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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 [2547 \(2020\)](#), by which the Council extended to 15 October 2021 the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), in accordance with Council resolution [2476 \(2019\)](#), by which it had established BINUH and requested me to report on the implementation of the resolution every 120 days. The report includes significant developments that have occurred since my previous report ([S/2021/133](#)) and provides an update on the implementation of the BINUH mandate.

2. The Government of Haiti declared an eight-day state of health emergency on 22 May following an upsurge in the number of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases and the confirmed presence of two variants of the virus that are associated with increased transmission. The measure was extended for an additional 15 days on 31 May. Haiti is eligible to receive free-of-charge vaccines through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility, which, since mid-March, had assigned sufficient vaccine doses for some 3 per cent of the population. As of mid-May, the Government had accepted the first allocation of the doses and was completing preparatory importation steps.

3. BINUH continued to work closely with the United Nations country team, strengthening implementation efforts in the priority areas of community violence reduction, justice, support for the Haitian National Police, human rights, elections and sustaining peace. They also continued to work in a coordinated manner through their integrated strategic framework, known as the “One United Nations plan”, thus ensuring focused United Nations support for Haitian institutions in addressing challenges to peace, stability and sustainable development and in advancing the commitments made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

II. Political issues and good governance (benchmark 1)

4. As a result of the prolongation of the state of health emergency, the Provisional Electoral Council, on 7 June, postponed the holding of the constitutional referendum sine die. In the absence of a meaningful breakthrough in the continued efforts to forge a minimal political consensus, conditions will remain challenging for the holding of the constitutional referendum, as well as the legislative, local and presidential



elections, in a technically sound and inclusive manner. While numerous stakeholders have underlined that it is imperative to reach a political agreement to hold polls that are free, fair and transparent in 2021, mediation attempts, including by an interreligious platform, have to date failed to yield progress. In a further sign of the volatile nature of the current political dynamics, the Prime Minister, Joseph Jouthe, resigned on 14 April. He was replaced on an ad interim basis by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Claude Joseph, who was tasked with forming a government within 30 days. His appointment was then extended for a second 30-day period on 14 May.

5. Meanwhile, the security situation has been marked by significantly increased levels of kidnappings, with 171 abductions reported in the first four months of 2021, affecting all spheres of society and creating a pervasive sense of anxiety. Limited results by the authorities in curbing crime, including a failed police operation in March in Village de Dieu, a waterfront shanty town in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area, dealt a further blow to the nation's confidence in the State's capacity to ensure public safety.

6. Opposition calls and demonstrations demanding that the President, Jovenel Moïse, leave office came to a head on 7 February, when the opposition declared that his mandate had expired. In the early morning hours, police officers arrested and detained a group of 20 alleged "coup plotters", including a Court of Cassation judge. Tensions further increased the following day, when another Court of Cassation judge announced his appointment as "Transitional President". Protests continued throughout February as multiple opposition and civil society groups persisted with demands that the President step down.

7. Haiti observed three days of national mourning over the killings of police officers ambushed on 12 March during the failed police operation in Village de Dieu. The then Prime Minister, Mr. Jouthe, attributed the tragic failure of the operation to strategic errors in gathering intelligence and the delayed deployment of tactical backup.

8. Demonstrations were held between 28 and 30 March to mark the commemoration of the thirty-fourth anniversary of the Constitution of 1987. The protesters, who denounced the Government's intention to replace the Constitution by referendum, continued to demand the departure of the President and the establishment of a transitional government to enact governance and economic reforms and organize elections.

9. Against that backdrop, efforts by political parties, religious groups, civil society organizations, diaspora groups and the private sector to engage with key stakeholders did not yield the urgently needed political consensus on the way forward. In late March, an interreligious platform, Religions pour la paix, proposed to mediate talks and invited BINUH to serve as one of five international observers. While a handful of opposition representatives and other actors expressed readiness to engage, other factions of the opposition openly rejected the call, questioning the platform's impartiality and reiterating the need for a transitional government and the departure of the President. Given the obvious lack of support, Religions pour la paix called off the initiative on 12 April.

10. Nonetheless, several stakeholders, intent on forging a political agreement able to move the electoral calendar forward, continued to propose views on the key elements to be included in a possible accord. Their suggestions include a reconfiguration of the Provisional Electoral Council and of the Independent Consultative Committee, the withdrawal of several – recently issued – controversial presidential decrees, an appraisal of the citizen identification card production and distribution processes managed by the National Identification Office and, lastly, the appointment of a government of national unity.

11. In a resolution adopted on 17 March, the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) indicated its readiness to assume a good offices role to facilitate dialogue that would lead to free and fair elections. Subsequently, in a letter dated 28 April addressed to the Secretary-General of OAS, the interim Prime Minister welcomed the proposed good offices support to facilitate dialogue among national stakeholders in order to reach a political agreement that would allow for the organization of the constitutional referendum and national elections in 2021. An OAS good offices mission was deployed on 8 June to facilitate dialogue leading to free and fair elections.

12. The constitutional reform initiative remains a significant cause of disagreement within the Haitian polity and a major source of contention for opposition actors. After reviewing and analysing the Constitution and holding thematic consultations with subject-matter experts, the Independent Consultative Committee presented a draft text for a new constitution on 2 February. The Committee stated that the draft contained a rationalized electoral process, a presidential system with a president and a vice-president elected by universal suffrage, a unicameral parliament and simplified local government structures. Several stakeholders across key national sectors, however, reacted negatively, with some voicing concerns at the significantly increased authority granted to the President and the heightened level of immunity that Presidents and Cabinet members could enjoy upon leaving office. Among the views expressed was the perceived lack of legitimacy of the draft in the absence of a political agreement, together with concerns that the Committee had gone too far in attempting to reduce the power of the parliament, which is currently viewed by some actors as excessive and a source of instability.

13. The Committee's calendar for subsequent consultations on the draft document with key stakeholders, including women, young people, persons with disabilities, community and religious leaders, the private sector, members of the diaspora, unions, former presidents and former prime ministers, was severely delayed and resulted in events being held in only 3 of the 10 regions (West, Grand-Anse and Centre Departments). The Office of the Ombudsperson, however, organized multisectoral consultations in parallel, reaching audiences in Port-au-Prince (West Department), Port-de-Paix (North-West Department), Fort Liberté (North-East Department) and Hinche (Centre Department). At the same time, sporadic, ad hoc initiatives to organize public and online events to discuss the proposed constitution were launched by diverse stakeholder groups. During the formal consultations, civil society and political figures increasingly disassociated themselves from the process, pointing to a lack of political consensus and questioning the Committee's independence and inclusivity. The head of the ruling party, Parti haïtien Tèt Kale, called upon the President to abandon the initiative, citing political imperatives and technical challenges relating to the distribution of national identity cards.

14. A second draft of the proposed constitution was nonetheless published on 19 May, with the Committee noting that it took into account comments on the initial draft received directly from more than 1,550 individuals during consultations and other comments submitted by more than 150 organizations. The Committee also highlighted the revisions made, especially regarding the composition of the proposed constitutional court, the reduced immunity of elected officials, who would now be held accountable for their acts before a high court, and the creation of an electoral tribunal to resolve electoral cases.

15. Alongside consultations on the draft constitution, modifications were made to the electoral calendar released by the Provisional Electoral Council on 7 January. To allow for more time to register voters, in late February the Council extended the registration period for the constitutional referendum by an additional two months, to 26 April, and the vote itself was postponed a first time, from 25 April to 27 June.

Conversely, the presidential, legislative and local elections were postponed by one week to 26 September, with a second round scheduled for 21 November should a new constitution not be adopted.

16. By the time that the Council closed the voters' list on 26 April, some 4.4 million Haitians of voting age had been registered. Those among them unable to collect their identification cards will be permitted to vote if they have other valid official photographic identification. Although voters residing abroad were able to register at consulates for the first time, the technical conditions to register were put in place only for members of the diaspora in the Dominican Republic and the United States of America. Clear procedures for registered members of the diaspora to vote are being worked on.

17. The funding constraints notwithstanding, the Government intensified an awareness-raising campaign on media platforms to mobilize Haitians, including in the diaspora, to participate in the referendum. However, electoral preparations, including the establishment of regional and municipal electoral offices and the assessment of voting centres, were significantly delayed by lags in planning and implementation and the late disbursement of funds to the Provisional Electoral Council. The latter also prevented the Council from undertaking the work necessary to make the logistics hubs for stocking electoral materials identified for the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area and the other nine regions operational in a timely manner. In addition, calls to oppose the referendum have multiplied in recent weeks. Of particular concern are statements inciting violence made by some leading figures.

18. At the request of the Government, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) provided technical and operational support through the procurement of electoral materials and logistical preparations. A UNDP-managed basket fund was established for this purpose, and the Government has contributed \$33 million to it thus far. The funds are expected to fully cover the cost of the referendum and some preparatory work for the subsequent elections.

19. While off to a slow start, a joint electoral security cell coordinated by the Haitian National Police is working with the Provisional Electoral Council, the United Nations and other national and international partners. It has convened weekly meetings to develop integrated plans to secure 1,559 voting centres. The plans include a joint risk assessment of centres and logistics hubs for electoral materials and assets, in close coordination with UNOPS. In addition, a Peacebuilding Fund project set at \$1.5 million provides assistance through the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and UNDP to prevent electoral violence against women. The electoral security plans further call for the national police to be fully mobilized and able to ensure the safety of the electoral processes. In line with previous electoral cycles, 7,000 temporary election security officers will be recruited, equipped and paid by the Council and trained with the assistance of the national police. Moreover, the Armed Forces of Haiti are part of the security plans to complement the national police in the provision of perimeter security in connection with a few logistics and operational sites.

III. Community violence reduction (benchmark 2)

20. Perceptions of deteriorating security grew more acute as State measures to tackle crime and armed gang violence remained largely unsuccessful. The inability to restore and maintain order throughout the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area was highlighted by several key incidents, including a major prison break in Croix-des-

Bouquets on 25 February, a failed police operation in Village de Dieu on 12 March and gang attacks in Bel-Air on 31 March and 1 April.

21. The sense of insecurity was also exacerbated by spikes in several security indicators. There was a 36 per cent increase in the number of kidnappings in the first four months of 2021, with 171 abductions reported, compared with 110 in the last four months of 2020. That alarming trend, including the abduction of a group of some 10 individuals, including 7 Haitian and French clergy members, on 11 April, stoked public frustration and galvanized the Catholic Church, along with the education and private sectors, to lead national shutdowns in protest. The number of intentional homicides increased by 17 per cent, with 525 cases reported from January to April, compared with 436 in the last four months of 2020. Of note, police officers were increasingly targeted by gangs in reprisals, resulting in 18 officers being killed and 35 wounded. The Haitian National Police registered an uptick in armed robberies by common criminals riding motorbikes, in addition to armed gangs targeting bank customers and local entrepreneurs. The number of incidents of civil unrest increased by 30 per cent compared with the previous four months, with 486 episodes recorded from January to April, of which 410 were not peaceful. The number of instances of gender-based violence reported by the national health system increased by 19 per cent between January and April, while the police registered a 44 per cent decline in the number of rapes reported, from 56 to 39 cases.

22. The Superior Council of the National Police progressively adopted measures to respond to escalating public safety concerns. They included tightened controls over bank transactions to freeze financial assets of criminal groups, strengthened joint police/customs inspections at major seaports and increased oversight of private security companies to stem trafficking in arms. To deter kidnappings, the former Prime Minister, Mr. Jouthe, as head of the Superior Council, banned the use of tinted windows on all vehicles not bearing official or diplomatic license plates, while the national police Director General ad interim established an anti-kidnapping task force and a hotline to report incidents. The measures were widely criticized as ad hoc reactions rather than part of a comprehensive public safety plan.

23. Against that backdrop, the President requested additional assistance from the United Nations to take on the mounting crime and violence, which are exacerbating a dire socioeconomic situation. In response, senior United Nations police advisers were deployed in May to provide additional expertise in strengthening police intelligence and investigation capacity in anti-gang and violence reduction strategies.

24. The then Prime Minister convened in early April the first interministerial task force on the draft national strategy for community violence reduction, giving it a mandate to finalize the strategy and develop an immediate and integrated response to gang violence based on national priorities with, if necessary, a realignment of existing project priorities. The task force is to report back to the Office of the Prime Minister by the end of June. Meanwhile, women's community-based organizations in gang-affected neighbourhoods were consulted on the draft strategy by the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, with a view to informing the work of the task force and reinforcing women's roles in peacebuilding by ensuring that women are included in community violence reduction programmes from the beginning, starting with the identification of community leaders, participants and beneficiaries of programmes.

25. In parallel, a task force led by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security completed its review of the draft law on firearms and ammunition, as part of a Peacebuilding Fund project on weapons and ammunition management implemented by UNDP with support from BINUH and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The

Government also requested the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research to lead a weapons and ammunition management baseline assessment to inform the drafting of a national action plan in line with the Roadmap for Implementing the Caribbean Priority Actions on the Illicit Proliferation of Firearms and Ammunition across the Caribbean in a Sustainable Manner by 2030, developed by the Caribbean Community.

26. Preparations continued for the implementation of the Peacebuilding Fund community violence reduction project to map community platforms and better support long-term socioeconomic development efforts in gang-affected areas. UNOPS, UNDP, BINUH and the United Nations Population Fund held coordination meetings with implementing partners, community representatives and State institutions to articulate a common strategic vision for intervention in the fragile Port-au-Prince neighbourhoods of Martissant and La Saline.

27. Lastly, the Peacebuilding Fund approved a new project to prevent violence, manage conflicts, strengthen dialogue and combat gender-based violence in 2021. It has a budget of \$1.5 million and is to be implemented by UNDP and UN-Women, in close partnership with BINUH. In line with Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the Spotlight Initiative also partnered with the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund to channel institutional and programmatic funding in the amount of \$1.2 million to civil society organizations working to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.

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

28. Progress on the key priorities in the criminal justice system remained limited, as headway on the reduction of prolonged pretrial detention stalled when judges' associations called for an open-ended strike in the aftermath of the alleged coup attempt of 7 February. Following the arrest of a group of alleged coup plotters, including a Court of Cassation judge, the President issued executive orders on 8 and 11 February in which, respectively, he dismissed three Court of Cassation judges and appointed their replacements without respecting the constitutional procedures that would require a seated parliament. A court clerk involved in a hearing for those arrested was also dismissed on 9 February. The measures, criticized by judicial personnel, civil society and some international partners as undermining the judiciary, prompted four judges' associations to go on strike from 15 February to protest against the lack of independence of the judiciary and call for the withdrawal of the executive orders and the reinstatement of the clerk.

29. Aided by the mediation efforts of the Office of the Ombudsperson, the judiciary and the executive settled some differences, ending the strike on 19 April. Nevertheless, the strike further strained the underresourced and overpopulated penitentiary system that, as at 19 May, held 11,594 inmates, including 460 women, 234 boys and 24 girls, for an occupancy rate of 339 per cent. Of those, 82 per cent were awaiting trial, an increase of 2 per cent over the previous reporting period. In contrast to the rising number of detainees, the number of prison guards has been falling. With 1,166 corrections officers, there is currently one guard for every 10 detainees.

30. A prison break at the Croix-des-Bouquets penitentiary on 25 February left the prison director and 29 prisoners dead, with more than 400 detainees escaping, of whom 68 were later recaptured. The national authorities, with the assistance of international partners, including the United Nations and the members of the financial and technical partners justice and rule of law sectoral working group on prisons, are

developing a strategic plan for resource mobilization to support efforts to improve prison conditions.

31. Following the convening of a national workshop on pretrial detention in January, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security reviewed its national strategy and established a monitoring committee on prison overcrowding in April. Advocacy by my Special Representative and Head of BINUH resulted in the establishment of the Board of the Legal Aid Council on 5 May, in accordance with the 2018 law on legal aid. This will facilitate access by the most vulnerable to free legal aid, gradually making decentralized legal aid offices operational throughout Haiti and assisting prison detainees in appearing before judges.

32. Other efforts to reform the justice sector have partially stalled. The new Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure adopted by decree on 24 June 2020 provide for alternatives to detention, which could help to reduce the pretrial detention rate and prison overcrowding. However, 10 months later, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security has yet to establish a national committee for the implementation of penal reform. Once established, the committee would be tasked with disseminating the codes among judicial actors and carrying out related institutional and legislative reforms. Meanwhile, neither of the coordination forums of justice actors in Port-au-Prince and Croix-des-Bouquets was able to meet during the reporting period owing to the endemic insecurity and the judicial strike.

33. The Haitian National Police strived to provide security by strengthening its capabilities, improving conduct and discipline and mitigating tensions within the institution. The challenging security situation notwithstanding, the size of the force has continued to shrink as a result of high rates of attrition, with the loss of about 400 officers every year owing to deaths, dismissals and resignations. Recruitment has been stalled for almost two years owing to financial difficulties and the pandemic. The leadership was recently able to resume recruitment, with 640 candidates, including 133 women, beginning an eight-month basic training curriculum on 16 May as the 31st promotion. This will help to bolster the force, which currently stands at 14,958 officers, including 1,581 women (10.6 per cent), 48 officers fewer than in my previous report. However, efforts to improve the officer-to-inhabitant ratio, which lags in comparison with countries of a similar population size, will require the assertive recruitment of additional personnel for some years to come. To further strengthen capacity, the police retrained 1,341 active officers of the 26th promotion (including 178 women) while 100 officers (including 8 women) were promoted to the rank of police inspector in May, after completing a six-month training course. The police will conduct similar refresher training for other promotions in the coming months.

34. The General Inspectorate of the Haitian National Police continued to play a significant oversight role in strengthening accountability and transparency. In planning for elections, BINUH, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNDP supported the police in delivering training sessions on human rights, ethics and rules of conduct for officers of the public order units that had been identified as the principal offenders in the annual report of the Inspectorate, in terms of misconduct during police interventions. Thus far, 554 officers, including 62 women, have participated in the programme. In addition to the conduct of inspections and training, several investigations launched by the Inspectorate into allegations of excessive use of force during protests, in particular against journalists, are continuing. The Inspectorate is also investigating alleged human rights violations and abuses, notably by prison officers against women imprisoned in Jacmel (South-East Department) and during the jailbreak at the Croix-des-Bouquets penitentiary.

35. The police continued to face serious incidents of discontent within the ranks, which threatened institutional cohesion. An example is the “Fantom 509” group, composed of a mix of rogue and former officers, who on several occasions took to the streets on motorbikes and unloaded their firearms, causing panic and mayhem. In the aftermath of the police killings on 12 March, the same radical faction capitalized on the mounting discontent of some rank-and-file officers with the institution’s leadership and instigated further incidents of street violence and vandalism. During those episodes of unrest, three police stations in the West Department were stormed to free 12 detained officers, during which two officers were killed. Following the incidents, the Director General ad interim of the Haitian National Police overhauled his senior leadership in an effort to improve his management team and initiated legal action against the group, now labelled a criminal organization, with several dozen of its members actively sought for the alleged commission of crimes.

V. Human rights (benchmark 4)

36. The human rights situation deteriorated further owing to the authorities’ persistent inability to protect the population from armed gang violence and the continuing, chronic lack of commitment to effectively addressing underlying and structural human rights violations, including in places of detention. Since my previous report, no effective action has been taken to ensure accountability in the growing list of emblematic cases, in particular the Grand Ravine (2017), La Saline (2018) and Bel-Air (2019) killings and the murder of Monferrier Dorval in August 2020.

37. BINUH observed an increase in human rights abuses, attributable mainly to the wave of kidnappings and the rise in gang attacks. In one incident in March, the population of Tabarre Issa, an urbanized displacement site in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area (West Department) established after the earthquake in 2010, fell victim to repeated attacks by gangs and land-grabbers, which resulted in at least four fatalities among residents, destruction of or damage to an estimated 80 per cent of homes in the settlement and the displacement of 2,496 people. Similarly, on 31 March and 1 April, elements of the G9 gang alliance attacked the Port-au-Prince neighbourhood of Bel-Air. Left to fend for themselves, residents reported the marked absence of the national police – a recurring trend experienced in at least 20 gang raids on Bel-Air in 2020 and 2021 that have led to the displacement of at least 407 households. Overall, between 1 February and 31 May, BINUH attributed 295 alleged human rights abuses to gang members and unidentified armed men, including 78 killings (1 girl, 5 women, 1 boy and 71 men), 25 injuries (2 girls, 4 women, 2 boys and 17 men), 3 rapes (2 girls and 1 woman) and 149 kidnappings (7 girls, 46 women, 8 boys and 88 men).

38. In the aftermath of the prison break at the Croix-des-Bouquets penitentiary (West Department) on 25 February, four deceased detainees were found within the compound. Eyewitness testimonies and reports collected after the incident indicated that as many as 25 escaped detainees were allegedly arbitrarily killed by law enforcement personnel, many with gunshot wounds to the back. Meanwhile, BINUH documented that as many as 25 female detainees had been subjected to ill-treatment in the prison in Jacmel (South-East Department).

39. In a joint public report to be issued in the coming weeks, OHCHR and BINUH have documented the conditions of detention prevailing throughout the prison system. In multiple prisons and police stations, persons deprived of liberty are cramped in extremely overcrowded cells without a toilet for up to 23 hours per day, with limited or no access to health care and with insufficient food. For example, the 193 detainees of the Petit-Goâve (West Department) police station, the majority of whom have been

in prolonged pretrial detention for up to five years, are afforded an average of 0.28 square metres of space per person. BINUH and OHCHR documented that they are being held in conditions amounting to torture or cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. They are also often subjected to corporal punishment. Several other detention facilities visited by BINUH, including in Les Cayes (South Department) and Cap-Haïtien (North Department), presented similar conditions, as did the National Penitentiary in Port-au-Prince (West Department), which holds a third of the prison population.

40. While the authorities are investigating the incidents at the prisons in Croix-des-Bouquets and Jacmel, a lack of accountability persists for human rights violations committed by law enforcement officials. Police and corrections officers have been identified as responsible for 238 alleged human rights violations, resulting in 42 people killed (3 women and 39 men) and 85 injured (35 women, 2 boys and 48 men) between 1 February and 31 May, a period during which the General Inspectorate of the Haitian National Police concluded 36 investigations, leading to 20 recommendations of sanctions (16 suspensions, 1 dismissal and 3 formal warnings). Furthermore, two cases were transferred to the Prosecutor's Office for further action.

41. Likewise, a systemic lack of accountability persisted in the emblematic cases of Grand Ravine (2017), La Saline (2018) and Bel-Air (2019). The authorities did not renew the appointment of the investigative judge in charge of the La Saline case and have taken little to no action to make progress in the other cases. Jimmy Cherizier, alias "Barbecue", remains free while the investigation into the murder of Monferrier Dorval in August 2020 still lags. BINUH also documented that, from 1 February to 31 May, the Office of the Ombudsperson, local human rights defenders, lawyers, judges and journalists were subjected to 12 cases of attacks, threats and acts of intimidation (2 against women, 8 against men and 2 against property belonging to the Office).

42. In the Grand-Anse Department, an investigation by BINUH revealed that only 46 of the 126 complaints (36 per cent) filed by victims of sexual and gender-based violence in 2020 yielded judicial inquiries and that none had subsequently gone to trial. Similar dynamics are likely to be at play nationwide. The pervasive lack of accountability in such cases has led to widespread public mistrust of the judicial system and law enforcement agencies. To help to galvanize action by the authorities, the United Nations Population Fund and its local partners provided multisectoral assistance, including prenatal care, to pregnant girls and support to mitigate stigmatization. In addition, the United Nations country team, through the Spotlight Initiative, trained eight women's rights advocacy agencies on tools for digital legal services to begin providing remote legal support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. The Spotlight Initiative also collaborated with a Haitian singer, Emeline Michel, to organize a virtual concert on 8 March to promote better social norms. The event was viewed by more than 100,000 individuals in Haiti and abroad.

43. The repatriation of Haitian migrants continued, with 7,870 persons (299 girls, 304 boys, 1,246 women and 6,021 men) being returned between 1 February and 30 April. Multiple allegations of mistreatment and human rights violations, such as ill-treatment in places of detention and the irregular confiscation of migrant property, including identification documents, were received by the International Organization for Migration as it provided critical assistance and protection to migrants repatriated from North, Central and South America.

44. Civil society organizations continued to advocate an improvement in the human rights situation and submitted three reports for the upcoming review of Haiti by the Human Rights Committee. Meanwhile, the national action plan on human rights for the period 2019–2021 is still pending approval by the executive, its endorsement by

the Interministerial Committee on Human Rights notwithstanding. The ratification by Haiti of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance is included in that plan.

45. The Government and OHCHR have continued work towards establishing a country office to support national efforts to address long-standing human rights issues and strengthen civic space.

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

46. Linkages between sociopolitical, governance and economic challenges continued to fuel instability, thereby undermining the macroeconomic situation and hindering labour market development, which has severely limited the economic prospects for young people and vulnerable groups. Following an estimated contraction of 3.7 per cent of the national gross domestic product during the 2020 fiscal year, the Government expects a return to growth in 2021, an outcome that would depend on marked improvements in the political and security situation. After a period of steady appreciation between September and November 2020 as a result of interventions by the central bank in the exchange market, the gourde again began to depreciate, dropping from 65 gourdes to the dollar in early December 2020 to 88.8 in late May 2021. The inflation rate responded to those trends, decreasing from 27.8 per cent in August 2020 to 17.2 per cent in March 2021, before beginning to increase again, as evidenced by recent data. In seeking to address the macroeconomic challenges, the Government had negotiated a staff-monitored programme with the International Monetary Fund in early 2020. However, the programme was not approved as initial actions related to governance had not been implemented. Although Fund staff have continued to work with the authorities to strengthen governance relating to procurement and encourage greater exchange rate flexibility, progress has not been sufficient for negotiations to restart.

47. Conditions for private sector development are worsening in the face of a deteriorating macroeconomic and security climate, with additional retrenchments forecast. For example, temporary layoffs were experienced at numerous textile factory complexes in 2020, including at the Caracol Industrial Park (North-East Department), where the workforce employed at 36 factories was reduced by 25 to 30 per cent to 52,291 workers. Recently, the Park's biggest employer announced that it would close a factory, leaving an additional 1,400 workers unemployed, while another employer is planning to gradually transfer its operations to the Dominican Republic. More generally, the drop in foreign direct investment in Haiti, which decreased from \$105 million in 2018 to \$75 million in 2019, is projected to continue given the country's persistently low rankings in international competitiveness indexes. In addition, fierce global and regional competition to attract increasingly scarcer investment funds is set to intensify, as reflected in the projection in the *World Investment Report 2020* of a 5 to 10 per cent decrease in foreign direct investment globally in 2021. The grim economic realities of the past months notwithstanding, the potential for economic diversification across the agricultural, tourism and manufacturing sectors remains strong, should political and security conditions permit greater economic stability.

48. The adverse context is having a measurable negative impact on households. According to the World Bank, almost 60 per cent of the population are projected to be at or below the poverty line in 2021. To address the worsening socioeconomic situation and pursue its strategic objectives, the United Nations country team, under

the leadership of my Deputy Special Representative, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, intensified its efforts around three core areas: employment creation for young people, women and other vulnerable groups; promotion of economic diversification; and strengthening of government capacity to design, implement and institutionalize national policy frameworks.

49. On employment creation, the country team provided training to dozens of young people from poor socioeconomic backgrounds as a deterrent to recruitment by armed gangs. By April, an initiative in the commune of Cité Soleil (West Department) had resulted in two thirds of the 570 young people trained finding employment. Regarding economic diversification, the country team and other partners are working on initiatives to expand and support productive opportunities. A partnership between the Government, the Inter-American Development Bank and the country team to develop technological innovation in agriculture and agroforestry improved the capacity of some 800 households and 22 farmers' organizations through training, provision of better agricultural inputs and access to markets and e-commerce. In the South and Grand-Anse Departments, more than 2,431 members of women's organizations received support to boost and diversify their revenues through enhanced agricultural production and productivity, light processing of agricultural products and adoption of best practices in climate-intelligent agriculture. Another initiative, targeting 1,000 small-scale farmers to help them to produce more and better-quality cocoa and breadfruit in the two departments, was launched in January 2021. All initiatives are aimed at targeting at least 40 per cent women.

50. Efforts to advance the national social protection and promotion policy continue, following its adoption in 2020. A study on the cost of implementation is being finalized, while an expert mission in the second quarter of 2021 will bring together seven United Nations entities to define a joint support programme. Successful implementation, however, will require the Government to boost domestic revenues by strengthening tax collection, reducing tax exemptions and reviewing spending priorities. For example, annual revenue losses from uncollected taxes or fees at the border remain substantial, with estimates ranging from \$184 million to \$440 million. Recognizing the relevance of cross-border issues, including revenue collection, for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, and building on the current political momentum to strengthen the relationship between the two countries, the United Nations country teams in Haiti and the Dominican Republic held a joint meeting in March. They are collaborating on a common work programme to support binational dialogue and cooperation, in coordination with several partners, including the European Union. In addition, a new project was recently approved by the Peacebuilding Fund to strengthen spaces for binational dialogue and to promote cooperation at the community and institutional levels between the countries.

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

51. In line with the increasingly dire sociopolitical and security situations, the humanitarian situation continued to worsen in 2021. Currently, an estimated 4.4 million people (40 per cent) need humanitarian assistance, mostly as the cumulative result of human-caused crises. Those figures represent an increase of 110 per cent since 2016. In addition to increasing food insecurity, the humanitarian crisis has negatively affected the development of human capital owing to the limited access to education and health services.

52. The 2021–2022 humanitarian response plan, launched in March, requires \$235.6 million for 2021. It is aimed at responding to the needs of 1.5 million people, including 1.3 million who are severely food insecure. The four strategic objectives

are to meet basic needs, ensure protection and accountability for affected populations, enhance disaster preparedness and, most critically, help the transition from a chronic humanitarian context to a sustainable development path by focusing on making the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus operational. Given that the equivalent plan for 2020 was only 33 per cent funded, and that the 2021 iteration has to date received less than 25 per cent of the funds required, advocacy efforts have intensified.

53. To meet basic needs and alleviate food insecurity, the United Nations country team has scaled up its emergency response to provide direct food assistance to 900,000 people in 2021, up from 252,710 people in 2020, and has continued to provide daily hot meals to 234,984 children in 1,323 schools. In addition, as part of efforts to tackle long-standing malnutrition, 8,000 children between the ages of 6 and 59 months benefited from a dose of vitamin A between January and March.

54. In addition, the United Nations country team is working with the local authorities and humanitarian partners to respond to thousands of displacements resulting from the violent events in Bel-Air and Tabarre Issa (see benchmark 4). Urgent needs include basic humanitarian assistance, protection and assistance with relocation. Concerns have also been raised about the potential for stigmatization of internally displaced persons by host communities.

55. The United Nations country team is supporting the implementation of the recently approved national action plan for risks and disasters. In total, 27 multi-risk community emergency plans have either been designed or are at the final design stage across the Grand-Anse, North-West, South and Artibonite Departments and regional multi-risk maps are being finalized for seismic, drought, flood/cyclone, earthquake and tsunami risks. Regarding the upcoming hurricane season, forecast to begin in June, the country team is supporting government preparedness through activities such as simulation exercises and pre-positioning of contingency stocks. In considering potential scenarios for 2021, including in relation to the hurricane season, the unfolding sociopolitical situation, security risks and the pandemic, the United Nations is also working on contingency planning for humanitarian access.

56. Given the increasingly chronic nature of humanitarian needs, the United Nations country team and its partners are focusing on applying sustainable development solutions to reduce vulnerabilities and risks and strengthening the resilience of communities, thereby reducing humanitarian requirements. Most notably, the adoption in March of a national policy for food security, food sovereignty and nutrition lays the foundation for building resilience through food production and reducing the need for food aid. The result of an eight-year effort supported by the country team, the policy is aimed at creating a paradigm shift by tackling the root causes of the decline of the agricultural sector. In particular, its implementation will involve adopting an inclusive approach emphasizing the development of family farms and of the Madan Sara, women traders considered to be the backbone of national small-scale agricultural trade, to enable a sustainable economic transformation. Such activities are premised on a shared, gender-sensitive risk analysis and a deliberate focus on addressing the structural causes of systemic instability. They contribute to promoting a humanitarian-development-peace nexus geared to enhancing the impact of country team interventions.

57. On the health front, according to official figures, there were 15,058 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 321 deaths, as at 3 June. More recently, there has been an upsurge in cases, and the Government announced on 14 May the presence of two variants that are associated with increased transmission. The United Nations and other partners continue to support government efforts that are aligned with the World Health Organization recommendations to contain COVID-19.

58. It has been more than two years since the last confirmed case of cholera was recorded in Haiti, in early February 2019. In 2020, 83 suspected cases were reported by the Ministry of Public Health and Population, all of which were tested and confirmed to be negative. As at 8 April 2021, the Ministry had reported one suspected case, which tested negative.

VIII. Sexual exploitation and abuse

59. Through the Central Emergency Response Fund and a two-year programme funded by the trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, efforts are continuing to address the needs of children born as a result of sexual exploitation or abuse by United Nations staff and related personnel. Those efforts will allow the United Nations system in Haiti to continue to provide health and educational support for the children and livelihood support for their mothers. The Field Victims' Rights Advocate continues to collaborate with the Office of the Ombudsperson to enhance reporting of cases of sexual exploitation or abuse in Haiti and direct victims to support services. The United Nations has worked to facilitate the administration of justice in paternity and child support claims related to former field mission personnel, providing critical documentation and information to mothers and to the relevant Haitian national authorities.

IX. Observations

60. The United Nations will continue to follow the now-postponed constitutional reform process and call upon the national authorities to ensure that the process does not further delay the holding of overdue local and parliamentary polls, as well as presidential elections, in 2021.

61. It remains imperative that the national authorities and relevant stakeholders spare no effort to reach a consensus that will contribute to the holding of these elections, the success of which is crucial to fostering a much-awaited democratic renewal and key to placing Haiti on a path of political stability and creating conditions for economic growth and sustainable development. I therefore call upon the national authorities, political parties and civil society actors to demonstrate the required political will and place the country's future ahead of narrow interests. Any violence, incitement to violence and hate speech are unacceptable. My Special Representative remains available, within the scope of her mandate, to assist in creating the conditions for the forging of such a consensus.

62. The tragic Village de Dieu operation should mark a turning point for security. I urge the Government to build on the progress made by the two interministerial task forces on community violence reduction and use the momentum to provide the resources and political commitment necessary to support the approval and implementation of the draft national strategy on community violence reduction within the time frame envisaged. Likewise, the Government should spare no effort in the timely development of a national action plan on weapons and ammunition management. It is also critical that the Government, in particular the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, strengthen its relationship with community and civil society organizations in order to foster greater and more efficient collaboration among all relevant actors to rebuild communities affected by gangs and restore hope for their residents.

63. The chronic lack of security illustrates the limits of a law enforcement-centred approach to stemming gang activities. It also underscores the need for a more holistic approach to tackle root causes of violence. I condemn the criminal violence that led

to the displacement of nearly 2,500 people in Tabarre Issa, as well as recurrent attacks against the population of Bel-Air. I deplore the recent wave of kidnappings that has exacerbated the general sense of insecurity. The persistence of serious gang violence and kidnappings, coupled with an ineffective response by the authorities, with the police bearing the brunt of the pressure for public safety, point to the Government's failings in advancing its fight against insecurity. I call upon the authorities to redouble their efforts and take the steps necessary to protect the population against gang violence, in addition to addressing the difficult socioeconomic and political context giving rise to gang activities. I also reiterate that it is critically important for the national authorities to ensure accountability in the emblematic cases of Lilavois and Grand Ravine (2017), La Saline (2018) and Bel Air (2019 and 2020) and for other serious crimes.

64. I am deeply concerned by the persistently high and ever-increasing pretrial detention rate and the serious overcrowding of prisons, which are largely the result of systemic weaknesses in the justice sector. While the alternatives to detention provided in the new Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure could help to resolve the issues, the implementation of the codes will require strong political commitment, adequate resources and rigorous planning. With their entry into force in June 2022 swiftly approaching, I encourage the Ministry of Justice and Public Security to establish the committee on the implementation of the penal reform codes without delay, in order to ensure their enactment.

65. I further encourage the authorities to take immediate steps to improve the appalling conditions of detention prevailing in almost all parts of the penitentiary system. Without genuine political will applied through functioning justice and prison systems, prisons will continue to suffer from chronic problems of overcrowding and lack of resources, which in turn negatively affect detention conditions and the human rights of detainees.

66. Such measures need to be complemented by a novel approach to tackling corruption and addressing systemic challenges. In that respect, the recent establishment of the Board of the Legal Aid Council represents a positive development that will pave the way for more equal access to justice, provided that the authorities and judicial stakeholders work together to ensure the swift opening of 11 decentralized legal aid offices. Likewise, the Spotlight Initiative carries with it the potential to shift mindsets in taking on violence against women and girls and doing away with the troubling impunity from which perpetrators appear to benefit.

67. The United Nations is strongly focused on addressing the structural and systemic obstacles that prevent the achievement of significant, tangible progress on the major political, human rights and development challenges that hinder the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, I am encouraged by the discussions between the Government, the United Nations and development partners on approaches to enhance development effectiveness and impact and revitalize existing aid coordination frameworks. In that respect, I hope that the upcoming action dialogue – discussions involving all development partners, including the private sector, members of civil society and non-governmental organizations, aimed at tackling the root causes of the scant impact of development aid – will help to restore confidence between the Government, the population and development actors and partners.

68. Haiti has numerous strengths, including proximity and access to major markets, a young labour force, a diaspora committed to the sending of substantial remittances, and unique historical and cultural assets. As such, it possesses genuine potential for economic diversification and greater job creation, which would lead to an economic rebound if sociopolitical and security conditions improve and the Government

commits itself to undertaking deep economic reforms. Haiti should strive to rein in its fiscal deficit while meeting the criteria to restart negotiations with the International Monetary Fund. The continued support of the international community, including investors, will be key to overcoming the structural challenges.

69. In the light of the serious humanitarian situation, arising largely from human-caused crises, I call upon the authorities to fulfil their protection responsibilities towards those most in need and to ensure humanitarian access at all times. I also call upon the international community to close the humanitarian funding gap so that much-needed assistance can be delivered to the most vulnerable 1.5 million people.

70. In conclusion, I should like to reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to contributing to the stabilization and prosperity of Haiti through an integrated approach and express my deep gratitude to my Special Representative for Haiti, Helen Meagher La Lime, my Deputy Special Representative, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, Bruno Lemarquis, and all United Nations personnel in the country for their deep commitment and tireless work.
