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programme of support for Haiti**

Report of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution [2019/32](#), by which the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti was requested to submit a report on its work, with recommendations, as appropriate, to the Economic and Social Council for its consideration at its 2020 session. The report highlights the main findings of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti following its visit to Washington, D.C., in March 2020, during which members held discussions with representatives of international financial institutions and civil society. It also highlights findings from the Group's virtual discussions with national authorities, as well as with representatives of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti and the United Nations country team. Given the travel restrictions related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, the Group did not travel to Haiti during the reporting period.

The Group acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to deepen the multidimensional crisis facing the country, possibly reversing the development and security gains of the past 15 years and exacerbating social and political tensions. The Group stresses that this unprecedented health, humanitarian and socioeconomic crisis requires unity of effort, with all appropriate actors coming together across the political spectrum and working with a variety of stakeholders to ensure that it is successfully addressed.

The Group underscores that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains the guiding framework to help effectively tackle COVID-19 as well as support Haiti on the path to long-term development, as only the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals can help countries mitigate the impacts of the pandemic and become more resilient to future shocks and crises. The Group calls for continuous solidarity, engagement and well-coordinated and coherent support by the international community, including the United Nations, to help the Government of Haiti successfully manage the COVID-19 crisis and accelerate efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals during the decade of action.



The Group is preoccupied with the worsening of the humanitarian situation, as half the country's population currently requires humanitarian aid, with 4.1 million people alone needing urgent food assistance. The Group stresses the importance of ensuring adequate resources for the humanitarian response so that aid organizations can successfully stay and deliver life-saving assistance.

I. Introduction

A. Mandate and composition of the Group

1. The Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, initially created in 1999 and reactivated in 2004, is chaired by Canada and composed of the Permanent Representatives of Argentina, the Bahamas, Belize, Benin, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, France, Haiti, Mexico, Peru, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States of America and Uruguay to the United Nations.

2. In its resolution [2019/32](#), the Economic and Social Council extended the mandate of the Group until the conclusion of the 2020 session, with the purpose of following closely and providing advice on the long-term development strategy of Haiti to promote socioeconomic recovery, reconstruction and stability, with particular attention paid to the need to ensure coherence and sustainability in international support for the country. The Council requested that the Group submit a report on its activities for the Council's consideration at its 2020 session.

3. The present report is the sixteenth submitted to the Economic and Social Council by the Group since its reactivation in 2004. It highlights the main findings of the Group following its visit to Washington, D.C., in March 2020, its online discussions with Haitian authorities and its meetings with various stakeholders in New York throughout the reporting period. Given the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) during the reporting period, which resulted in travel restrictions across the world, the Group did not visit Haiti, but carried out its consultations with Haitian interlocutors in a virtual format.

B. Outline of the activities of the Group during the reporting period

4. Given ongoing concerns about the humanitarian, development, political and security situation in the country, the Group organized and took part in a number of activities designed to increase its understanding of the situation in Haiti earlier during the reporting period than previously. On 4 September 2019, the Group participated in a luncheon with the then Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Haiti, Bocchit Edmond, organized by the Permanent Mission of Haiti to the United Nations in New York to mark the twentieth anniversary of the creation of the Group. It was an opportunity to hear first-hand from a senior-level Haitian government official on the state of the situation in the country and the Government's upcoming priorities.

5. On 31 October 2019, in the light of the worsening economic crisis, deteriorating humanitarian situation, increasing insecurity and political deadlock in the country, the Group held a briefing with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) and the acting Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator. Following that briefing, on 6 November the Group issued a statement urging the international community to remain collectively engaged in support of Haiti (see annex I).

6. On 2 March 2020, the Group carried out a visit to Washington, D.C., where members met with representatives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Inter-American Dialogue, the United States International Development Finance Corporation and the United States State Department, as well as Haitian authorities, including the Special Adviser to the President of Haiti, Esther Antoine.

7. On 4 March 2020, the Group participated in a briefing for Member States on the humanitarian situation in Haiti by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator for Haiti, the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Haiti to the United Nations, Patrick Saint-Hilaire, and representatives of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other United Nations humanitarian entities.

8. On 29 April 2020, the Group held a virtual meeting with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator for Haiti, the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Haiti to the United Nations and representatives of the Ministry of Public Health and Population, the National Commission on Food Security and the Multisectoral Commission for the Management of the COVID-19 Pandemic, as well as representatives of the United Nations country team, to discuss the health, humanitarian and socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 in Haiti, including the situation of deteriorating food security in the country. Following the briefing, on 8 May the Group issued a statement of solidarity in support of Haiti (see annex II).

9. The Group expresses its appreciation to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti, the Deputy-Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and the other members of BINUH and the United Nations country team for their support for the work of the Group.

II. Overview of the country situation

A. COVID-19 crisis

10. The present report is being prepared as COVID-19 is raging across the world, resulting in a massive number of deaths and immense human suffering. Haiti was one of the last Caribbean countries to register the presence of COVID-19, owing in part to limited tourism and inflow of people from other countries. The first case was registered on 19 March 2020 and, on the same day, the President of Haiti, Jovenel Moïse, declared a state of sanitary emergency. Mr. Moïse then announced a series of measures to contain the virus, among them the closure of all airports, border crossings, ports, schools and industrial parks, as well as a ban on gatherings of people and a national curfew from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. In addition, an administrative circular was issued listing measures to be taken during the pandemic, including the wearing of masks and ensuring a cleanliness protocol for public transport. Since then, cases have multiplied, with models, based on the assumption that no mitigating measures are taken, forecasting 400,000 people hospitalized and 17,000 deaths.

11. The Group took note of the establishment, in early April 2020, of a multidisciplinary scientific committee and a multisectoral commission to assist the Ministry of Public Health and Population in addressing the pandemic, as well as the development of a \$176 million COVID-19 health response plan. Although COVID-19 is having an impact on countries at all levels of income and development, in reality, the pandemic is exposing the stark inequality that separates the privileged from the marginalized communities of the world. The Group was informed that as a least developed country, Haiti will be particularly affected owing to its limited resources, weak health infrastructure, lack of proper sanitation, dense living conditions, underlying socioeconomic difficulties and significant humanitarian needs.

12. The Group observed that unless dealt with properly, COVID-19 could possibly reverse 15 years of development and security gains made in the country. If the

COVID-19 pandemic is not managed well, it could further erode people's confidence in their national institutions, exacerbate political and social tensions, prompt human rights violations and contribute to renewed violence and increased insecurity. The Group was briefed on the importance of ensuring good coordination of institutional structures in the fight against COVID-19. The Group was also informed that the impact of such a global crisis in Haiti would be more efficiently addressed through global action and solidarity, and that the United Nations, Member States, donors, international financial institutions and all stakeholders needed to act together with determination and urgency to prevent and respond to the spread of COVID-19, as well as help mitigate its humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences.

13. The United Nations country team, under the technical leadership of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has initiated discussions with the Government, international financial institutions and the European Union on conducting a joint, comprehensive socioeconomic impact assessment of COVID-19, to be led by the Government. The assessment is meant to inform the development of a collective socioeconomic recovery framework. The Group underscores that action to respond to the COVID-19 and humanitarian crises should be guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as only by addressing underlying factors will it be possible to help build the country's resilience to future crises and shocks. The Group is concerned that, five years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, only limited progress has been made in its implementation. The Group stresses the need for the Government to integrate the 2030 Agenda into the country's national development plans and strategies and encourages the international community to enhance its support to the Haitian Government to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals are successfully achieved during the decade of action.

B. Political and security context

14. The political situation in Haiti has become more fragile since the Group's most recent report, dated 20 June 2019 (E/2019/80). In the second half of 2019, economic and social challenges, combined with a further escalation in the protracted political crisis that had already affected the country, resulted in widespread mass protests and *peyi lòk* (lockdown of the country), which led to a near complete paralysis of economic and social activity in major cities from September to November 2019.

15. The President of Haiti has been governing without a Parliament since the beginning of the year. That is due to the fact that parliamentary and municipal elections were not held on 27 October 2019, as initially scheduled, and the mandate of all members of the Lower Chamber of Parliament and at least one third of senators expired on 13 January 2020. After several attempts to overcome the political crisis, a new Prime Minister, Joseph Jouthe, was appointed on 2 March 2020. In his inaugural address on 4 March, Mr. Jouthe identified fighting insecurity, addressing social disparities and restoring the economy as his priorities. The Prime Minister also presented the members of his Cabinet, composed of 19 ministers, 4 of them women, and 9 secretaries of State, 2 of whom were women.

16. There is concern that, while necessary, measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 adopted by the Government might affect efforts towards making crucial reforms in the country, including a constitutional review and the municipal, parliamentary and presidential elections expected to take place in 2021.

C. Economic outlook

17. Even before the advent of COVID-19, Haiti was already suffering from a difficult economic situation as a result of a history of political instability, social unrest and natural hazards that frequently turn into devastating natural disasters. Haiti is one of the poorest and least equal countries in the world, ranking 169th out of 189 countries on the 2019 human development index and, according to the World Bank, having the third highest Gini coefficient (60.8) in the world as of 2020. More than 6 million people in Haiti – roughly 2 out of 3 – cannot meet their basic needs, and among them, 2.5 million – or 1 in 4 – are extremely poor, particularly in rural areas, with many relying on subsistence farming to feed their families.

18. A combination of rising inflation (20 per cent as of the end of the fiscal year), a 25.5 per cent depreciation of the national currency (the gourde) against the United States dollar in the past two years, the accumulation of arrears and continued high energy costs is making life increasingly difficult for the Haitian population. Moreover, gross domestic product (GDP), which had grown only modestly during the 2017/18 fiscal year, is estimated to have contracted by 0.9 per cent in 2019 and will continue to contract in 2020.

19. The fallout from COVID-19 is expected to further disrupt economic activity and exacerbate existing economic insecurity vulnerabilities. For instance, it is expected that the reduction in textile exports (which accounted for \$1.11 billion during the 2018/19 fiscal year) and a dramatic fall in remittance flows (which amounted to \$3.3 billion in 2019, or 39 per cent of the country's GDP) will lead to a drastic increase in the country's current account deficit, from an estimated 3.5 per cent of GDP in 2018/19 to 7.2 per cent in 2019/20. Energy subsidies, estimated at 6.5 per cent of GDP in 2019, remain a fiscal burden and continue to limit fiscal space for spending in other sectors. Declining fiscal revenues, coupled with increasing health and social expenditures to address COVID-19, are also likely to increase the country's fiscal deficit.

20. The Group's interlocutors stressed that the Haitian Government should mitigate the economic impact of the COVID-19 shock by providing the necessary resources to sustain people's livelihoods and promote recovery and resilience. They noted that the Government should ensure that adequate measures are put in place to incorporate economic relief for the population, especially for the many women and men who rely on the informal economy to make a living. For that to happen, it is of the utmost importance that the international community provide the needed support to the Haitian authorities.

21. The Group learned that IMF approved a \$111.6 million disbursement under the Rapid Credit Facility to help Haiti cover its balance of payments and financing needs to address COVID-19, and that the World Bank approved a \$20 million fast track COVID-19 response project. It also learned that on 26 March, IDB announced a special lending facility for countries affected by COVID-19. The Group's interlocutors noted that bilateral and multilateral donors should be more ambitious and anticipatory in their actions to help Haiti tackle the economic impact of the crisis, including by suspending any debt-servicing requirements for Haiti for the duration of the pandemic.

D. Social indicators

22. Social indicators in Haiti are a stark reminder of the poor quality of life people suffer. According to the World Bank, the richest 10 per cent of the population holds more than 48 per cent of the total income of the country, compared with the 1 per cent

of total income held by the poorest 10 per cent. Income inequalities; widespread poverty; high underemployment and unemployment (officially about 14 per cent), especially among youth; malnutrition; and limited access to quality basic social services, including health and education, make it nearly impossible for people to realize their full potential. Moreover, gender inequality remains pervasive as violence against women and girls is widespread and women continue to suffer discrimination with regard to access to health, education, decision-making positions and well-paid job opportunities.

23. Haiti ranks 154th out of 183 countries in life expectancy with a total of 63.5 years (66 years for women and 61 for men), with healthy life expectancy alarmingly low at 44 years. The maternal mortality rate remains high at 529 per 100,000 live births. Malnutrition – which poses a serious threat to child physical and mental development – is very high. Acute malnutrition at the national level has reached 6 per cent, while severe acute malnutrition reached 2.1 per cent, exceeding the World Health Organization's emergency threshold of 2 per cent. The COVID-19 pandemic will likely increase the number of malnourished children under 5 by 25 per cent. The Group's interlocutors are concerned that child malnutrition will rise even further as the impact of COVID-19 becomes more severe. For instance, school closures across the country in April 2020 have led to the suspension of the United Nations-supported school feeding programme – which is one of the largest social safety nets in Haiti – leaving 300,000 children without daily food assistance.

24. Health indicators are also of concern. More than 90 per cent of health facilities charge user fees, and with more than half the population living on less than \$2.42 a day, little room is left in people's daily budget to cover health expenses, including preventative care. As the Government spends less than 1 per cent of its GDP on the health sector, there are not enough resources to upgrade the health infrastructure nor to enhance the capacity of medical personnel. With more than 85 per cent of university educated professionals, including many health-care professionals, leaving the country to seek better opportunities abroad, many hospitals and health centres are drastically understaffed. The fragile health system could easily be overwhelmed by COVID-19 owing to the increasing demand for hospital beds (between 7,500 and 9,000 beds required) and ventilators in a country where cardiovascular diseases – which put people at increased risk for COVID-19 – represent the number one cause of death. Furthermore, lack of clean water and sanitation infrastructure means that COVID-19 can easily propagate, particularly in densely populated communities.

25. The education sector remains weak. Even though the principle of free school is enshrined in the national Constitution, the Government allocates only 1.7 per cent of its GDP to the education sector. The great majority of schools are private or run by faith-based organizations and charge tuition fees (approximately \$80 per year) that are too high for many families to afford, as that amount represents at least 15 per cent of the income of the average Haitian. Consequently, approximately one third of children between the ages of 6 and 11 in rural areas and 9 per cent in urban areas are not in school. Abandonment and repetition rates are also high, with the average student attending school for approximately 5.4 years. Less than 20 per cent of teachers are considered to have the academic qualifications required for teaching. Despite efforts by the Government in recent years to improve education through a series of policy measures, those measures are regrettably not translating into concrete improvements, given shortcomings in their implementation, including lack of adequate funding. COVID-19 dealt a severe blow to education in Haiti. Few national institutions have been able to provide distance learning for various reasons, including the lack of electricity and the Internet, educational tools, platforms and online education services. It is concerning that the 2019/20 academic year remains incomplete.

26. The Group stresses that access to quality education is a prerequisite for social and economic development. In Haiti, more than one third of the population is below 15 years of age, and young people aged 15 to 24 represent 32 per cent of all unemployed people. Providing children with good quality education improves their job prospects, leading them to fulfil their full potential later in life. Education can be further negatively affected by COVID-19. The crisis is resulting in extended school closures and has the potential to increase drop-out rates as well as losses in learning, particularly given the difficulty of providing distance learning in a country where, according to 2018 data, two thirds of the population do not have Internet access. The most vulnerable and marginalized children, including those with disabilities, struggling learners, migrant and displaced children, or those living in rural and poor communities, are at risk of being pushed further behind. The loss of protection that schools provide can also compromise children's well-being, as children and young people out of school could be more easily recruited by criminal groups, including violent gangs. Measures are therefore urgently needed to limit the impact of COVID-19 on children's education, including, for instance, by using radio and television to make remote learning possible. At the same time, the COVID-19 crisis offers an opportunity to rethink how the education system could be strengthened to the benefit of all Haitian children.

E. Humanitarian needs

27. Humanitarian needs in the country have almost doubled in the past year. Some 5.1 million people – approximately half the country's population – require urgent support. The key driver of rising needs is the spike in food insecurity, which is worse than after the 2010 earthquake and puts Haiti among the 10 countries in the world experiencing the most severe food crises. According to the latest data (April 2020), the price of staple foods (food basket) has grown by 25 per cent in the past 12 months, and is estimated to have further increased in recent weeks, which, coupled with the depreciation of the national currency, and a 12 per cent decline in agricultural production from 2018 to 2019, has significantly reduced access to food for the poorest households. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, some 4.1 million people need urgent food assistance, including 1.2 million people who face emergency levels of food insecurity (phase 4). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to push a portion of the 2.9 million people currently facing severe food insecurity (phase 3) into phase 4.

28. In addition, Haiti remains considerably exposed to sudden-onset emergencies such as hurricanes and earthquakes. The country ranks as the most vulnerable to natural disasters in the Latin American and Caribbean region and the fourteenth most vulnerable in the world, according to the INFORM index for risk management. The Group stresses the importance of adequately preparing for the upcoming hurricane season and ensuring that actions to address the impact of COVID-19 do not divert attention and resources away from preparedness actions, disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation.

29. The Group welcomes the significant progress made in fighting cholera through the comprehensive national plan for the elimination of cholera in Haiti for 2013–2022 and the Secretary-General's new United Nations approach to cholera in Haiti, which led to improvements in water and sanitation infrastructure, epidemiological surveillance and rapid response activities to control outbreaks. Reassuringly, no new laboratory-confirmed cases have been identified since February 2019 and no cholera-related deaths have occurred since January 2019. However, the Group is concerned that progress could be jeopardized by the impact of COVID-19, which may result in almost doubling the number of people with no or limited access to safe water from 35

to 68 per cent, or 6.8 million people. The Group stresses the importance of consolidating progress in the fight against cholera, including through long-term development measures to enhance people's access to water and sanitation. The Group also notes that the systems developed to fight cholera could be useful in the response to COVID-19 and should therefore be capitalized on and further supported. Funding the Secretary-General's new approach should be prioritized, both to achieve elimination status by 2022 and to provide meaningful support to the hardest hit communities.

30. The Group learned of the significant number of people of Haitian origin who have voluntarily returned to Haiti or have been repatriated to Haiti by the authorities of the Dominican Republic in recent years. The International Organization for Migration reports that in 2018 and 2019, some 100,000 Haitian migrants had either returned voluntarily or been forcibly returned from the Dominican Republic on an annual basis. During the first months of 2020, returns from the Dominican Republic were estimated at between 5,000 and 7,000 per month. However, since the COVID-19 outbreak began in the Dominican Republic on 1 March 2020, despite the closing of the official border there are now approximately 4,000 returns on a weekly basis and 35,000 returns have been registered since the outbreak began. Using unofficial crossings not only exposes people to higher risks of contracting and transmitting COVID-19, it also puts women, girls and boys at greater risk of trafficking and other abuse. Of concern is that returning migrants are facing stigma, as they are perceived to be carriers of COVID-19, and communities are blaming them for bringing the disease to their areas. The Group underscores that the Government of Haiti, with the support of the international community, should provide the necessary protection and humanitarian assistance to people returning from the Dominican Republic.

31. Despite the alarming humanitarian situation, the Haiti humanitarian operation remains one of the world's least funded. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan for Haiti was funded at less than 10 per cent. Financial requirements have significantly increased, as the Plan was revised to include the COVID-19 response. A total of \$472 million is currently required to address the humanitarian needs of the 2.3 million most vulnerable people (\$327.6 million for the revised Humanitarian Response Plan, \$105 million for the COVID-19 health response and \$39.3 million for non-COVID-19 health responses). The Group is concerned that the lack of resources for humanitarian operations will seriously constrain the capacity of aid organizations to deliver much-needed assistance on the ground.

F. Human rights situation

32. The continuous insecurity and the sharp deterioration of the socioeconomic conditions in Haiti have amplified the human rights challenges, including in the context of the violent anti-government protests in 2019 that paralyzed the country during *peyi lòk*, as well as inter-gang clashes, resulting in many women, men and children being killed, injured or displaced. The right to education, the right to work, the right to an adequate standard of living, including food, clothing and housing, and the right to physical and mental health have been seriously affected. An estimated 3 million children were out of school in the fourth quarter of 2019 owing to insecurity and protests. Haitians had increased difficulties in accessing food, drinking water, medicine and fuel as a result of road blockades, and the health sector was particularly hit with shortages of electricity, fuel and supplies and by the inability of medical personnel to reach their workplaces.

33. Judicial accountability remains a key challenge. Recent emblematic cases involving human rights violations and abuses from gang members and law enforcement agents, such as in Lilavois and Grand Ravine (2017), La Saline (2018)

and Bel Air (2019), saw no concrete judicial action taken in response to the human rights violations and abuses committed. The Group underscores the importance of carrying out effective investigations into human rights violations and adopting the necessary measures to effectively bring perpetrators to justice and break the circle of violence.

34. The Group was informed of the need to address the issue of increased lawless areas under the control of gangs that might have long-term exclusion effects on communities. The Group underlines the need to step up efforts to address gang violence through a multisectoral approach that encompasses community violence reduction programmes, weapons and ammunition management and strengthened rule of law, as well as political and socioeconomic measures. The Group also stresses the importance of further strengthening the capacity of the Haitian National Police to ensure effective law enforcement while adhering to the highest human rights standards. The Group welcomes the fact that the General Inspectorate of the Haitian National Police has reactivated its thematic round table with civil society to further improve the promotion and the respect of human rights as well as accountability within the institution.

35. The Group is concerned that COVID-19 could exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and potentially lead to further human rights violations and abuses. Dynamics of incitement to violence due to fear of the pandemic and the stigmatization of persons affected or suspected to be affected by COVID-19 have been observed in the country. The Group welcomes the public information campaigns carried out by national institutions, including the national human rights institution, with support from the United Nations, to increase awareness about the virus and reduce stigma. The Group also calls for the urgent adoption of extraordinary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the overcrowded Haitian prisons (343 per cent of capacity), as pre-existing structural problems in the penitentiary system, coupled with the current acute lack of resources to face COVID-19, could lead to a humanitarian crisis.

36. The Group welcomes the development and validation of a national human rights plan in December 2019 as a tool to support the implementation of the recommendations of the 2016 universal periodic review and other international human rights mechanisms. It notes, however that the plan's endorsement by the Council of Ministers, and therefore its implementation, is still awaited. The Group also welcomes the preparation of the first periodic report by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as a good opportunity to engage with the Government of Haiti on the modalities of implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

III. Coherent and sustainable international support for Haiti

A. “Delivering as one” approach to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

37. After more than 15 years of peacekeeping presence, in October 2019 the United Nations transitioned to a more development-oriented configuration when the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti was replaced by BINUH. The Group has been actively advocating for close and sustained collaboration and coordination between BINUH, the United Nations country team and other United Nations entities, as well as local and international partners, in consultation with the Government of Haiti, to ensure the implementation of the “delivering as one” approach by the United Nations system in Haiti. The Group is of the view that only by adopting a whole-of-

system response and working collaboratively on peace efforts, humanitarian action, disaster-risk reduction, sustainable development and human rights, will it be possible to efficiently and effectively address basic needs, tackle the root causes of instability and attain the Sustainable Development Goals. The Group, therefore, welcomes efforts by BINUH and the United Nations country team to enhance coordination of their activities by developing a joint vision and holistic approach to United Nations actions in Haiti whose results are reflected in the recently developed United Nations Integrated Strategic Framework for Haiti. The Framework seeks to focus the political and programmatic resources of the United Nations on the cross-dimensional and structural obstacles to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It does that by working across sectors to achieve the Goals, rather than in silos; building rather than substituting national capacity; looking for innovative responses and integrated development solutions that work for Haiti; pooling efforts through partnerships for greater impact; combining long-term engagement with quick emblematic advances; and listening to more people across the country. In parallel, the United Nations country team is taking steps to reinvigorate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the country. The Group also appreciates the granting of Peacebuilding Fund eligibility to Haiti by the Secretary-General in July 2019, following the Government's request, as the Fund can play an important part in sustaining peace by helping address some of the drivers of violence and conflict.

38. The Group welcomes the prompt action taken by the United Nations country team and BINUH to assist the Haitian authorities in tackling COVID-19 through a multi-agency and multisectoral response. At a time of such an unprecedented global health crisis, countries are looking to the United Nations for essential support. The new generation of United Nations country teams, under the leadership of an independent, impartial and empowered resident coordinator system, can play a crucial role in helping countries respond to the COVID-19 crisis while remaining focused on achieving the transformative ambitions of the 2030 Agenda and the promise to leave no one behind. A coherent response is under way in Haiti under the overall leadership of the Resident Coordinator, with the Pan American Health Organization leading the immediate health response, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs coordinating the humanitarian response and UNDP providing technical leadership for the socioeconomic response. The Group calls on the international community to remain collectively engaged in those efforts and provide the United Nations development system in Haiti with the necessary capacity and with full, predictable and sustainable funding to accelerate efforts in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

B. Maintaining donor engagement in Haiti

39. In the past decade donor engagement in Haiti has been stable, with annual variations of between \$120,000 and \$136,000 (\$1.015 billion in 2009; \$1.135 billion in 2013; \$999 million in 2018). The average share of bilateral cooperation represents 72 per cent of official development assistance. The year 2010 and the following years are an exception in that a significant increase of official development assistance was observed, generated by more solidarity with Haiti after the terrible damage caused by the 2010 earthquake (\$2.9 billion). Despite stable flows to Haiti, official development assistance received as a percentage of gross national income (GNI) decreased in the past decade from 15.1 per cent in 2009 to 10.2 per cent in 2018. In contrast, in 2018, the average share of remittances represented 32.6 per cent of GNI, while the foreign direct investment share was 1.1 per cent. With regard to United Nations operational activities for development, the latest available data show that, in 2018, Haiti received \$141.2 million for such activities (\$94.1 million for development-related activities

and \$47.1 million for humanitarian activities), down from \$196.7 million (\$112.6 million for development-related activities and \$84.1 million for humanitarian activities) in 2013, which represents less than 0.4 per cent of the \$36.4 billion in global expenditure for operational activities for development. The Group has repeatedly stressed the importance of continuous engagement of the international community in support of Haiti to help put the country on the path of sustainable development and effective development cooperation.

40. During its visit to Washington, D.C., the Group met with international financial institutions to learn about their ongoing initiatives in Haiti. The Group was informed that, although IMF had cancelled the \$229 million staff-level agreement made in March 2019 with the former Prime Minister of Haiti, Jean-Henry Céant, owing to the prevailing political crisis, it planned to remain closely engaged with the Haitian authorities, with the aim of recommencing discussions leading to eventual support as soon as the political conditions were met. The Group was informed that IMF had revised its approach so that efforts to promote macroeconomic stability were implemented more gradually and with corresponding support to social programmes. The Group stresses that macroeconomic and structural policies to sustain economic growth must necessarily be balanced with social protection arrangements, particularly to support the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of the population.

41. IDB has allocated more than \$1.3 billion to implement projects under its 2017–2021 country strategy aimed at contributing to stronger, inclusive and more sustainable growth in support of poverty reduction. Allocations have included, inter alia, \$463 million for the transport sector, \$253 million for water and sanitation, \$175.5 million for urban development and housing, \$75 million for education and \$40 million for the social sector. The Group calls on IDB to continue its long-standing engagement with Haiti, particularly as the projects under the 2017–2021 country strategy are drawing to a close.

42. The World Bank continues to support the Government of Haiti in its development efforts. The Bank is currently undertaking three major projects in the country for a total value of \$175 million, including in the areas of airport upgrade, rural resilience and access to basic services. A \$40 million contribution has also been apportioned to prepare for natural disasters. In March 2020, the World Bank launched its strategy for fragility, conflict and violence 2020–2025, which could be instrumental in helping countries such as Haiti address the drivers and impact of violence and conflict and enhance resilience. While welcoming projects implemented by donors, the Group is of the view that only by moving away from a project-by-project approach to a more strategic approach will it be possible to make progress with regard to the longer-term development of Haiti. The Group is aware that finding a solution to the current political crisis would go a long way towards helping realize that strategic long-term approach.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

43. **The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic during the reporting period meant that the Group was unable to carry out its annual visit to Haiti and met with a more limited number of Haitian stakeholders by way of videoconference. The Group is therefore not formulating extensive new recommendations in the present report, but notes, however, that many of its previous recommendations are still valid. Moreover, given the onset of the COVID-19 health crisis, the recommendations in the present report are formulated with a view to helping mitigate the pandemic's socioeconomic and humanitarian ramifications.**

44. The Group is deeply concerned about the current situation in Haiti, noting the vicious circle of the political crisis and the deteriorating socioeconomic environment. It is important to address the Gordian knots that prevent meaningful and tangible progress in tackling the larger political and development challenges; namely, the power and role of a small wealthy elite, the dysfunction in the political system, the lack of an accountable public service and the lack of progress on the constitutional review. Social exclusion, economic insecurity and inequalities and widespread poverty are the root causes of the current political deadlock and deteriorating security situation, while at the same time political uncertainty prevents swift improvement in the socioeconomic and humanitarian conditions of the country. The outbreak of COVID-19 adds to the challenge given that, unless successfully managed, it can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities as well as political and social tensions.

45. The Group stresses the need to take a holistic approach in addressing the multifaceted crisis faced by the country. Efforts are urgently needed to address the political impasse which has engulfed Haiti since July 2018 and which has resulted in increasing distrust of the Government and national institutions by all segments of society. At the same time, no political solution can bring long-term stability unless effective measures are taken to address the root causes of instability, such as widespread poverty; pervasive inequalities, including gender inequalities; economic instability; limited access to basic social services; severe natural resource depletion; corruption; weak governance; and human rights violations.

46. It is all of those factors that continue to trap the Haitian population in recurrent cycles of vulnerability and prevent progress in reducing humanitarian needs and transitioning towards sustainable development. The Group stresses that urgent measures to save lives need to be complemented by actions to address the socioeconomic drivers of needs, build resilience to future shocks and promote long-term development. Significant progress needs to be made in linking humanitarian, development and peacebuilding interventions, for example by linking risk and disaster management with environmental policies, and food insecurity with agriculture policies. It is even more urgent in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, as it is clear that limited progress in promoting sustainable development has made countries more vulnerable. An effective response to COVID-19 must be guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which will offer an opportunity to “build back better” in line with the principle of leaving no one behind enshrined in the 2030 Agenda.

47. The United Nations system has an important role to play in helping the Government address the existing challenges through a holistic approach, so that activities to advance political stability and good governance and promote and protect human rights are complemented by efforts to help accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

48. For those efforts to bear the desired fruits, it is of crucial importance that the Government of Haiti and its development partners work in a well-coordinated, effective and coherent manner.

49. The Group presents to the Economic and Social Council the following recommendations for consideration:

50. The Group encourages the Government of Haiti to:

(a) Intensify efforts to engage with all sectors of society in a genuine and inclusive national dialogue aimed at addressing the country’s political and

socioeconomic challenges, and make progress towards the constitutional review and the organization of municipal and parliamentary elections;

(b) Ensure a well-coordinated response to the multifaceted COVID-19 crisis by addressing, simultaneously, its health, humanitarian, socioeconomic and development dimensions;

(c) Collaborate more closely with countries in the region in areas of common interest such as migration, especially in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic;

(d) Accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development within the framework of the decade of action;

(e) Accelerate implementation of national development plans in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(f) Step up actions to reform the justice sector, focusing on implementing existing laws, guaranteeing the rule of law and carrying out anti-corruption and anti-impunity measures;

(g) Strengthen efforts to promote full respect of human rights, including by addressing sexual and gender-based violence. In that regard, it calls for the swift endorsement by the Council of Ministers of the national human rights plan and its effective implementation;

(h) Given the country's vulnerability to hurricanes and other natural disasters, ensure much stronger attention and provide more resources to disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation, in addition to supporting preparedness and response capacity, including by continuing to strengthen the Directorate for Civil Protection;

(i) Consider exploring ways to work more closely with the Peacebuilding Fund and Commission.

51. The Group recommends that the international community and other development actors:

(a) Adequately and urgently support the Government's efforts to prevent and respond to the spread of COVID-19, including by providing the necessary resources to meet the requirements of the COVID-19 response plan led by the Ministry of Public Health and Population;

(b) Significantly increase contributions to the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan, including for the COVID-19 humanitarian response, to meet the increasing humanitarian, protection and food needs in the country;

(c) Promote regional solidarity, remain collectively engaged in Haiti and work closely with the Government of Haiti in providing well-coordinated and coherent support in mitigating the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 and promote sustainable development, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(d) Provide significant support to the United Nations country team so that the United Nations system will have the necessary capacity and resources to successfully help the Government of Haiti accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;

(e) Provide adequate, predictable and flexible multi-year funding towards transition, recovery and peacebuilding programming to facilitate complementary action across the humanitarian-development-peace continuum.

52. The Group recommends that the United Nations system:

(a) Continue working closely with the Government of Haiti in supporting the COVID-19 response in all its dimensions, and in implementing activities within the framework of the development priorities defined by the Haitian authorities, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(b) Collaborate closely with international financial institutions to respond to the COVID-19 health and socioeconomic crises, considering the country's need for special attention given its fragility;

(c) Continue stepping up its efforts to adopt a whole-of-system response, including greater cooperation and complementarity among activities that promote development, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian action and the sustaining of peace to better reduce needs, risks and vulnerability, to help address the root causes of the country's problems and promote long-term development and peace;

(d) Ensure that BINUH and the United Nations country team maintain close collaboration and coordination to maximize the impact of their actions and leverage existing resources;

(e) Ensure sufficient operational capacity in Haiti to respond to increasing humanitarian needs and prepare for the upcoming hurricane season. The strengthened and continued presence of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the country will be crucial to raising awareness and coordinating the humanitarian response.

Annex I

Statement of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti*

New York

6 November 2019

The Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti of the Economic and Social Council held an extraordinary meeting on 31 October 2019 in the light of the worsening economic crisis, deteriorating humanitarian situation, increasing insecurity and ongoing political deadlock in the country. The Group was briefed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), Helen La Lime, and the acting Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator, Fernando Hiraldo.

The Group recognizes that the Haitian crisis is multidimensional in nature and will only be resolved through the leadership and ownership of the Haitian people and through a political solution. Responsibility lies with Haiti's democratically elected officials to reach a compromise in accordance with legal procedures. The Group calls on all Haitian parties to reject violence and urgently commit to resolving political differences peacefully through dialogue. Only through a comprehensive, inclusive and constructive national dialogue will it be possible to quickly chart a way forward in order to successfully address the political, social, humanitarian and economic challenges faced by the country, rebuild trust and shape a common vision for the country's long-term development. The Group recalls the need for and the primary responsibility of the Government of Haiti to address the long-standing drivers of instability and inequality in Haiti. The Group stresses that efforts towards an inclusive national dialogue should be complemented by measures to urgently help address the socioeconomic and humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

The Group underscores that there cannot be lasting peace and stability without striving to achieve sustainable development and economic security for all Haitians.

The Group urges the international community to remain collectively engaged in support of Haiti. The Group expresses its grave concern at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Haiti and stresses the importance of increased contributions from international partners to the Humanitarian Response Plan to ensure that the prevailing humanitarian and protection needs in the country are successfully and promptly met. The Group stresses the need to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access. The Group welcomes the progress made in the fight against the cholera epidemic but underlines the need for continued vigilance.

The Group expresses its appreciation for the efforts of BINUH and calls on it to continue its political good offices role and its active pursuit of efforts to help resolve the situation and to ensure effective collaboration between all United Nations political, development, humanitarian and financial entities, as well as other local and international partners operating in Haiti. The Group remains actively seized of the situation and will continue to monitor developments closely.

* The Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti is chaired by Canada and composed of the Permanent Representatives of Argentina, the Bahamas, Belize, Benin, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, France, Haiti, Mexico, Peru, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States of America and Uruguay to the United Nations. The President of the Economic and Social Council is an ex officio member of the Group. The Group was initially formed in 1999 and its mandate is to follow closely and provide advice on the long-term development strategy of Haiti.

Annex II

Expression of solidarity by the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti towards Haiti during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic*

New York
8 May 2020

Further to an extraordinary meeting of the Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti held on 29 April to discuss the evolving situation in Haiti in the light of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Group expresses its concern that least developed countries such as Haiti will be disproportionately affected, given the weak health infrastructure and underlying social and economic inequalities characterizing these countries. The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to deepen the humanitarian, human rights and economic crisis in Haiti and to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, pushing more people into poverty in a country where 6 million people are already living below the poverty line.

The Group is further concerned that, unless adequately managed, the COVID-19 health emergency, and its socioeconomic impact, could become a humanitarian catastrophe, threatening to unravel some of the hard-won development and security gains achieved in the past decade and a half in Haiti. Forty per cent of the country's population is now food insecure, making Haiti among the 10 most food insecure countries in the world. With schools closed, some 300,000 children are now left without their daily school meal, putting them at serious risk of stunted growth. The onset of the hurricane season from June through November 2020 could further compound existing challenges. The Group is also concerned that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic could further erode confidence of Haitians in their national institutions, exacerbate political and social tensions, prompt human rights violations and be a factor leading to renewed violence and increased security challenges.

The Group underscores that, while immediate action is needed to address Haiti's health and humanitarian needs, efforts should also be pursued to continue promoting sustainable development and building the country's resilience to future shocks. The Group welcomes the prompt measures taken by the Government of Haiti, whose overall responsibility and accountability remain essential in addressing the crisis, including the setting up of a multidisciplinary scientific committee and a multisectoral commission to assist the Ministry of Public Health and Population in managing the pandemic, as well as the development of the COVID-19 health response plan.

The Group further welcomes the efforts by the United Nations country team and the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) to support the Haitian Government in addressing the socioeconomic, humanitarian and security implications of the COVID-19 crisis, particularly efforts to enhance coordination and coherence of humanitarian action, sustainable development and peacebuilding efforts.

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Stressing that the COVID-19 global crisis requires global response and solidarity, the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti requests the United Nations, Member States, donors, international financial institutions and all stakeholders to act together with determination and urgency to prevent and respond to the spread of COVID-19 and to mitigate its humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences. The Group calls upon all actors to ensure a rapid, safe, full and unhindered humanitarian access which is more necessary than ever to facilitate the response to the pandemic. The Group also urges support for Haiti's COVID-19 response plan led by the Ministry of Public Health and Population and calls upon Member States to contribute to the Humanitarian Response Plan for Haiti as well as to the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19.

The Group remains actively seized of the situation and will continue to monitor developments closely.
