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OVERVIEW OF U.S. POLICY TOWARDS HAITI PRIOR TO THE ELECTIONS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE TRANSNATIONAL CRIME, CIVILIAN SECURITY, DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS UNITED STATES SENATE

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OVERVIEW OF U.S. POLICY TOWARDS HAITI PRIOR TO THE ELECTIONS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2015

U.S. SENATE, SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE, TRANSNATIONAL CRIME, CIVILIAN SECURITY, DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES, COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,

Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:35 p.m., in room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Marco Rubio (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Senators Rubio, Gardner, Perdue, and Boxer.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MARCO RUBIO, U.S. SENATOR FROM FLORIDA

Senator RUBIO. The hearing will come to order. The hearing today is intended to provide the committee with an overview of U.S. policy toward Haiti prior to the upcoming elections in August. We have one witness from the administration today, which is the Hon. Thomas Adams, the special coordinator for Haiti.

Mr. Adams was named special coordinator in 2010, and his career in the United States Government has spanned 35 years, with much of it focused on managing foreign assistance. I would like to thank Mr. Adams in advance for the testimony he will provide us today.

The hearing will focus on a review of U.S. resources, priorities, and programs currently underway in Haiti and look at some of the challenges that are currently facing the Haitian people in the runup to the elections. Haiti has struggled to overcome its centuries' long legacy of authoritarianism, extreme poverty, and underdevelopment.

On January 12, 2010, Haiti was struck by a massive earthquake that devastated much of the capital of Port-au-Prince. Although Haiti is recovering, poverty remains massive and deep, and economic disparities wide. It continues to be the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. And yet Haitians that have immigrated to the United States have demonstrated the ability to assimilate and to prosper.

In South Florida where I live, the Haitian-American community has established small businesses and investments as well as elected numerous Haitian-Americans to local and state office, including the current chairman of the Miami-Dade County Commission.

Unfortunately, today in Haiti the conditions of this type of success have not been present. I was frustrated by the suspension of

the October 26 elections in Haiti last year. And the announcement by President Martelly that he would rule by decree was very concerning to me.

With the scheduling of the first round of Haitian elections for August 8, I am now cautiously optimistic that a new democratically elected government will be inaugurated. Elections in Haiti have usually been a source of increased political tensions and instability. Many Haitians are skeptical that the polling will take place as scheduled, which could lead to further unrest.

There is still much to be accomplished in the democratization of Haiti. Some parts of the government are not fully independent. The judicial system remains weak, and corruption and political violence still threaten the nation's stability.

Haitian governance capacity is already limited or considerably diminished by the earthquake, and it is my hope that a free and fair election in Haiti will lead to a government that is responsive to the Haitian people. But there are other concerns beyond elections.

Americans have donated millions of dollars to Haiti toward recovery from the 2010 earthquake, and the U.S. Government has provided more than $6 billion in aid. While there is no question that Haiti has improved in the last 5 years, recent reports that private and public aid has been mismanaged are incredibly disturbing.

The simple question is, How is the aid for the recovery and reconstruction been spent? Where has the money been spent? Has the Haitian population benefited from the massive amount of worldwide aid aimed at helping Haiti recover and prosper?

Currently, thousands of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent living in the Dominican Republic face possible expulsion due to a recent Dominican court ruling. I am concerned that a possible mass migration between these two countries will create a humanitarian crisis, which Haiti lacks the resources to cope with.

My office has been in contact with the State Department on this issue and has continued to receive regular updates to ensure human rights are protected.

The United States is one of Haiti's principal trading partners, almost 84 percent of Haitian exports went to the United States in 2013. Florida has the largest number of people of Haitian heritage in the United States. Well over 250,000 Haitians call Florida home.

U.S. trade preferences for Haiti have contributed to some 32,000 jobs in the apparel sector. According to USAID, U.S. programs have helped over 70,000 farmers increase their crop yields, doubled agricultural incomes for certain crops, and provided over 54,000 agricultural loans to increase access to credit for small and medium enterprises.

I believe Haiti is of vital interest to Florida, to the United States, and to the entire Western Hemisphere. When Haiti is stable and prosperous, America benefits. When Haiti is unstable, unsecure, and lacking opportunities for its people, it creates vacuums where criminal gangs or worse can operate and that could lead to migratory pressures in the United States or disastrous and deadly tragedies on the high seas.

I would also like to enter into the record a letter from Congresswoman Frederica Wilson, my friend from Florida. She represents the district with the largest Haitian population in the United States.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The letter from Congresswoman Frederica Wilson mentioned above can be found in the "Additional Material Submitted for the Record" section at the end of this hearing.]

Senator RUBIO. And with that, I will recognize the ranking member, Senator Boxer of California.

I look forward to continue to work with you on these important issues that affect the Haitian people.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BARBARA BOXER, U.S. SENATOR FROM CALIFORNIA

Senator BOXER. Mr. Chairman, thank you so much. And thank you for holding this important hearing.

First, I do want to welcome our distinguished witness, Mr. Thomas Adams, our special coordinator for Haiti.

Sir, I want to thank you very much for your service.

Since the tragic earthquake in 2010 that killed more than 230,000 people and injured more than 300,000—it is hard to even imagine those numbers—the nation of Haiti has continued to struggle. According to Oxfam International, the earthquake left more than 1.5 million people homeless, and the Haitian Government found itself completely unprepared to deal with the resulting humanitarian crisis.

In the wake of the earthquake, the United States undertook a major effort to provide urgently needed assistance. Since 2010, this commitment, I am proud to say, has amounted to more than $4 billion and has provided both humanitarian aid as well as long-term assistance to help support the nation's governance and development.

But I do want to say I have major concerns. Nearly 80,000 people still live in tents that were erected as short-term emergency housing after the earthquake more than 5 years ago. They are still in tents. Nationwide, 59 percent of the population live below the poverty line. And according to USAID, unemployment is almost at 40 percent in Haiti.

It is clear that long-term assistance is important and still needed as the recovery has been slowed by the inability of the Haitian Government to hold elections that are 4 years overdue. And I want to add my concern about that. A full two-thirds of the seats in the Haitian Senate have expired and are sitting vacant. These unfulfilled seats have made it extremely difficult for the government to function. And in this void, the current President is ruling by decree. This is a troubling step backward for Haiti.

It is clear that the planned elections for August and October represent an important tipping point for Haitian democracy, and I am sure the chairman and I and members of this committee are going to follow this very, very carefully.

Today's hearing is an important opportunity for us to examine the current situation in Haiti, particularly the upcoming elections,

and help us chart a path forward to support the Haitian people and their democratic aspirations.

Thank you.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you, Senator Boxer.

And with that, Mr. Adams, I will recognize you for your opening remarks.

STATEMENT OF THOMAS C. ADAMS, SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR HAITI, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. ADAMS. Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Boxer, and Senator Perdue, thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the U.S. Government's engagement with Haiti, including efforts related to the upcoming elections. I welcome the chance to provide a brief overview of where we are, to describe next steps, and to answer your questions. With your permission, I would like to submit my written testimony for the record, and just deliver a few very brief remarks.

At the outset, I would like to thank Congress for the sustained support it has shown. The Senate and House are invaluable partners in Haiti's recovery. The assistance funds that have been appropriated are a tangible demonstration of the U.S. commitment to Haiti. No less important has been Congress' sustained and bipartisan attention in encouraging steps in Haiti's democratic development. We encourage congressional visits to Haiti to see firsthand what U.S. assistance is accomplishing there.

So where do things stand in our efforts? Unquestionably, there is still much to be done. Even before the earthquake, Haiti faced enormous economic and political challenges. Development work there is not easy. There are no quick fixes or shortcuts. And despite having fallen short of our original objectives in certain cases, we can nevertheless credit U.S. assistance for positive and lasting developments in Haiti.

Our funding helped house more than 328,000 earthquake-displaced stations. Almost 95 percent of displaced persons have left the tent camps, which are all but gone. Nearly half of all Haitians have access to basic health services at U.S.-supported health facilities. And we provided $95 million for cholera treatment and prevention, including clean water and sanitation activities.

The United States has also helped Haiti increase agricultural productivity. As of July 2015, in just 3 years of operation, approximately 7,500 jobs have been created at the Caracol Industrial Park. More jobs are expected as facilities expand.

Security in Haiti has significantly improved. Violent crime rates, in particular kidnappings, are down dramatically compared to past years.

We are following very closely the situation along Haiti's border with the Dominican Republic. We are concerned by reports from the Dominican Republic that tens of thousands of people, mostly Haitians and people of Haitian descent, have crossed the border from the Dominican Republic into Haiti since June 17. We are monitoring the situation closely and actively engaging with the Government of the Dominican Republic, the Government of Haiti, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Organization of American States, civil society organizations, and the inter-

national community, to confirm that the appropriate authorities work to ensure the security of all who cross the border and the protection of their human rights.

The United States is also funding civil society organizations, international organizations, including the International Organization for Migration, to assist in these efforts. We continue to encourage the governments of the Dominican Republic and Haiti to consult and collaborate with each other and with civil society groups and international organizations to develop processes that uphold the rule of law, provide procedural safeguards, and are consistent with each country's international obligations and commitments.

Haiti's leaders must strive for a political, economic, and societal climate that fosters economic development and prosperity. An indispensable step toward this involves the holding of successful parliamentary, local government, and Presidential elections. The United States strongly supports the right of all Haitians to go to the polls in a timely manner to express their views through a credible and transparent process.

Congress shares this goal with the administration, and I thank you for consistently emphasizing the importance of Haitians voicing their democratic preferences at the ballot box.

The United States commends President Martelly and members of Haiti's independent electoral council for their efforts to prioritize the holding of elections this year. We are committed to working with the Government of Haiti and its international partners to facilitate appropriate assistance, including international observation, to help ensure that the elections are inclusive, transparent, and credible. As electoral planning continues, the United States supports the OECD, the U.N., the OAS, and the Government of Haiti in their efforts to coordinate and execute successful 2015 elections.

We encourage all actors to participate fully in the electoral process, to abide by the rule of law, and to adhere to accepted standards of transparency.

Let me stress that the United States has no vote in these elections. It does not support any candidate or group of candidates.

Finally, to be sure, it will take many more years to make that kind of far-reaching and lasting improvements we all wish to see in Haiti. The past 5 years have been marked by measurable improvements in the lives of Haitians and genuine accomplishments in Haiti's recovery and development. Much will depend on building political stability through successful democratic elections. But I continue to believe, through our long-term commitment, the United States is helping Haitians achieve a better future.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Adams follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THOMAS C. ADAMS

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Boxer, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the U.S. Government's engagement with Haiti, including efforts related to its upcoming elections. I welcome the chance to provide a brief overview of where we are, to describe next steps, and to answer your questions.

The broad and deeply rooted ties that link the United States and Haiti operate at the institutional, familial, and personal levels. In every state you will find individuals or groups, nongovernmental organizations, faith groups, schools or medical teams, committed—through training, visits, fund-raising, sponsorships, onsite as-

sistance—to helping Haitians better help themselves. In the wake of the devastating January 2010 earthquake, an estimated one out of two U.S. households made some contribution to relief efforts for Haiti. Congress likewise was quick to respond to urgent and longer term needs. Thanks to consistent, broad, bipartisan support on the Hill, U.S. Government assistance to Haiti has been substantial; since the earthquake, $4.1 billion has been made available.

There is significant progress to report in Haiti, which I will describe shortly. At the outset, I would like to thank Congress for the sustained support it has shown. The Senate and House are invaluable partners in Haiti's recovery. The assistance funds which have been appropriated are a tangible demonstration of the United States unwavering commitment to Haiti. Of that $4.1 billion total, 80 percent—$3.3 billion—has been disbursed to date. Immediate humanitarian assistance following the earthquake totaled $1.3 billion and has been disbursed in full. Approximately $2.8 billion has been made available for long-term reconstruction and development, and of this, some 71 percent—$2 billion—has been disbursed to date. No less important has been Congress' sustained attention in encouraging steps in Haiti's democratic development. We encourage congressional visits to Haiti to see firsthand what U.S. assistance is accomplishing.

Our engagement with Haiti has involved both near term and longer term goals. Having helped address Haiti's immediate humanitarian needs in the wake of the earthquake, the United States now directs attention and resources to the country's longer term development, working in partnership and through a Haitian-led process to help the country build a more promising future for its citizens.

Where do things stand in these efforts? Unquestionably, there is still much to be done. Even before the earthquake, Haiti faced enormous economic and political challenges. Development work there is not easy; there are no quick fixes or shortcuts. There are areas in which we all, Haitians and Americans both, hoped we would be further along by now. There are projects which did not attain the results initially expected and based on lessons learned we have made course corrections. For example, we shifted from building a new port to rehabilitating the existing port at Cap Haitien, and we shifted from building houses to providing technical assistance and financial products that will enable Haitians to build and improve their own homes. Despite having fallen short of our original objectives in certain cases, we can nevertheless credit U.S. assistance for positive and lasting developments in Haiti. But we are not finished.

Since 2010, U.S. post-earthquake assistance to Haiti has helped to measurably improve key economic and social indicators and build infrastructure necessary for self-sustaining growth. Our funding helped house more than 328,000 earthquake-displaced Haitians by providing transitional shelters, repairs to damaged homes, support to host families, and rental vouchers. Almost 95 percent of displaced persons have left the tent camps, which are all but gone. We have funded the removal of some 2.7 million cubic meters of earthquake rubble—36 percent of the estimated 7.4 million cubic meters of total rubble removed.

Our support for Haiti's infrastructure includes the reconstruction of Haiti's University Hospital and other damaged health facilities, and the construction of seven police stations and the Presidential security unit barracks. Nearly half of all Haitians have access to basic health services at U.S.-supported health facilities, and we have provided $95 million for cholera treatment and prevention, including clean water and sanitation activities. This has led to improved basic health indicators and a dramatic decrease in the incidence of cholera.

The United States has also helped Haiti increase agricultural productivity by introducing improved seeds, fertilizer, and technologies to more than 70,000 farmers, which have helped increase yields for rice, corn, bean, and plantain crops as well as increase mango exports by 175 percent. Our funding has placed over 33,000 hectares of hillside farmland under improved watershed management.

The United States has funded the rehabilitation and upgrading of five electrical substations in Port-au-Prince, and the construction of a 10-megawatt power plant to serve the Caracol Industrial Park and 8,000 local households and businesses in Haiti's north. Primary school enrollment is up, with the United States funding the construction of more than 600 semipermanent furnished classrooms, enabling over 60,000 children to return to school. We have helped more than 100,000 households and businesses convert from charcoal to more efficient cook stoves, and supported the planting of 5 million fruit and forest tree seedlings.

Consistent with Haitian priorities to promote economic growth outside of Port-au-Prince, the United States has targeted some of its most significant assistance to one of Haiti's poorest regions in the North. The Caracol Industrial Park is a public-private partnership that is funded by the Inter-American Development Bank and is owned by the Government of Haiti. Conceived as a long-term public-private invest-

ment, Caracol will require time and continued support to reach its full potential. As of July 2015, however, in just 3 years of operation, approximately 7,500 jobs have been created at the Caracol Industrial Park. More jobs are expected as facilities expand. Anchor tenant Sae-A is projected to eventually create 20,000 jobs, and the Haitian-owned Coles Group has announced it will create 2,500 jobs at Caracol once further phases of construction are completed.

The United States is also working in partnership with the Government of Haiti to help improve judicial and police institutions, and enhance citizen security for all Haitians. Since the earthquake our assistance has made possible the training and commissioning of 3,300 new officers in the Haitian National Police (HNP). We have helped create a new HNP community policing unit, which has grown to over 80 officers, in partnership with the New York City Police Department and the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The United States has also helped fund the reconstruction of more than 32,000 judicial case files following earthquake loss or damage. We have trained over 2,700 justice sector actors on basic and advanced criminal justice skills to improve their ability to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate criminal cases. Security in Haiti has significantly improved—violent crime rates, in particular kidnappings, are down dramatically compared to past years.

We are also following closely the situation along Haiti's border with the Dominican Republic. We are concerned by reports that tens of thousands of people, mostly Haitians and people of Haitian descent, have crossed the border from the Dominican Republic into Haiti since early June. We are monitoring the situation closely and actively engaging with the Government of the Dominican Republic, the Government of Haiti, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, civil society organizations, and the international community to confirm that the appropriate authorities work to ensure security and the protection of human rights. The United States is also funding civil society organizations and international organizations, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), to assist in these efforts. We continue to encourage the Governments of the Dominican Republic and Haiti to consult and collaborate with each other and with civil society groups and international organizations to develop processes that uphold the rule of law, provide procedural safeguards, and are consistent with each country's international obligations and commitments.

It is up to the Haitians themselves to secure and build on these accomplishments. We can advise and assist, but Haiti's development must reflect goals and priorities that the government and people of Haiti have identified, and for which they are exercising ownership. The confidence of the Haitian people in their government will in large part depend on its effectiveness in delivering basic services. Capacity-building and effective governance are thus central to sustaining Haiti's progress. This will require responsive, accountable, and transparent institutions; the just application of the rule of law; new laws and changes in existing ones to attract investment; and a fully staffed and functioning government in every branch. Haiti's leaders must strive for a political, economic, and societal climate that fosters economic development and prosperity. An indispensable step for this involves the holding of successful parliamentary, local government, and Presidential elections.

The United States strongly supports the right of all Haitians to go to the polls in a timely manner to express their views through a credible and transparent process. Congress shares this goal with the administration, and I thank you for consistently emphasizing the importance of Haitians voicing their democratic preferences at the ballot box.

The United States commends Haitian President Michel Martelly and the members of Haiti's independent Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) for their efforts to prioritize the holding of elections this year. We are pleased that an electoral decree and calendar have been published, and we are committed to working with the Government of Haiti and its international partners to facilitate appropriate assistance—including international observation—to help ensure that the elections are inclusive, transparent and credible. As electoral planning continues, the United States supports the CEP, the United Nations, the OAS and the Government of Haiti (including its national police) in their efforts to coordinate and execute successful 2015 elections. We encourage all actors to participate fully in the electoral process, to abide by the rule of law, and to adhere to accepted standards of transparency. Let me stress that the United States has no vote in these elections and does not support any candidate or group of candidates.

Successful elections have the potential to break the political gridlock that has imposed opportunity costs on the people of Haiti. The impasse between Haiti's executive and legislative branches has stymied the passage of legislation in such important areas as an updated business code, an updated criminal code, clarification of property rights, and the provision of electronic signatures. Progress in these areas

would strengthen investor confidence and help Haiti strengthen, expand, and diversify its economy. Without a doubt, no long-term development goals in Haiti can be sustained or fully realized without the engagement and support of the private sector.

Successful elections thus are understandably the highest priority of our near term engagement with Haiti. The citizens of Haiti choosing their leaders and representatives through fair, democratic means directly reinforces our goal of fostering good governance.

I have been describing the progress that U.S. assistance has helped Haiti achieve in its effort to rebuild. But I do not mean to minimize the challenges still ahead. To be sure, it will take many more years to make the kinds of far-reaching and lasting improvements we all wish to see in Haiti. The past 5 years have been marked by measurable improvements in the lives of Haitians and genuine accomplishments in Haiti's recovery and development. We must maintain an open and frank dialogue with the Haitian people and their leaders, and focus on how we can help the country's institutions build capacity to be effective providers of basic services. Much will depend on building political stability through successful democratic elections. But I continue to believe that, through our long-term commitment, the United States is helping Haitians achieve a better future.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you, Mr. Adams.

We will now begin our questions. I am going to defer opening questions to Senator Perdue, who needs to go preside over the Senate.

Senator PERDUE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Adams, thank you for being here. I really appreciate the chairman and the ranking member holding this hearing.

Haiti holds a special place in my heart. I worked in Hispaniola since the early 1970s, and I have seen the progress of one country, the Dominican Republic, and the not so much progress of the country across the mountains, what we are here to talk about today, Haiti.

I apologize for having to leave but I have to preside, as the Senator just said.

After I was elected last year, I went on a mission trip to Haiti to a place called Grand Goave, about 45 miles west of Port-au-Prince. It is an orphanage housing a little over 250 orphans there run by the Good Samaritan Project. And those people are doing fantastic work down there, as you guys are. I am proud of Georgia-based churches, such as Rock Springs Church and a few others, that are very actively supporting that work.

Since the 2010 earthquake, I am proud of the United States response in Haiti. We are one of the most philanthropic countries in the world. And we see the effect of that philanthropy, even though we may not have hit all our goals, there is much progress that has been made in Haiti. I personally witnessed that. Four billion dollars is a lot of money and you can see the results of that.

However, after 5 years, many of these children are still living in tents. In Grad Goave, their dormitory, their church, their school, were destroyed, and no injuries and no fatalities, thank God. But 5 years later, these children are still eating on the ground. They are still sleeping in tents. The church has been rebuilt. And we are working hard.

I appreciate your efforts there. But I really believe there is a lot yet to be done, and we need to make sure that our money is being effective.

The second thing is, I am very concerned, as we have already heard, and I am sure there will be further questions about the po-

litical environment and the free elections, so my sincere admonition and encouragement is to make sure that we get to a point of good governance there, that corruption is dealt with, and that our aid money that is going in there really gets to the people that we are trying to help.

I have a letter to President Obama, along with others, asking that we work with international community to make sure that these elections are held in a free and fair manner. I would like to ask my colleagues here today in joining me in that endeavor.

I want to thank you and the State Department. The State Department personnel, our military personnel, were some of the first people on the ground after the earthquake. Our Navy hospital ship does not get enough credit for what it did there.

We see the aftermath. People really came up to me in the streets of Haiti, Port-au-Prince, and talked to us about a relative or whatever that spent weeks in the Navy hospital ship and now are fully recovered. So thank you for all your work down there.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your forbearance.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you very much.

Senator Boxer, I will go first?

Mr. Adams, let me ask you, does the administration believe that President Martelly is capable of administrating free and fair elections for the Haitian people? And do you believe that he will step aside after the next President of Haiti is elected?

Mr. ADAMS. Thank you. That is a very good question.

The holding of elections under the Haitian Constitution really falls to an independent electoral commission, and they got started late because of political gridlock, and they are playing a little catchup. But I think they are on track to hold the first round of elections on August 9. And we are, certainly, supporting them in that effort.

President Martelly, I go down to Haiti once or twice a month, I see him. I spend a lot of time with him. I think he is deeply committed as part of his legacy to having free and fair elections. And he wants to have them, and he wants to leave in February. He has told me that on numerous occasions. So I think the answer to that is yes.

But again, there could be some bumps in the road on getting everything done in time to have the election. But so far, they are on track. They are doing better, frankly, than I expected.

Senator RUBIO. Just last month, ProPublica's investigation revealed that the Red Cross built exactly six homes in Haiti with nearly $0.5 billion. This is disturbing news, and it highlights the fact that hundreds of millions of dollars in humanitarian aid is simply not reaching its intended target, the most vulnerable people in Haiti.

In addition, there have been numerous accusations that U.S.-based NGOs, nongovernmental organizations, have received large donations from the American people, but have failed to transparently administer aid to the Haitian people.

So let me ask, are you satisfied that both the U.S. Government assistance and private efforts such as those led by the Red Cross are achieving their intended goals of assisting the Haitian people?

Mr. ADAMS. As I said in my opening statement, it is not easy to get things done in Haiti. We had more ambitious plans to directly build houses than we were able to carry out for a number of reasons. Red Cross has faced similar efforts.

We partner with the Red Cross in a number of areas, and one of the ways we are partnering is, just north of Haiti, there is a huge expanse of land where 150,000 Haitians, who were originally squatting in areas called Canaan and Jerusalem, are building their own houses kind of willy-nilly. And the Government of Haiti about a year ago asked us to get involved in that, to make sure that these houses were built earthquake- and hurricane-resistant, and space was left for schools, sanitation, police stations.

We changed our program to support the Haitians in building their own houses. The Red Cross has joined us and pledged $20 million. They are there now paving roads.

So I think I am not going to judge the Red Cross or others, but I think there are two sides to every story in Haiti. And again, I would listen to both sides before condemning anyone.

Senator RUBIO. Earlier this year, Senator Shaheen and I authored the Girls Count Act, which directs current U.S. foreign aid to assist with providing birth certificates in developing countries. Although Haiti has a birth registration rate that exceeds 60 percent, according to UNICEF, there is still a clear disparity in registration status between the poor and wealthy, leaving the most vulnerable susceptible to exploitation, such as human trafficking.

Since the passage and signing of that bill, or just overall, what is our Government doing to address or to help the Haitian Government address this gap in birth registration?

Mr. ADAMS. We pioneered the modern biometric ID cards for all Haitians and related birth documents years ago through USAID. The Government of Canada took on the next tranche. And at the time of the last election, 90 percent of Haitian adults had biometric documents.

The Canadians were willing to extend the program to get the 10 percent missing and to do a better job with children and others. But in the middle of that, the Haitians announced that they had received an offer from Venezuela to do it with $96 million and they were going to go with the Venezuelans. The Venezuelan money never showed up. So there is some lag now.

We have been working with the Haitians, with the European Union and others, to provide funding to restart the registration, particularly in preparation for elections.

But you are right, this has lagged behind for the reasons I cited.

Senator RUBIO. Mr. Adams, since you were named the Haiti special coordinator in 2010, Haiti has begun to recover from that catastrophic earthquake. They have undergone a political upheaval, and they now face the possible mass migration of thousands of Haitian descent people.

Does the administration have a comprehensive policy toward Haiti with regard to the upcoming elections as well as the monitoring and evaluation of USAID for earthquake relief?

Mr. ADAMS. Yes, in Haiti, USAID has a five-person inspector general office. We do a lot of monitoring and evaluation down

there. We get regular GAO reports, which I know you are familiar with.

And we make mistakes, and we fix them. I think USAID has been very candid about that. Again, we start down some roads, and they just do not pan out, and we have to change direction.

So I think there is monitoring and evaluation. We do not do government-to-government assistance with the Government of Haiti because we do not trust their transparency and accountability systems, although they have been improving those with our assistance. I think they will get there eventually.

Senator RUBIO. Finally, can you provide us with an update on the current situation regarding possible mass migration of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent? I know it has been in the news lately in South Florida and across the country.

Mr. ADAMS. Yes, it certainly has been. I know I have been engaged. I went about 3 months ago to the Dominican Republic with Counselor Shannon and met with President Medina and Foreign Minister Navarro. I have met with him several times here.

I think our quiet diplomacy has actually pushed this in a good direction. I think the Dominicans have rethought their original strategies. They have assured us that there will be no mass deportations, and none have begun yet. There have been some self-deportations.

If you ever been on the border with the Dominican Republic, it is very porous. There are four major border-crossing points, but there are 59 informal crossing points, and people go back and forth all day. Some Haitians walk to work in the D.R. in the morning and come back.

So one of the areas we are trying to improve on is getting better data from what is really going on at the border because you get a lot of wild stories sometimes and when we investigate them, they do not turn out to be true.

Right now, there was a report I saw today from the U.N., saying they think only about 19,000 Haitians have self-deported, at this point in time. There were reports of others that when they investigated, they found that they were not really deportees.

So we continue to monitor this very carefully. We engage with the Dominicans regularly on this. Our terrific Ambassador in the Dominican Republic, Wally Brewster, has been very effective in this regard. Secretary Kerry has called President Medina on this.

So we remain engaged, and we are watching this. And again, I think it is going in the right direction, but we have to keep on top of it.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Senator Boxer.

Senator BOXER. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

In its 2014 country report on Haiti, Human Rights Watch highlighted the ongoing use of child domestic workers. These children, the majority of whom are girls, are sent to live with wealthier families in the hope that they will be cared for and provided with an education in exchange for light housework. However, it is often not the case, according to this report, as the children are often unpaid, denied education, and shockingly even abused.

According to Human Rights Watch, most of Haiti's trafficking cases are children for these domestic jobs. By some estimates are over 200,000 children—200,000—are involved in this type of work despite the passage of a law that outlaws many forms of trafficking, including hosting a child for the purpose of exploitation.

Can you tell us how the Haitian Government is enforcing this law, if at all? And do we need to launch a broader effort, because this is completely unacceptable? We are giving the government money, and this is a situation that is deplorable.

Mr. ADAMS. Thank you for that question.

The basic reason for trafficking and for the rest of the system in Haiti is poverty. As you know, it leaves families with poor choices. And addressing poverty is really the main key to dealing with this.

The Government of Haiti has taken some critical steps to combat trafficking in persons, including the passage of landmark antitrafficking in persons legislation in June 2014 that had languished in Parliament since 2010. Since this legislation was published, the Government of Haiti has reported four investigations and prosecuted two suspects. It is a start.

The GOH also developed a new antitrafficking plan for the period of March 2015 to December 2017 that comprises a multisectoral and whole-of-government approach to addressing trafficking in persons. The interagency effort to formalize the victim identification and referral guidelines has, like other priorities, slowed due to protracted political impasse over scheduling of overdue elections and the subsequent December 2014 resignation of Prime Minister Lamothe and his Cabinet. Also, weaknesses, not specific to the trafficking in persons issue, including the weak state of the judiciary and a lack of funding for GOH agencies, remain concerns.

Despite these challenges, we are encouraged by GOH actions on investigations and prosecutions and anticipate that they will initiate more in the coming year.

The Government of Haiti's overall response to human trafficking has become increasingly strategic by targeting the linkages between extreme poverty in Haiti and the susceptibility to exploitation. Through the government's free universal education and social programs, which have impacted 4.5 million Haitians to date, and the government's increased focus on both the availability and quality of accommodation centers receiving vulnerable and at-risk children, Haiti is making, I think, significant efforts to reduce the incidence and perceived social acceptance of human trafficking.

We are working closely with the Haitian Government to improve Haiti's judicial framework as part of a longer term solution. And again, the legislation was a key element of that, and particularly out of a Parliament that——

Senator BOXER. I want to follow up, because I do not have a lot of time.

Mr. ADAMS. No, go ahead. I will stop there. But I think there——

Senator BOXER. I appreciate it. Well, let me just say, there are 200,000 children, Mr. Chairman, who are in this situation, and they are working for wealthier people.

That is my understanding. That is how it was reported.

So this has nothing to do with poverty here. Poverty is the fact that the parents are saying go work for these people. These people have no right to hurt a child.

So your point that there are two prosecutions since 2014 and that is a start, I do not think so. I think that is show. I think this is awful.

I do not know, I want to work with my chairman on this, because it sounds like you are making an excuse. Oh, the problem is poverty. No, the problem is with the rich people who are hurting these children, and they need to stop.

The poverty part of it is horrible, that a parent has to give up a child to a circumstance like this, yes. But the fact that they are going to a wealthier home with a promise of a better life, that is where the prosecutions have to happen.

So I am not sanguine about this, and I do not think that your response, in all due respect, I mean, I know you are measured about it, it just does not match the crime. If I knew that there were 200,000 American kids in as bad of circumstances, and quite a lot of them are getting harmed, with two prosecutions, I would go get myself a different attorney general.

Let me just ask you, on the upcoming legislative and Presidential elections in August and October, we all agree it is an important opportunity. Do you believe these elections will occur as scheduled?

Mr. ADAMS. I think there is a fairly good chance they will. There are, as I said, a few issues left. One is the lack of funding. Tomorrow at the U.N., I am going up for a donor conference to try to get some more money. We are, certainly, going to put in money, pledge more money for elections.

Senator BOXER. How much is needed?

Mr. ADAMS. Well, that gap is about $50 million for three rounds.

Senator BOXER. How many people live in Haiti?

Mr. ADAMS. Some estimates are recently 11 million. No one knows for sure. There has not been a census lately. But 11 million is a good——

Senator BOXER. Any need $50 million to pull off——

Mr. ADAMS. Yes, these are very——

Senator BOXER. For 11 million people?

Mr. ADAMS. These are elections for every political office in Haiti, and the Haitians design them so that every Haitian can walk to a nearby voting center. They have hundreds of voting centers, thousands, actually.

Senator BOXER. That is good if they have the election.

Mr. ADAMS. We are working very hard, and we have been working very hard, to ensure it happens.

Senator BOXER. Good. All right, thank you.

Mr. ADAMS. Thank you, Senator.

Senator RUBIO. Just to follow up on the issue with children who are basically put into homes to work, the situation that Senator Boxer has outlined, is there not a sort of societal and/or cultural issue here as well? In essence, that has been acceptable practice for a long time. And is there not a role to help change that thinking, because when I visited Haiti and in interacting with the Haitian-American community, you hear a lot about how this is a practice that has been going on for years. Is there not something we can

do to explain to parents—number one, giving them options not to have to do that. But, second, that this is, in fact, not something good that they are doing?

Mr. ADAMS. In fact, we have done a lot. The initial supplemental appropriation for Haiti had $5 million in it to combat this problem. And we made grants to a number of civil society programs to raise awareness of the predicament of thousands of children, mostly girls, in forced domestic servitude.

Our Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons has dedicated $3.75 million in new grants, which is a lot for them, as you probably know, to strengthen Haitian institutional and civil society capacity to identify and respond to human trafficking.

Funds are focused on prevention and protection programs for victims of trafficking and sexual or gender-based violence, and on supporting investigations and prosecutions of those cases. We have also worked with the U.N. on this. We have instituted in the police-training curriculum programs on gender-based sexual violence to combat this.

So we have taken a very active role in trying to combat both the societal image of this and the actual——

Senator RUBIO. Related to that question, there was a series of reports done a few years ago—the Miami Herald did one of them—about the existence of child brothels in the border region with the Dominican Republic.

What is the situation in Haiti today with regards to children being trafficked into prostitution? You alluded to that briefly in your comments. How would you describe that situation today versus 5 years ago?

Mr. ADAMS. Well, as I said, the border is fairly porous and unregulated, and there are reports of people crossing the border with children. Again, our training has helped the Haitian National Police on the border, the U.N. troops on the border, to stop and question these people. But it still happens far too often.

And again, there need to be more prosecutions on this, as Senator Boxer has suggested.

Senator RUBIO. You talked a little bit about the law enforcement work. United Nations Stabilization Mission, its mandate expires in October. Is that correct?

Mr. ADAMS. Its mandate expires every year in October.

Senator RUBIO. But there has already begun to be some sort of drawdown on its resources?

Mr. ADAMS. Yes, the mandate that was approved last year, last October, cut the military component in half. So at this election, there will be about 2,500 troops and about 2,500 international police, about 5,000 soldiers and police there.

Senator RUBIO. As that drawdown continues to happen, do you believe at this point the Haitian National Police will be able to provide internal security without the continuing same level of assistance from the United Nations?

Mr. ADAMS. Well, the Haitian National Police have greatly improved, thanks a lot to our funding of their training and other support.

The main problem is the country of Haiti's size should have about 30,000 police. The Haitian National Police, as good as they

are, have about 12,000 right now, and the balance of U.N. troops have to make it up. So it is under-policed.

We have supported them in getting ready for this election. We made some money available so that they could get their vehicles in order and other things. Again, I think with a good security plan, they can pull off the elections.

Senator RUBIO. Finally, you earlier mentioned Venezuela's offer, which never came to fruition, to help them with some of their identification systems. Is Venezuela playing any role in helping them conduct these elections?

Mr. ADAMS. They have mentioned they might. I think they might make a pledge tomorrow to support the elections financially.

Senator RUBIO. Will they be involved beyond that, in terms of the actual——

Mr. ADAMS. No.

Senator RUBIO. Because the Venezuelan Government, the current government there, is not very good at free and fair elections.

Mr. ADAMS. As I understand, yes, sir.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

Senator Gardner.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for your time and testimony today.

I know you briefly discussed in your comments and your remarks, but could you talk a little bit about efforts when it comes to transparency and reforms to end corruption?

Mr. ADAMS. I would be glad to. Corruption is a huge problem in Haiti, both the perception and reality of corruption are very high in Haiti. And their own government accounting systems are not very transparent.

There is an effort underway, spearheaded by the International Monetary Fund, to establish single-payer accounts in each ministry, which are really three accounts. But right now Haiti started out with over 500 bank accounts for the government that were poorly policed.

Senator GARDNER. What types of accounts are you talking about?

Mr. ADAMS. Bank accounts for projects. I mean, just not very well organized, frankly. Prime Minister Lamothe agreed with us to do something about this. He got the ministries together. We have a Treasury adviser working on this, along with the IMF, to reduce the accounts and to set up accounting units in each ministry. That is going pretty well.

There has been real progress there, and I think they may reach the point when we could consider government-to-government assistance. And it is important for the Haitians, because they do get budget support from other countries, not just the United States. And that budget support is contingent upon meeting IMF benchmarks. If they do not meet them, and the IMF program ends, so will a lot the cash support they get from other governments. So Haiti has an incentive to do this.

Senator GARDNER. When did those efforts start, the efforts you are talking about? How long ago?

Mr. ADAMS. I discussed this with the Prime Minister about 2 years ago. We would have donor meetings, and they would complain that we did not give money directly to the government. We

would complain that their systems were not very transparent, frankly. And I said, let us quit fighting and do something about it. Donors will support you in setting up accounting systems and in coming up with more of a system.

They have kept their word. At times, this has stalled because there are a lot of people who do not want to see this. At critical times, the Prime Minister came in and got the ministries together and said do it. They are continuing now through the Ministry of Finance.

Senator GARDNER. What happens with reforms with the election coming up?

Mr. ADAMS. Well, I think we would like the election to break political gridlock and accelerate reforms. Haiti needs lots of new laws. They have a lot of antiquated laws. They need a lot of things that will make that country more attractive to investment.

While we have the HELP and HOPE Act that does that, there is not enough foreign aid or remittances to fix Haiti. If Haiti cannot attract more foreign investment, it is going to be the same old story.

There has been good economic growth in Haiti since the earthquake. Before the earthquake, 4 years before the earthquake, there was a negative growth rate, slightly negative. It has been about 3 percent or 4 percent since then. But it needs to be 7 percent to eradicate poverty.

For that to happen, they have to really fix a lot of their institutions, their judicial system, and pass a raft of modernizing laws, and cleanup corruption. And if they do that, I think they will get the foreign direct investment that will ultimately solve their economic problems.

Senator GARDNER. You mentioned the judicial system. Is there continued interference from the executive branch in judicial issues?

Mr. ADAMS. Well, the Parliament passed an amendment to their constitution in 2012 that set up an independent judiciary. The President had to promulgate it, which he did. That Superior Council of the Judiciary is supposed to vet the judges, get rid of the corrupt ones, get rid of the ones who do not even have law degrees, of which there are a number, and reform the judiciary.

We have supported their work for the past 2 years, but we are getting a little impatient at seeing the results of their work and have said if we do not see some results soon, we cannot justify continued taxpayer assistant to the reform of the judiciary. So we want to see them actually do their vetting.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you.

I have no further questions. I do not know if the ranking member does. If not, I just want to begin by thanking you. We are going to have some votes here in a few minutes, and then we have another hearing immediately following on some nominations. But again, I want to thank you for appearing before us today. This is an important issue, particularly to those of us who live in Florida. It impacts us directly.

The United States, as outlined in your testimony and in some of our opening statements, has made a significant investment in help-

ing the people of Haiti turn their country around. We remain hopeful and optimistic, with some real challenges.

But we want to thank you for your service to our country and your service to Haiti, and what you are doing.

And with that, the record is going to remain open until the close of business on Friday, July 17.

And with that, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:16 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF THOMAS C. ADAMS TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BOB CORKER

Question. After years of deadlock, Haiti's Government appears to be committed to organizing elections. Are they really? Is it true that, as of June 9, 2015, funding was still about 40 percent short of the estimated $66 million needed for the Haitian elections? What is the Government of Haiti doing to fill that gap? What are you doing?

Answer. The Government of Haiti is moving forward with three rounds of elections, on August 9, October 25, and December 27, of this calendar year. Due to political gridlock which delayed elections for almost 4 years, Haiti's independent Provisional Electoral Commission (CEP) only began work on the elections in January of this year. There have been concerns regarding preparations for the first round on August 9, including delays in finalizing the list of 1,508 polling centers, the 13,725 polling stations and the voters assigned to each one, as well as in hiring and training polling station and security staff. However, the CEP provided the data needed for printing of the ballots and voter registration lists and its President, Pierre-Louis Opont, has said there will be no delay in the first round of parliamentary elections.

With regard to the shortage of funds for the elections, both in the basket fund administered by the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP) for election commission operations and for elections transportation and logistics, at a donor conference at the United Nations in New York on July 16, 2015, an additional $14.2 million in elections funding was committed by the United States, Canada, Brazil, Norway, and Mexico. Several other countries that did not make pledges at the conference indicated they were considering additional donations. The U.S. pledge was for $9 million, of which $4 million is to the United Nations for logistical support which had been provided by the U.N. peacekeeping mission (MINUSTAH) in the last election, and $5 million is for additional elections support to the UNDP basket fund. This raises the total amount of funding the U.S. has dedicated to these elections to $28.8 million, of which $6.5 million went to the UNDP basket. The Government of Haiti has said it will cover any funding requirements for the elections that are not covered by donor funding, including security costs of deploying the Haitian National Police.

Question. Some 70 individuals registered to run for President, 56 are slated to be on the ballot—a challenge for Haiti's voters. Yet, some serious candidates were excluded. Why? Was this the price of preventing unrest from certain sectors?

Answer. Haiti's Constitution levies a number of requirements on any candidate for President, requirements the CEP must certify have been met before placing a candidate on the ballot. Any candidate that has held public office and been entrusted with the handling of government funds must undergo an audit from Haiti's supreme audit agency to make sure that government funds entrusted to his or her organization were spent for the purposes intended. The results of that audit must be presented to Parliament, which must vote on a discharge allowing that candidate to be placed on the ballot. With Haiti's Parliament defunct due to the expiration of terms, the only way for candidates to obtain required discharges would be for President Martelly to decree them. He has chosen not to do so. Nearly all Presidential candidates excluded from the ballot by the CEP, including former Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe, failed to get the appropriate discharge. These candidates came from all sides of the political spectrum, indicating CEP efforts to follow the law impartially.

Question. The Assessing Progress in Haiti Act of 2014 required a 3-year Haiti strategy based on rigorous assessments. In response, the State Department sub-

mitted an update of your 2011 strategy. Can you please respond to the following questions?

The strategy required "an action plan that outlines policy tools, technical assistance, and anticipated resources for addressing the highest-priority constraints to economic growth and the consolidation of democracy, as well as a specific description of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating progress."

♦ Have you submitted such an action plan with budget requirements, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to Congress?

Answer. The post-earthquake strategy adopted by the U.S. Government in January 2011 continues to guide our overall approach to development assistance for Haiti, subject to fine-tuning on the basis of subsequent information and lessons learned. The 3-year extension of the strategy built on that original document, with necessary adjustments where changed circumstances or reassessments called for revisions. The report that accompanied the 3-year strategy extension submitted in February 2105 is intended to explain those adjustments.

We agree that it is important to monitor progress toward the strategy's goals, and the 2014 Assessing Progress in Haiti Act Report included among its attachments a List of Indicators describing benchmarks. Those indicators will be updated in the subsequent annual versions of the report. USAID's monitoring and evaluation efforts in Haiti are complemented by regular oversight by a USAID Regional Inspector General team and USAID works with the GAO on independent audits of programs. We continue to submit spend plans and congressional budget notifications as appropriate regarding funding for the activities in the strategy.

Question. Similarly, the strategy required the identification of specific goals for future United States support for efforts to build the capacity of the Government of Haiti to, among other matters, reduce corruption. The word "corruption" is mentioned once in the strategy document submitted by the State Department. How do you plan to fulfill this requirement?

Answer. Official corruption remains a serious problem in Haiti. While some progress has been made, much more needs to be done.

We are supporting anticorruption efforts in a number of ways. In 2014, USAID supported advocacy efforts that led to the adoption by Parliament of the legislation pertaining to the "Prevention and Repression of Corruption." This legislation is an important step toward addressing corruption at all levels, including penalizing common corrupt practices such as conflicts of interest in the award of contracts, nepotism, extortion, and secret funding of political parties. The U.S. and other major donors are supporting an effort to make Government of Haiti financial processes more transparent and accountable through the establishment of a single payer account and an audit body in each ministry to ensure transparency and check to see that government funds are spent for the purposes intended. The U.S. is providing a U.S. Treasury advisor to that effort, which is spearheaded by the International Monetary Fund. This effort is making progress, and we continue to actively engage the government to promote enhanced fiscal and governmental transparency.

We are also supporting the reform of Haiti's judiciary with assistance to the Judicial Inspection Unit (JIU) of the Superior Council of the Judiciary in its plan to place inspectors in each of the five courts of appeal to manage and monitor the judges within their jurisdictions. This work will institutionalize JIU oversight by effectively managing and monitoring judges to help create a more efficient and accountable judicial process. An additional program provides training on investigation techniques, pretrial preparations, and defending/prosecuting a suspect during trial for judges, police, and prosecutors. This program has reached 2,392 justice sector actors and includes specialized trainings on issues such as investigating and prosecuting perpetrators of transnational crimes including anticorruption and money laundering.

Finally, we have authority to refuse visas to Haitian officials for involvement in significant corruption pursuant to Presidential Proclamation 7750 and Section 7031(c) of the FY 2015 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act.

LETTER FROM FREDERICA S. WILSON SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARCO RUBIO

COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
SUBCOMMITTEES
HEALTH, EMPLOYMENT, LABOR, AND PENSIONS
WORKFORCE PROTECTIONS - RANKING MEMBER

FREDERICA S. WILSON
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
24TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

July 15, 2015

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Chairman
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere,
Transnational Crime, Civilian Security,
Democracy, Human Rights,
and Global Women's Issues
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere,
Transnational Crime, Civilian Security,
Democracy, Human Rights,
and Global Women's Issues
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Rubio and Ranking Member Boxer:

It is with great humility that I submit this letter at the request of Chairman Marco Rubio, who shares my concern for the quality of life for Haitians here and in Haiti, and together we represent thousands of Haitian Americans.

As we approach Haiti's upcoming legislative and presidential elections scheduled for August 2015 and October 2015, respectively, I urge the expense of all available diplomatic avenues and resources to ensure a free and fair process. Elections and voting are the foundation of democracy and transparency will be a tremendous boost toward creating more stability in Haiti.

Haiti holds the historic distinction of being the first republic established in Latin America and the Caribbean, winning its independence in 1804, and the only country in the world established through a successful slave revolt. Haiti's freedom was obtained through the defeat of a major military and economic power by a militia inspired by the idea of freedom from an oppressive government – much like the American Revolution.

Haiti has provided the world with learned scholars, renowned and acclaimed artists, and some of the most delectable cuisine. Haitians have excelled as explorers, writers, scientists, and artists at home and throughout the world. However, Haiti has borne the brunt of dozens of coups, unfettered corruption, and major natural disasters, none more damaging than the 2010 Haiti Earthquake. The country's history of political instability and economic uncertainty has led to its position as the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere and made social, economic, and academic development an arduous task.

I have been an advocate for Haiti and Haitian American causes for decades and long before I was elected to public office. In 1982, I successfully fought for the release of Haitians held in deplorable conditions at Krome Detention Center in Miami. In my role at the time as the South Atlantic Regional Director for Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., I worked to find suitable housing and create a smooth transition for women after their release.

Shortly after my election to Congress, I traveled to Haiti to meet with President Michel Martelly and those who were directly impacted by the 2010 earthquake to assess recovery efforts. I was able to see the earthquake's destruction firsthand and better understand the huge humanitarian effort that would be needed for its recovery. Upon my return, I hand-delivered a letter and was successful in my appeal to President Barack Obama for an extension of Temporary Protected Status for Haitians in the U.S. at the time of the earthquake.

More recently, I was a leading advocate in the effort to establish the Haitian Family Reunification Program which has been implemented and will expedite family reunification for eligible Haitian relatives of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents. The program will promote safe, legal, and orderly emigration from Haiti to the United States, and will reunite tens of thousands of Haitian families. It will also provide a vital lifeline for Haiti's economy.

I was an original co-sponsor of the Assessing Progress in Haiti Act, H.R. 3509, which was overwhelmingly passed in the House. This legislation extends and strengthens essential oversight and accountability in Haiti by requiring the State Department to provide detailed progress reports on recovery efforts every 6 months through September 30, 2016. I also introduced legislation that would address gender-based violence in Haiti.

In March 2014, I traveled to Haiti on an official Congressional delegation to receive an update on the status of local elections and to assess the security situation in Haiti. While there the delegation examined the findings of a Governmental Accountability Office report, commissioned through the House Foreign Affairs Committee, which reviews the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) assistance efforts in Haiti since the 2010 earthquake.

Currently, President Martelly is ruling by decree. Haiti's parliament was dissolved in January 2015 because of term expirations of legislators in the absence of elections that were supposed to take place in 2012. Haitians have expressed their frustration through civil unrest. The governmental dilemma has hindered the recovery from the 2010 earthquake and overstates the need for a smooth election process.

Adding to the social and political problems facing Haiti, the country must contend with the possible expulsion of thousands of Haitians and Haitian Dominicans living in the Dominican Republic as a result of the September 2013 Constitutional Court ruling. The proposed mass deportation will only put more strain on the country's already scarce resources. I have been in contact with the State Department and was assured that the United States is closely monitoring the situation to ensure that the human rights of Haitians are protected.

History will mark our intervention in Haiti during this tumultuous period as a barometer of our nation's commitment to the ideals upon which it was founded. America's role as the international vanguard of freedom, democracy, and the protection of human rights will be judged by our response. We are duty-bound to assist Haiti, our neighbor and ally, to guarantee its sustainability.

I am encouraged by the strength and the resiliency of Haiti, withstanding many tests with remarkable determination. I will continue to fight for Haiti's growth and development, and to improve the quality of life for all Haitians.

Sincerely,

Frederica S. Wilson

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

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