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PRESS RELEASE

Elections in Haiti: the Special Representative meets with women from political parties



Port-au-Prince, 28 February 2005 – The Special Representative to the Secretary General and Chief of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdes, met with the Haitian women – leaders and members of political parties – in order to “discuss and review the support they will need from MINUSTAH on issues concerning elections.”

After praising the women’s efforts in establishing democracy in Haiti, the Chief of MINUSTAH defined the meeting as an evaluation of their preoccupations in regards to the success of the upcoming elections. In effect, for Ambassador Valdes, “these efforts have already been taken into consideration by the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP), more notably in article 121 of the electoral law, which refers to women’s participation in elections. However, “difficulties are still present and that is why it is important to listen to their troubles and needs”, said Mr. Valdes.

According to the Secretary General of the women’s NGO “Fanm Yo La,” Marie Jocelyn-Lassegue, “there is an evident women’s interest for politics. However, women are generally scared by violence.” This same opinion was shared by other participants, who also highlighted problems such as the “lack of finance for women’s electoral campaigns, the excess of responsibility since they are also in charge of taking care of their families, the lack of political initiative, awareness, training, etc.”

To these women in service of their country, the Chief of the MINUSTAH suggested “the development of relations with their Latin American colleagues in order to share experiences as well as to identify themselves with international NGOs.” Mr. Valdes also assured the political women of his support, which is already mentioned in MINUSTAH’s mandate.

This meeting, which also counted with the participation of MINUSTAH’s Gender Unit Chief, Nadine Puechguirbal, has permitted these women to familiarize themselves with a project prepared by the Electoral Assistance of MINUSTAH, which includes gender issues in regards to the electoral process.

Madame Mirlande Manigat – joint Secretary General of the Union of Progressive National Democrats (RDNP) – defined MINUSTAH’s initiatives as very useful “in the sense that it levels certain differences.”

For additional info, please contact MINUSTAH’s Office of Communication and Public Information at tel.: (509) 510-2563 ext.: 6343 or 510- 3183/84/85 ext.: 6037- 6034-6035 or consult MINUSTAH’s website at <http://www.minustah.org>.