the impact of the pandemic. Public outcry regarding wrongful releases, as well as the risk aversion of many judicial and political actors, has dampened the impetus to set prisoners free.

18. Before the outbreak of the pandemic, the Directorate of Prison Administration undertook to improve prison conditions for the carceral population. With the support

of BINUH and United Nations agencies, including UNDP, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as international partners, the Directorate developed a contingency plan for the prevention, mitigation and control of the pandemic, including through the distribution of protective equipment and hygiene kits and the implementation of gender-sensitive awareness campaigns. However, on 15 May, the national penitentiary, in Port-au-Prince, reported 11 cases of COVID-19 among its inmate population, which illustrated the Directorate's lack of resources to implement proper confinement measures, as well as to store food and medical supplies, in anticipation of supply chain disruptions. Without sufficient government and donor funding, detention conditions, characterized by overcrowding, poor access to health services and an inability to meet basic needs, render prisons in Haiti particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 and other diseases.

19. The justice system in Haiti responded to the onset of the pandemic by adjusting its operations in ways that are likely to strengthen the country's courts in the future. As part of its mitigation efforts, the Superior Council of the Judiciary requested that heads of jurisdictions institute personnel rotations and other protective measures for justice actors and litigants. The National Network of Haitian Magistrates subsequently put forward a proposal, developed jointly with BINUH and UNDP, on the use of videoconference technology to conduct court hearings and other judicial processes remotely. Such measures will enhance the resilience of a court system that was affected significantly by prevailing insecurity during the *peyi lòk* period and that had been hampered by the suspension, since October 2019, of all hearings in the Port-au-Prince jurisdiction because the capital's court of first instance and court of appeal are located in a zone where frequent clashes between gangs occur. However, the opening of 11 legal aid offices has been delayed by the pandemic, notwithstanding continuous engagement between the National Council on Legal Aid and justice partners.

20. The effective response of the Government to long-standing grievances raised by officers within the Haitian National Police resulted in improved working conditions. The response was based on 28 recommendations issued by the Facilitation and Dialogue Commission of the national police, which was created by its Director General ad interim on 24 February and advised by BINUH. In March, following a series of increasingly violent protests led by a small group of officers, the Government increased officers' benefits and granted them the right to unionize. The resolution conflict coincided with the emergence of a marginal, and at times violent, group composed of radical active and former police officers who continue to make extensive demands notwithstanding the formal recognition of the first police union, on 21 April. To date, the implementation of the recommendations of police leadership, as well as the reintegration of dismissed pro-union leaders, has de-escalated most tensions within the force. The national police went beyond the new legal and financial provisions implemented by the Government to improve its internal regulatory framework. With BINUH support, directives were drafted and approved to create a dedicated welfare directorate and health coordination service of the national police, as well as a national police hospital. In addition, a draft law standardizing career progression within the police force is pending adoption by the Council of Ministers.

21. The sole security force in Haiti continues to face serious financial difficulties owing to the stagnation of the national budget since 2017. At the end of March, halfway through the fiscal year, approximately 55 per cent of the Haitian National Police budget had been allocated. The Prime Minister successfully released 1,967 pay cheques on 24 April to settle long-standing salary arrears affecting the two most recent classes of police recruits. However, without a significant increase in funding,

basic operating needs will be compromised. The recruitment process for new police officers and prison guards has been suspended owing to a lack of funds to pay for new hires. Combined with the current attrition rate, which averages roughly 400 officers annually, and given that only 2,370 cadets joined the ranks of the police between 2017 and 2020, the national police will not meet the target of 4,000 additional officers (including of 12 per cent for women) included in the strategic development plan for the national police, 2017–2021, by 2021. As of 4 March, the workforce consists of 15,172 police officers, with just over 10 per cent female representation, corresponding to a ratio of 1.3 police officers to 1,000 inhabitants, below the international standard of 2.2.

22. After a year-long vacancy, a new director of the Inspectorate of the Superior Council of the Judiciary was appointed on 19 March, a seemingly small, but important, development in oversight and accountability. Concurrently, the rise of corrupt practices in some specialized police units, illustrated by police inaction during the violent police protests of February and March, has prompted the General Inspectorate of the Haitian National Police to set up specialized commissions to investigate allegations of fraud throughout the country.

V. Human rights (benchmark 4)

23. The human rights situation in Haiti remained of concern during the period under review as a result of persistent insecurity in gang-related neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince, a further deterioration of economic and social conditions and continual allegations of human rights violations and abuses. Shortcomings of the Haitian State continue in the protection of citizens' rights to life, security and physical integrity owing to protracted challenges in ensuring effective law enforcement and judicial accountability.

24. Violations and abuses of human rights continued to be documented, primarily in the context of inter-gang clashes in some areas of Port-au-Prince. Most notable were the clashes in mid-April among various gangs in the Martissant neighbourhood, which resulted in the killing of 8 residents and the injury of 11, while displacing at least 136 families. In another incident, on 18 April, three civilians were killed during territorial clashes between gangs in the La Saline neighbourhood. Those events echoed similar emblematic incidents of the recent past, such as in Lilavois and Grand Ravine (2017), La Saline (2018) and Bel Air (2019), after which no new concrete judicial actions were taken in response to the human rights violations and abuses committed.

25. Overall, in the first half of 2020, as political violence gave way to increased levels of criminality, the number of verified human rights violations attributable to gangs outpaced those attributable to the police. Between 1 January and 31 May, BINUH documented 470 cases of alleged human rights violations and abuses, 93 of which the Haitian National Police are believed to be responsible for. Overall fatalities resulting from the documented violations and abuses during that period rose significantly, compared with the figure for the previous reporting period, with 168 individuals killed and 123 injured. The downward trend in police violations was also observed during the anti-government protests that paralysed the country during the *peyi lòk* period, September to November 2019. Investigations of the protests, which were finalized during the reporting period, indicated that, of a total of 349 human rights violations and abuses committed, 258 (34 persons killed and 224 injured) were perpetrated by gang members and unidentified armed men, while 91 cases (32 persons killed and 59 injured) were attributable to State agents, including the police. The same

statistics also reveal that 5 women and 5 children were among the 66 persons killed, while 21 women and 28 children were among the 283 injured.

26. To further improve accountability for human rights violations, the General Inspectorate of the Haitian National Police reactivated its thematic round table with civil society. The initiative was aimed at improving engagement between the police and the general public, including with regard to human rights, and reinforcing trust by providing police-related information to the population in a transparent way. With 76 allegations of human rights violations received by the General Inspectorate, the current reporting period was marked by an increase in allegations received, compared with the 52 allegations received during the previous period. In addition, 37 outstanding investigations of human rights violations launched between 2005 and 2019 were closed and forwarded to the General Directorate of the national police. The Director General ad interim of the national police endorsed eight sanctions against police officers for human rights violations, and four cases were forwarded to the justice system.

27. Progress was not made during the reporting period with regard to Government-wide strategies to improve compliance with human rights standards. Notwithstanding BINUH advocacy, the national action plan on human rights, which had been validated by partners that included representatives of civil society and the national human rights institution in December 2019, has yet to be endorsed by the Council of Ministers. The lack of progress delayed an important policy development on the national human rights agenda that could enhance the coordinating role of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights and support the implementation of the recommendations of the universal periodic review in 2016 and other international human rights mechanisms. Furthermore, the new Government of Haiti does not currently include a ministerial position in charge of human rights or a designated human rights focal point within the executive branch to oversee human rights issues. Only with strong institutional leadership will the Inter-Ministerial Committee be empowered to mobilize relevant ministries to prioritize improving the human rights situation in Haiti.

28. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities among the Haitian population, in particular as they pertain to socioeconomic inequalities and access to health. BINUH and the United Nations country team have engaged with the Government to protect the vulnerable by addressing the dynamics of incitement to violence owing to fear of COVID-19 and by focusing on stigma reduction. As at 31 May, BINUH had verified 27 disturbing incidents involving persons who had tested positive for, or were suspected of having contracted, the virus. The incidents included seven cases of attempted lynching, eight cases of death threats and hate speech, five assaults, five cases of attacks against care centres and two instances of denial of treatment to an individual suspected of having contracted the virus. Migrants and deportees are at particular risk of stigmatization and targeted violence. According to IOM, Haiti currently receives some 4,000 returnees per week. As more Haitians return to the country in the coming weeks after losing their jobs in the Dominican Republic because of the pandemic, the number of such incidents is expected to increase.

29. Efforts to raise the awareness of Haitians of the dangers of the pandemic are critical to addressing misinformation and discrimination and reducing the impact of the pandemic throughout the country. The Ministry of Public Health and Population and other national actors, including national human rights organizations, are running public information campaigns – with support from the United Nations and spearheaded by UNICEF – to increase awareness and reduce stigma through the use of leaflets, op-eds, posters, flyers and messaging with partners and health communicators. In line with my recent call for action against a possible surge in

domestic and sexual and gender-based violence in the context of COVID-19 lockdowns, other outreach efforts are aimed at reducing the threat of domestic violence and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, in response to the pandemic, the United Nations, along with relevant national and international partners, is supporting more targeted responses to specific human rights concerns by helping to develop a comprehensive multisectoral protection strategy addressing the most serious protection risks facing affected and vulnerable populations.

30. The United Nations partnership with the Office of the Ombudsperson, which is demonstrating increased capacity to deliver on its mandate, is producing strong results. As a member of the committee established by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security to define eligibility criteria for prisoner releases, the Office has mainstreamed human rights concerns to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. It also played an important mediation role during the above-mentioned dispute regarding the working conditions of the Haitian National Police and the right of police officers to unionize. That role was in line with its national strategy, 2019–2024, and the aim to support dialogue on conflicts involving public institutions.

31. BINUH continues to provide technical assistance to enhance civil society contributions to United Nations human rights mechanisms. The Mission and UNFPA organized a workshop with civil society actors focusing on gender and rights in the context of International Women's Day (8 March) to assess the implementation of recommendations issued by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2016 and the second cycle of the universal periodic review of Haiti, in 2016. From 19 to 21 February, the Mission participated in a training organized by Avocats sans frontières Canada on the contributions of national human rights non-governmental organizations to human rights mechanisms, ahead of the October 2020 session of the Human Rights Committee, at which the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in Haiti will be assessed.

VI. Unemployment, youth and other vulnerable groups (benchmark 5)

32. Achieving progress towards developing employment opportunities and reducing socioeconomic inequalities at a time when Haiti is grappling with the multifaceted impact of the pandemic and a looming humanitarian crisis is daunting. The economic outlook for Haiti at the outset of 2020 was already bleak following the difficult year of 2019, which was marked by a steep depreciation of the currency, an inflation rate of 20 per cent, a contraction of 1.2 per cent of real gross domestic product and increases in the fiscal deficit, public debt and domestic arrears. The International Monetary Fund projects that the country's real gross domestic product will contract by 4 per cent in 2020 and that inflation will exceed 20 per cent. To date, international financial institutions and other partners have pledged \$195.2 million in direct support to Haiti, mainly in the form of project grants and budgetary assistance. Absent additional financial support, the country will fall further behind in addressing its development challenges.

33. The economy of Haiti is contending with multiple concurrent shocks, including expected reduced fiscal revenue, increased expenditures to respond to the crisis, a decrease in foreign direct investment, exports and remittances. The World Bank forecasts that remittances from Haitians living abroad will decrease by nearly one fifth as recession hits the economies of Canada, France and the United States. Discussions are ongoing among the Government of Haiti, the United Nations system and bilateral as well as multilateral development partners to conduct a joint socioeconomic impact assessment through a conflict analysis lens that would inform

the scope of future support packages to Haiti. The assessment would be aimed at identifying critical areas for recovery interventions, which would help to lay a foundation for a greener, more resilient and more equitable recovery, thus addressing the root causes of instability and vulnerabilities in Haiti. Such an effort would be guided by the global framework developed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to ensure coherent and effective support by United Nations country teams for the socioeconomic response to COVID-19 in those countries.

34. The export sector in Haiti, which has been hit especially hard, will struggle as a result of the global economic downturn. The garment and apparel sector alone, which represents 90 per cent of the country's manufacturing exports and which, in February, accounted for 56,000 jobs, 70 per cent of which were occupied by women, has suffered extensive supply chain disruptions. Following government directives, some textile factories reopened at reduced capacity in April to produce personal protective equipment, including for domestic distribution. Given that sector's importance to the Haitian economy, the textile industry has been, and will continue to be, a priority for United Nations support. During the reporting period, with support from UNFPA, the International Labour Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 1,328 women employed in the garment industry gained access to health services.

35. The President is raising national and international awareness of the negative socioeconomic impact of the pandemic and the need to recover from the crisis and prepare for a post-COVID-19 Haiti. On 27 March, he announced that 1.5 million vulnerable families would be receiving direct cash transfers. He also stressed the need to reinforce the agricultural sector in order to increase food production and contribute to fighting future food shortages. He announced a seed distribution programme and the installation of 10 solar-powered watering pump systems in some departments. In that context, the United Nations country team continued to support government efforts to strengthen the capacities and resilience of local communities, family farmers and governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, including the private sector. The United Nations country team also contributes to promoting improved livelihoods and employment opportunities, in the agriculture sector in particular. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, UNDP, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the United Nations Environment Programme have provided technical and financial support, capacity-building, training, awareness-raising, research and data management support to State institutions, farmers and fishermen, aimed at increasing agricultural production, productivity and the quality of food. Some of the United Nations assistance includes support for women's associations and women farmers for green livelihoods, small-scale farming and nursery management; financial and technical support for improved farming techniques; the promotion of agriculture extension and conservation agriculture; the optimization of small-scale irrigation systems; the use of technological innovation to improve the use of natural capital through climate-friendly technologies; improved practices in agroecology and agroforestry; and the development of value chains.

36. The United Nations system in Haiti, with the support of the Peacebuilding Fund, is preparing to implement a series of socioeconomic interventions aimed at promoting stability and reducing community and gang violence, with a focus on the most at-risk young people. The interventions will be aimed at addressing the root causes of community and gang violence by supporting participatory local community dialogue platforms and quick-impact projects aimed at fostering education and dialogue, creating jobs for young people, enhancing vocational training opportunities and promoting microcredit schemes through which women in particular would be

provided with access to low-interest loans and subsidies for rebuilding small businesses affected by armed gang violence.

VII. Basic social service delivery and resilience (benchmark 6)

37. A multisectoral commission for the management of the pandemic, which was established by the President on 6 April, has overseen the development of a multipronged national response plan that covers patient care, communications, logistics, surveillance, laboratories and research, transparency and information technology. In full support of those efforts, the United Nations health response in Haiti, led by PAHO, WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF, is focused on early identification, isolation of and care for suspected cases and community outreach to limit transmission. The United Nations system has contributed to strengthening the country's surveillance capacity by assisting the Ministry of Public Health and Population in contracting and training national epidemiologists, field nurses and lab technicians, as well as scaling up laboratory testing capacity through the provision of reagents and other equipment, including 9,000 molecular tests for COVID-19. To ensure the protection of front-line workers providing care, the United Nations has distributed 34,000 items of personal protective equipment to institutions and trained 1,152 medical and non-medical workers on the use of such equipment, infection prevention and control and suspected COVID-19 case management. IOM, along with other United Nations agencies, is supporting the work of Haitian health and migration authorities at the border with the Dominican Republic, where increasing numbers of migrants cross daily. Lastly, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Office for Project Services, UNDP and others are supporting efforts to reinforce the supply chain, a crucial element of a strong response.

38. As anticipated, the systems that have been built or reinforced to fight cholera are now, with adaptations, proving to be useful for other health crises, including this pandemic. The sampling process that ensured the testing of suspected cholera cases has been recalibrated for COVID-19, and several cholera emergency response teams have been reoperationalized to address the pandemic. At the same time, the United Nations continues to prioritize the fight against cholera, focusing on system strengthening, surveillance, rapid response, prevention and coordination. More than 15 months have passed since the last confirmed case of cholera was recorded in Haiti, early February 2019, and no deaths have been reported since then. In the first quarter of 2020, only 68 suspected cases of cholera have been reported thus far by the Ministry of Public Health and Population, and all tested negative.

39. In addition to all of the efforts under way to provide a strong response to the health crisis, a number of critical issues must be addressed urgently, including by designating, equipping and securing dedicated COVID-19 health structures throughout the country, further clarifying the institutional division of labour among national entities and addressing the critical funding gap for the response, in particular for the immediate period. The United Nations is working proactively with its national and international partners to overcome such challenges.

40. The pandemic and the containment measures will exacerbate an already acute socioeconomic and humanitarian situation. The onset of hurricane season, from June to November, could further compound existing needs. More than 40 per cent of the population of Haiti requires humanitarian assistance, and the country is one of the 10 most food insecure in the world. Alarming levels of malnutrition were confirmed in February through a nationwide nutrition survey supported by UNICEF, which revealed a global acute malnutrition rate of 6 per cent and a severe acute malnutrition rate of 2.1 per cent. Even before the COVID-19 crisis, the number of persons in need

in the health sector increased owing to limited functioning of, and access to, health services.

41. Launched on 2 March, the 2020 update to the 2019–2020 Humanitarian Response Plan amounts to \$253 million and is aimed at reaching 2.1 million of the 4.6 million Haitians deemed the most vulnerable, including 1.3 million persons in the health sector. As of 8 June, it received \$29.9 million. Some of the country's additional pandemic-related health response requirements, estimated at \$105 million, are reflected in the revised global Humanitarian Response Plan, which was launched on 7 May. The evolution of other critical humanitarian needs for the country will be reflected in the revised Plan, which will be published later in 2020.

42. Following the temporary suspension of United Nations food and cash distributions in several departments between 19 March and 2 April, Haitian authorities, along with United Nations agencies, adjusted food distribution procedures to minimize the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable. One month's worth of food rations was distributed at the request of local authorities to more than 30,000 persons in two Artibonite communes (Ennery and Saint-Michel de l'Attalaye) in case those communities – which were closely associated with some of the initial confirmed cases of COVID-19 – were placed under quarantine. Because schools were closed as of 19 March, the World Food Programme distributed the remaining 946 metric tons of food from its school feeding programmes as take-home rations for the students' families. The Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development also distributed assistance to more than 30,000 vulnerable households in five departments to strengthen agricultural livelihoods for the spring season and avoid an increase in food insecurity in the wake of the pandemic.

43. The pandemic has focused attention on the country's need to adopt structural and more sustainable solutions to long-lasting problems and vulnerabilities, including the exposure of Haiti to natural hazards. Efforts should be pursued towards continuing to promote sustainable development and build the country's resilience to future shocks. A good example is the national social protection and promotion policy, which is pending adoption by the Council of Ministers and would represent a major step towards reducing poverty, diminishing inequality, empowering women and men and reducing dependency on humanitarian assistance.

44. Similarly, long-term structural investments in areas such as disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation would increase the country's resilience to shocks and reduce its dependence on humanitarian assistance and short-term crisis response. Support for the Directorate for Civil Protection, which strengthens the coordination capacities of emergency operations centres at the national and departmental levels, has been refocused on the response to the pandemic and preparing for the upcoming hurricane season. In addition, the United Nations is supporting efforts to establish new protected areas, restore ecosystems and promote erosion control, natural resources management and waste management planning as part of disaster risk reduction.

VIII. Operational posture and integration

45. Since the confirmation, on 19 March, of the first two cases of COVID-19 in Haiti, the United Nations system has supported national efforts to address the pandemic and mitigate its socioeconomic impact while continuing to advance Security Council-mandated tasks. Measures to reduce the Mission's risk profile by implementing telecommuting arrangements were put in place. Similar steps were also taken by the United Nations country team to ensure the delivery of critical, in particular life-saving, activities while limiting risks to staff and preventing the spread

of COVID-19. Efforts to identify locations for the potential medical evacuation of staff in cases of COVID-19 infections have succeeded. A regional COVID-19 air ambulance is now required to have medical evacuation plans fully in place.

46. The integrated strategic framework of the One United Nations initiative, endorsed by United Nations principals on 19 February, represents a unified vision for the United Nations system in Haiti, articulated around six benchmarks. The plan, which guides the collective efforts of the organization in 2020 and 2021, is intended to focus its advisory and programmatic resources on cross-dimensional structural obstacles to the achievement of longer-term stability and the Sustainable Development Goals. While the impact of the pandemic is likely to require adjustments to the plan COVID-19 only reinforces the urgency to proceed with joint action in the areas identified in the One United Nations initiative, anchoring the immediate support in the longer-term objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and addressing structural development deficits and vulnerabilities to help Haiti to better recover.

47. Having concluded its start-up phase, BINUH is finalizing the procurement process for the premises of its new headquarters in anticipation of relocating once the pandemic has been contained. The Mission continues to pursue efficiencies actively by reviewing service contracts with the objective of reducing costs. On 14 February, BINUH officially transferred the fuel farm of the former United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti to the Government, which has enabled significant expansion of the country's fuel storage capacity. In addition, although some logistics and supply challenges remain, the Haitian National Police headquarters and central directorates were relocated to sections of the logistics base vacated by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti and the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti, while BINUH continues environmental clearing work. Furthermore, the rehabilitation of BINUH police and corrections co-location sites is nearly complete, and all sites will be made fully operational, once conditions permit, to support senior management of the national police effectively with daily activities and strategic planning.

IX. Sexual exploitation and abuse

48. The zero-tolerance policy of the Secretary-General on sexual exploitation and abuse remains a priority for the United Nations in Haiti, where no new cases have been confirmed since the closure of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. Supported by the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate at United Nations Headquarters, the senior victims' rights officer of BINUH is implementing a system-wide, multi-country strategy to support victims in pursuing paternity and child support claims in the jurisdictions where such claims can be made. As part of the BINUH advocacy strategy, radio broadcasts were made to inform the general public of the policy of the Secretary-General, in particular on victims' rights. BINUH also set up a grievance mechanism and continued to make referrals with the support of the Office of the Ombudsperson. Educational, financial and food support continue to be provided to children born as a result of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel formerly deployed to Haiti. Several countries have coordinated with Haitian authorities to interview victims of sexual exploitation and abuse as part of processes to address impunity for such wrongs. Online training modules on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse have been made available to United Nations entities and implementing partners as part of the response to the pandemic.

X. Observations

49. A strong response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Haiti, a country whose long-standing fragility has been exacerbated by 18 months of a protracted political, economic, social and institutional crisis, is necessary to prevent an erosion of national stability and mitigate risks to security and development outcomes. A further aggravation of the humanitarian and socioeconomic situation in Haiti could lead to significant human suffering and large population outflows, with a significant impact on the region.

50. The public health and socioeconomic dimensions of the pandemic in Haiti have to be addressed urgently. While the Government of Haiti was prompt in adopting a significant number of strong measures to contain the spread of the virus, efforts must continue to further clarify and strengthen the coordination arrangements of the response; encourage all sectors of society to remain mobilized in a coherent, effective, multipronged and gender-sensitive response; and ensure transparency in the use of funds for both the health and socioeconomic responses. National authorities have to quickly take critical decisions, including clarifying which health structures will be at the forefront of patient care, strengthening measures at the border with the Dominican Republic and containing the outbreak in prisons and detention centres. Furthermore, communication efforts have to be stepped up not only to ensure that prevention measures are fully understood and adhered to but also to counter the worrisome rise in stigmatization and discrimination.

51. Haiti cannot face the pandemic alone, however. It requires unflagging support from its humanitarian and development partners. The United Nations system in Haiti has adapted its activities and resource mobilization strategy to target its immediate support to the national response to the pandemic and contribute to social protection and priorities of early economic recovery. As a number of partners have already announced the allocation or repurposing of funding to the crisis, I call upon the international community, including, first and foremost, regional partners, to increase financial, technical and political support for Haiti during these challenging times.

52. It is critical that immediate and targeted interventions to contain and address the pandemic not detract from the country's longer-term objectives and persistent structural challenges. We have to ensure that the crisis is leveraged as an opportunity to recover better together. The 2030 Agenda continues to provide a long-term vision and multidimensional framework to guide immediate response actions and longer-term investments for a greener and inclusive recovery. I call upon the United Nations country team and all partners to take all possible measures to scale up support for Haiti and ensure that health and socioeconomic activities are prioritized under the response to the far-reaching impacts of COVID-19 and contribute to such longer-term objectives. The pattern of "short-termism" that has often marked crisis response efforts in Haiti must be broken.

53. The Haitian National Police passed another important test by demonstrating increased professionalism and restraint in enforcing public order, including during a series of effective anti-gang operations, while taking on the additional burden of enforcing the implementation of restrictive Government measures to contain the spread of COVID-19. They have also addressed labour issues within their ranks and improved their regulatory framework while continuing to make progress in following up on human rights complaints and ensuring compliance with human rights standards. Notwithstanding those achievements, the longer-term issue of adequately resourcing the police remains unsolved. The issue continues to put the lives of police officers at risk and threatens to jeopardize the sustainability of the progress made in the professionalization and effectiveness of the police force.

54. A resurgence in gang activity in the midst of the pandemic is compounding the plight of the most vulnerable and exacerbating an already volatile situation. Such activity represents a serious concern and reconfirms the need for holistic, integrated and sustained efforts to address the scourge of the gang phenomenon and improve access to basic services in areas under the influence of gang violence. I welcome the finalization of the multipronged national strategy on disarmament, dismantlement, reintegration and community violence reduction under the aegis of the Haitian National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. I also encourage all relevant actors to back it with full political support and relevant institutions to fully cooperate on its implementation.

55. It is disappointing that the number of individuals released from Haitian prisons in the context of COVID-19 mitigation measures remains paltry, although cases have been confirmed among the inmate population. While important steps have been taken in the right direction, the situation in the Haitian prison system remains alarming owing to overcrowding and a lack of food, medication and services for detainees. The situation is illustrative of the major deficiencies that continue to plague the Haitian justice system. With 74 per cent of incarcerated persons awaiting trial, and an obsolete criminal code, the length and convoluted nature of judicial proceedings continue to impede access to justice while compromising the right to due process, most notably in terms of the legality of pretrial detention. The United Nations system in Haiti will continue to support the Government of that country as it exerts political will and leadership in ensuring the sustained and adequate provision of life-sustaining services and supplies to prisons, as well as swift progress towards judicial reforms to address long-term issues with the country's incarceration trends.

56. The fragility of the rule of law in Haiti continues to translate into failures of the Haitian State to meet its obligation to protect the rights of its citizens to security, life and physical integrity. It also undermines efforts to combat impunity, denying justice and reparation to victims and creating an enabling environment for further violence. Recent events in the Village de Dieu area of Port-au-Prince echo a series of prior incidents, such as the La Saline, Grand Ravine and Bel Air killings, whose perpetrators continue to elude justice. The execution of pending arrest warrants, speedy progress in judicial proceedings and the swift implementation of the national action plan on human rights remain critical to guarantee the effective protection of those rights and restore citizens' trust in State institutions.

57. The failure of efforts towards dialogue to reach a political agreement in February was another missed opportunity for dialogue and agreement on the long-term constitutional, institutional and structural reforms required to support stability and State effectiveness, including in terms of providing the economic opportunities, basic services and protection that Haitian citizens deserve. However, another opportunity is surfacing in the context of the response to the pandemic, and it should not be wasted. Political, private sector and civil society actors have overcome their differences, shown solidarity and thus directly contributed to the response to the pandemic by providing financial support, organizing aid deliveries and launching public awareness activities. I am encouraged by this much-needed display of national cohesion, which responds to the need for national unity and the longstanding expectations of the Haitian population towards its leaders after months of bitter political divisions. I call with renewed urgency upon all political actors to take advantage of the opportunities for cooperation arising from the crisis to build trust and work together to address, in the longer run, the root causes of political and institutional instability in Haiti.

58. In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my Special Representative for Haiti, Helen Meagher La Lime, and my Special Envoy for Haiti, Josette Sheeran, for their leadership and commitment. I am also grateful to my deputy

Special Representative, Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator, Bruno Lemarquis, all members of the United Nations country team and United Nations personnel for their tireless work, dedication and remarkable adaptability to the difficult working conditions on the ground and operational limitations posed by the pandemic. The United Nations system stands ready to assist Haitian stakeholders and institutions by promoting society-wide collaboration to face the threat of COVID-19 and preparing the ground for the implementation of a consensual reform agenda, along with an electoral process in line with constitutional norms. I reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to accompanying Haiti through these difficult times and contributing to its long-term stabilization and prosperity.
