

ECOSOC
Haiti segment, 21 July 2020, 10 am

**Statement of Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident
Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator Mr. Bruno Lemarquis**

Madam President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Building on the presentation of the report we've just heard, I will provide a quick update on the Covid-19 situation, the humanitarian and development situations and the work of the UN in this context.

On Covid-19:

Although the situation is not, for now, as bad as anticipated when compared to the scenarios that had been made for Haiti, it is too early to say how the pandemic will evolve next, noting that the actual number of cases and deaths is higher than the official numbers. It is not the time to lower the guard, on the contrary. The impact of recent measures taken by the Government, such as the reopening of the border, airport, factories, is not yet fully known.

Haiti had faced several issues in the early months of the pandemic, internal coordination issues, delayed decisions, issues at the border, as well as denial, stigmatization and community resistance. But a lot has been achieved, despite all the limitations, thanks to the leadership of the Presidential Commission for the Management of the Covid crisis and the Ministry of Health, and the support from a broad range of national and international partners. And there are good news to report as well, and I will mention two. First, now that the virus has spread across the country, community resistance seems to be decreasing, and it is now easier to open Covid-dedicated health facilities. Second, the national Covid-19 health response plan is relatively well funded for now considering the evolution of the pandemic, with a mix of national resources and donor and IFIs resources, reprogrammed or additional. But if funding is no longer an issue for now, more work is required to ensure a better coordination and alignment between the available resources and interventions and the response priorities.

On the humanitarian situation:

The Covid-19 pandemic is compounding an already very dire humanitarian situation. The Humanitarian Response Plan had to be reviewed in June for the second time this year – the first time was to reflect the impact of last year's political and socio-economic crisis. The number of people in need has increased by 10% over the last four months and is now reaching 5.1 million people, close to half of the country's population. Food security remains a primary concern, with 4.1 million people in need of food assistance today (40% of the population). People access to food is limited by disruptions in production and supply chains, a growing inflation rate, the depreciation of the national currency and a drop in remittances. Regarding health, the continuity of critical non-Covid health services has been severely impacted, in particular maternal and neonatal health and immunization programs, increasing the risk of re-emergence of measles and other communicable diseases. Protection risks have

also been exacerbated by the pandemic, including gender-based violence and violence against children.

In addition, Haiti is bracing itself for an active hurricane season, which would further exacerbate the situation. Haiti is a country highly prone to natural hazards and is not well prepared in terms of risk mitigation and risk reduction. As a result, each natural hazard quickly turns into a disaster with a major impact, including on development gains.

Development update:

Haiti remains the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and one of the most unequal in the world. Covid-19 is having a significant impact on the economy and on the livelihoods of the most vulnerable. This comes on top of the already dramatic impact of last year's crisis, peyi lock. ECLAC forecasts a 5% contraction in Haiti's GDP in 2020. The economy's capacity to sustain growth overtime is constrained by repeated shocks, in particular natural hazards and political instability.

In early June the government approved by decree, in the absence of a Parliament, the national budget for 2019-2020. Priorities include the fight against Covid, internal security, high impact social actions and the stabilization of public finances. The government has also embarked on an IMF staff monitored program. Completing this SPM would send a strong signal to move forward with a reform agenda and an opportunity for the country to be more formally assisted by the IMF on its way towards macroeconomic stabilization. In the face of continued balance of payment issues and lower fiscal revenues projected for this fiscal year, the government will have to thread carefully between macroeconomic stabilization and the need to step up social expenditures. In this context, the recently adopted National Social Protection Policy is a positive development.

Update on UN support:

The UN is supporting a coherent response to the Covid-19 crisis. The health response is led by WHO/PAHO, the humanitarian response is coordinated by OCHA, and the socioeconomic response is being developed under the technical lead of UNDP. On the latter, the UN has promoted a joined-up approach, and a joint socioeconomic impact assessment is being conducted under Government lead, with support from the UN, the World Bank and the European Union. This process represents a good opportunity to advocate for a recovery that is more inclusive, resilient and greener.

Beyond Covid, the UN is transforming its approach and ways of working in Haiti, in a context of transition - with the shift from 25 years of peacekeeping operations to a special political mission at the end of last year, but also in the context of UN reforms, in particular the UN development system reform. At the heart of the change is a deliberate focus on impact and on the structural drivers of Haiti's fragility and development deficits, to help address cross dimensional and structural obstacles to the achievements of the SDGs.

Linked to the above is also a deliberate effort to concretely advance the humanitarian – development – peacebuilding nexus, to reduce risks, vulnerabilities and humanitarian needs. The institutionalization and financing of social protection and social safety nets is a good example.

These approaches will also inform the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework that will start in 2022.

This way forward will require the full support of our international and regional partners, Member States and donors. Greater development effectiveness and impact will also require enhanced coordination between national and international partners and among international partners.

In closing I want to express my thanks to the ad-hoc advisory group on Haiti for its continuous support and advocacy. I also call on ECOSOC to increase its support and solidarity towards the Republic of Haiti, especially during these trying times.