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TOWARDS NATION-BUILDING

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This is a first of a series of reports on MDGs planned by UNA-Haiti. The program is under the direction of Mr. Fritz Simon, Secretary General and Mr. Harvey Dupiton, Vice-President. As sponsorship becomes available, the program will encourage more of this type of academic input on the subject.

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Towards Nation-Building- Haiti

Preface

United Nations Association Haiti (UNA-Haiti) is accredited by the World Federation of United Nations Association (WFUNA). It was organized in Haiti in August 2004 to join a network that enables several thousands of people everywhere to connect on critical global issues affecting us all, from peace and human rights to the spread of democracy, equitable development, and justice.

In an attempt to contribute to the Millennium Project Report of the United Nations, UNA-Haiti plans the development of a series of reports tailored to Haiti's areas of priorities. To this end, this initiative is supported by interns and volunteers drawn from academia. We express our thanks to Audrey Roberts the author of this first paper and her supporting cast of volunteers (Maryam Saki, Mark Wasco, and Stephanie Hirschorn).

This first report, entitled "***Nation-Building-Haiti***", was launched in September 2005 in order to emphasize an area that has received very little attention from the planners of the official Millennium Development Goals framework—that is an exhaustive effort to create appropriate conditions for the institutionalization of democracy and good governance rather than relying simply on elections for nation-building.

Introduction

One of the striking qualities of the post-Cold War world, characterized by globalization, is how easily businesses and governments in capitalist democracies have abandoned the values they putatively espoused for forty years during the struggle against communism, such as individual liberties and political legitimacy based on free elections. Most people, organizations, and governments are willing to pledge money to alleviate poverty. However, they are less willing to support impoverished communities in non-monetary ways that require greater sacrifice.

An estimated one billion people throughout the world live below the poverty line. Although the number is large, considered by individual country the numbers are not as jarring. Charted on paper in neat categories, poverty seems to be very clear and manageable. However, it is dynamic and unpredictable. People are inventive and flexible, and the permutations of self-satisfaction are infinite. In addition, descent and destruction are not permanent, nor are places and people plagued by devastation forever.

While some countries are expected to flourish in meeting the Millennium Development Goals, other states that have not yet found political stability, will be further marginalized. The MDGs need to be adapted toward a doctrine of humanitarian intervention tailored to particular geopolitical realities. For instance, in Haiti there is a

dire need for electoral assistance. The elections are the first and essential step, albeit not the comprehensive answer. Further work includes Haitian policy makers reconciling a popular democracy with a constitutional one, the two pillars upon which rest both the legitimacy and effectiveness of democratic regimes.

Economic Dislocation - Funding Pledges that Failed to be Met

Inherent in the political economy of democratic transitions are the effects of the short-term economic conditions on the bargaining power and interests of incumbents and oppositions. According to Juan Gabriele Valdes, the chief of the UN mission in Haiti, only one tenth of the 1.4 billion dollars promised at a donor conference last summer has been received. Prime Minister Gérard Latortue recently criticized the EU, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank for not having disbursed the funds pledged. There must be an equitable deployment of information and communication resources for civic empowerment and effective democratic governance before and leading up to the elections, instead of the stagnation that Haiti has so frequently experienced in the past. The international community must offer its commitment and support over the long term, not just in the form of funds during crisis. Although money is not the only answer, the injection of appropriate funds at the right time is crucial. And that time is now.

Intervention and Development

The funds for the peace mission to Haiti do not improve the level of respect for economic rights in Haiti. Projects in Haiti need to be innovative, sustainable, and participatory. Aid can not used efficiently if there is no institutional foundation to make it tractable. The aid must first "establish the prerequisites" so that the country can meet the MDGs. In addition, those areas that have been successfully set up need attention and maintenance. Tensions need to be reduced and channeled creatively, and the emergence of social consensus must be supported.

Institutions – a Platform for Democracy

There is an intimate link that exists between democracy and bureaucratic institutions. Institutionalization is crucial in establishing a democracy, because institutions, whether political-military, or socio-economic provide systemic legitimacy. No democracy can be truly secured or consolidated unless the state has a reliable, competent bureaucratic organization at its disposal. The current institutional design of the Haitian government is not sufficient because it currently facilitates unfettered centralization of power. The defining feature of competitive elections in liberal democracies is the inherent uncertainty of their outcomes.

What is Impeding Haiti in Progressing MDGs

While the political instability and bloodletting is quite real, the greatest threat to most Haitians' lives is the lack of clean water, access to basic health care, and the lack of dignified, stable employment. Development, human rights, and security cannot be addressed in phases in Haiti, but rather must be looked at as overlapping and mutually reinforcing facets of developing lasting peace and combating poverty. In order to even begin to embark on a coup of poverty in Haiti, there needs to be a cessation of violence by way of a legitimate government born out of open and fair elections.

A Canadian International Development Agency has identified a new strategy by which to deliver aid to Haiti. According to this review, the following factors are most responsible for the lack of progress in Haiti.

1. POLITICAL:
   *Governance issues: the legitimacy of those in power is always disputed by opposition parties and this in turn weakens the political class and its relationship with civil society.
   *Exclusion of civil society groups and those in rural populations from political life

2. ECONOMIC:
   *Corruption, low private investment, poor economic and trade policies, high unemployment rates, huge migration levels

3. SOCIAL:
   * No rule of law, human rights abuses

4. Lack of coordination in terms of International Cooperation with Haiti

Before the above strategies can be applied, Haiti's central dilemma must be addressed: how to establish the source of legitimacy in democratic governance from the ruler to the rules.

The Electoral Process and Representation of Government – Populist Democracy, Constitutional Democracy, Civil Society

Given the turbulent political history of Haiti, the need to ensure the credibility and integrity of the electoral process is paramount. The election timetable must adhere to free, fair and all-inclusive elections. The fact that there are some 90 registered political parties, and a myriad of civil society organizations, which do not appear to have clearly identifiable platforms for the future of the countries, makes evident the fragility of the transitional government. The presence of a large number of parties and independent candidates competing for the support of geographically dispersed and ideologically disparate voters severely diminishes the prospects of any party winning outright, especially with overwhelming majorities of votes or seats.

A prerequisite to being able to participate in the elections must be a renunciation of violence by all political actors. Also, ideally, there should be a minimum consensus essential before elections are held.

The interim president and the interim prime minister stressed that the return of Haiti to constitutional rule through the election of a legitimate and democratic government was an essential foundation for the future stability and development of the country. Many long-term, structural problems may persist in Haiti even after the newly elected authorities take office, but we are confident that a new democratic climate would significantly facilitate the resolution of those problems.

Electoral fraud and violence have been recurrent features in Haiti's past elections. Therefore, international engagement by way of international observers or advisers would greatly reduce these risks. Election monitoring helps to assure credibility and legitimacy of elections. Electoral participation should not require people to put their life on the line to exercise their right to vote.

Logistical and practical challenges of preparing for the elections persist as well. Conducting credible elections for an estimated 4.25 million voters in a country where there is no infrastructure (roads and electricity) and no existing voter list is a major challenge. Furthermore, there is a 22 million deficit in the budget for the elections.

A democracy requires debate, moderation and compromise. The difficulties of constructing a self-limiting government are manifold. To work effectively the institutional design of any democratic government is grounded in a broad consensus among political elites on a vision of democracy (however vaguely defined) that the design is supposed to embody and foster. In the absence of such a consensus, unprincipled populism defines the terms of political discourse and action in the country.

Within the consensus there must be a coupling of state and society. It must also include Haiti's contemporary colorful collection of civil society associations, networks, and unions. Leadership and participation need to be developed in the NGO community, for the above-mentioned groups vary widely in organizational capacity, goals and ideologies. Given the history of predation by the state and repeated failures of democratic experiments since 1990, these groups remain understandably skeptical of