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PRESS RELEASE

Gonaïves women celebrate International Women Day

Gonaïves, 08 March 2005 – About 60 women gathered this morning in the center of Gonaïves to celebrate the International Women Day. They formed a joyful parade, like a street carnival, and chanted slogans and danced in the streets for more than two hours. In the front line some of them carried a bouquet of plastic flowers.

Vehicles of United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) followed the procession closely, taking care of the security with mixed patrols of Haitian National Police (HNP), CivPols, and soldiers of the Argentinean Battalion. A female HNP also acted as interpreter.

The procession crossed the city busiest main arteries, where hundreds of sidewalk vendors, most women, would cheer and applaud them. By noon, children and teenagers leaving school in their colorful uniforms also joined the celebration.

The parade became silent when it reached a small garden with a stone monument, where the flowers were placed. Carved in the stone, these words: «Here rests Mrs. Jean Jacques Dessalines - if you want to know what this woman was, consult the first pages of our History».

One of the coordinators of the event, Annessie Claude, director of Social Affairs in Gonaïves, said that Madame Dessalines was the first feminist in the history of Haiti, the very first woman to understand the “suffering and humiliations of poor women” in her country: “She is our inspiration”. Marie Rene’e Joseph, who represented a few women’s organizations in the event, said that now, “more than ever, women have to get jobs, have to participate in the reconstruction of our country”.

For additional information concerning the celebration of International Women Day by Gonaïves Women, please contact Sonia Nolasco, the MINUSTAH Regional Information Officer in Gonaïves.

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