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PRESS RELEASE

USG Jean- Marie Guéhenno visits Gonaïves

Port-au-Prince, 24 June 2005 – The Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, visited today the western city of Gonaïves, where he came into contact with the security and socio-political situation, as well as with the military and civil police actions of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in the Western Department. He also encountered the political authorities of the region, among them the Departmental Delegate, Mr. Elie Cantave, and the Police Commissioner of the Haitian National Police (PNH), Mr. Serge Jolicoeur.

In his report, Mr. Cantave highlighted that « 60 to 70 % of the population are unemployed, the illiteracy rate is between 50 and 55 % ». Amongst the problems underlined by the Delegate there were the difficult access to basic services, notably education, health, electricity, the lack of infrastructures, etc., difficulties aggravated by the last floods. For Commissioner Jolicoeur, « the security situation in the region has improved considerably ». « We always count on the technical and logistic support of MINUSTAH », added Mr. Serge Jolicoeur.

In response to these concerns, the UN Under-Secretary General to Peacekeeping Operations indicated that « the participation of the international community should not be in doubt ». « The elections are at stake, and the international community is engaged toward its progress with transparency, honesty and impartiality. », said Mr. Guéhenno, showing « his satisfaction regarding the strong mobilization of the population for the elections through the progress of the registration process ».

« The Security Council, in its resolution 1608, has entrusted to MINUSTAH the responsibility to build a new police force, which will have no place for the criminals and consequently will increase from the confidence of the population », observed M. Guéhenno. He pleaded in favor of « a more strong and impartial Haitian justice, and also of important elements for the reconstruction of Haiti ».

M. Guéhenno has been accompanied by several personalities of MINUSTAH, including the Principal Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General in Haiti, Hocine Medili.

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