

PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT
on the occasion of the ECOSOC Special Meeting on

SAVING LIVES: ADDRESSING FOOD SECURITY NEEDS OF HAITI (16 June 2023)

I convened a Special Meeting of the Economic and Social Council on “*Saving Lives: Addressing Food Security Needs of Haiti*” on 16 June 2023. The following key messages and recommendations emerged from our discussions:

- Haiti is facing complex and multi-faceted challenges that require urgent action. Food insecurity has been worsening in Haiti reflecting the sustained economic downturn, natural disasters and a decline of the agricultural production, compounded by surging armed violence and sustained lack of investment. We are deeply concerned about the food security, nutrition, health, and safety of people in Haiti, which are endangered by high levels of violence and insecurity perpetrated by armed groups. Food insecurity is intrinsically linked to conflict and increased physical insecurity. The most vulnerable sectors of the Haitian population are those hit the hardest. Our utmost priority must be to save lives and address the urgent food insecurity needs.
- The humanitarian needs continue to grow amid devastating flooding and a recent earthquake. The Haiti Humanitarian Response Plan for 2023 requires \$719 million, the largest appeal since the 2010 earthquake. It is targeting 3.2 million people out of 5.2 million people in need. As of 16 June 2023, only 22.6% of the appeal has been funded. We call on current donors to demonstrate solidarity with Haitian people and to substantially increase their contributions, and we call on other donors to contribute to this urgent funding appeal to ensure the full operationalization of the humanitarian response plan.
- The deteriorating food security situation is of grave concern—nearly half the population, 4.9 million people, are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity. Additional funds are urgently needed to reach people in need of emergency food and livelihoods assistance.
- The food crisis in Haiti constitutes a violation of the right to food that requires urgent action to address the structural issues that prevent people from accessing food, including both physical and economic access. Extreme gang violence worsens an already tense food situation and requires immediate attention. Nevertheless, in some parts of the country, it is possible and safe to produce food. Local initiatives exist and must be supported without any delay.
- Emergency agricultural interventions, especially when combined with cash and food assistance, can have enormous impacts on food availability, food accessibility and nutrition. Together, these can help Haitian food producers, in particular smallholders and family farmers, meet their immediate food needs and become resilient to risks and shocks.
- Children in Haiti are facing multiple chronic crises—hunger, malnutrition, violence, cholera and natural disasters. They are in desperate need of protection and support – particularly those suffering from life-threatening malnutrition. In the space of just one year, the number of children projected to suffer from severe wasting has increased 30 per cent.
- Women and girls are at particular risk – faced with a volatile situation, many will be forced to trade sex for food to survive in a climate where women and girls are already targeted for sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence. We need to strengthen efforts to protect women and girls as well as ensure adequate funding for gender-based violence programming.
- Local non-governmental organizations are playing a key role in the humanitarian response, and we need to support their important work and ensure aid reaches people in most vulnerable situations through unhindered humanitarian access.
- While emergency food and livelihoods assistance is the utmost priority, we need to complement it with efforts to develop long-term solutions, build sustainable food systems, and invest in local food production

in Haiti. We must remember that Haiti has good agroecological conditions which gives us the opportunity to build resilience and food security, but we must scale up investments in rural employment and poverty reduction if we are to transform the Haitian agri-food system to help address the underlying causes of food insecurity in Haiti. Such transformation can be achieved by improving local production and productivity, promoting sustainable and climate-smart agricultural practices, developing agricultural value chains, linking farmers to markets, scaling up investments and financing, upgrading agricultural infrastructure, generating more decent job opportunities and incomes.

- We welcome the concerted and coordinated actions by the United Nations entities, including WFP, UNICEF, OCHA and FAO, and partners to support Haitian people. Regional organizations and the international financial institutions, including the IMF and the World Bank, must play a transformative role in promoting community resilience to enhance food security. The IMF's approval of emergency financing "Food Shock Window" of its Rapid Credit Facility in January 2023 and the World Bank's Crisis Response Window, were commended.
- Solutions must be Haitian-led. The international community must partner with Haitians to strengthen long-term economic resilience and public systems to deliver services for the Haitian people and to safeguard against future crises. We welcome the efforts of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to support Haiti towards establishing political stability and in addressing security concerns, including through dialogue among Haitian stakeholders, including civil society and the Haitian diaspora.
- No single actor can solve the challenges in Haiti. We need a whole-of-society approach, that is well coordinated and financed, to address the needs of Haitian people and put the country on a path to achieve the SDGs.
- We heard the voices of young Haitians, who shared their hopes, vision and solutions, and called on the international community to act. The Minister of Planning and External Cooperation of Haiti shared his country's intention to launch an investment plan to increase food security. We also heard calls for an international United Nations conference on Haiti to more fully address the peace and development challenges in the country.
- While gang violence has severely inhibited the ability of humanitarian actors to provide assistance to those in need, we can and must continue to scale up emergency relief and sustainable development efforts in Haiti. The food insecurity crisis cannot be ignored and should be a high priority for the international community. A decentralized and local approach would help strengthen public institutions and communities' resilience, as well as build trust.
- Sustained investments are required not only for humanitarian assistance but also to strengthen long-term economic resilience, increase food self-sufficiency and institutionalize social protection for the most vulnerable. To this end, existing partnerships should be scaled-up, new opportunities be identified, including through South-South cooperation to leverage the existing fora for concrete results for Haiti.
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights calls upon State Parties to consider the challenges of both food-importing and food-exporting countries to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies. Multilateral policy and action coherence is needed to achieve food security in Haiti. We call on all relevant parties, and actors, to respect sources of food, including crops and livestock, as well as humanitarian supplies.
- The Economic and Social Council remains committed to supporting Haitian people in their pursuit to lead decent, dignified and rewarding lives to achieve their full human potential, including through its Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti.