

STATEMENT DISCOURS

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Statement by the Honourable
Monique Vézina, Minister
for External Relations,
concerning the situation
in Haïti

OTTAWA

February 3, 1986.

The Minister for External Relations, the Honourable Monique Vézina, has issued the following statement with respect to the situation in Haïti.

«The Canadian government remains preoccupied by the situation in Haïti. Widespread demonstrations by the people of Haïti against the present government have precipitated the present state of siege and atmosphere of tension within the country. It is not difficult to understand why an impoverished people has demonstrated its dissatisfaction with the performance of this government. We share that concern. We are distressed that the government has refused to take action to prevent the undisciplined acts of abuse and violence perpetrated by the militia.

Canada's present major concern about Haïti is with the welfare and human rights of the Haïtian people and the safety of the more than 2,000 Canadians who are resident in that country. The safety of Canadians is being monitored closely by our embassy and at present there are no indications that they are in any immediate danger.

Canada is not suspending its aid to Haïti. This decision is not related to our views about the present government in Haïti but solely to the urgent and continuing need of the Haïtian people for our assistance. Haïti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere. It is a country where Canadians from the religious and voluntary sectors have been active for many years».

CANADIAN AID TO HAITI

Canadian aid to Haïti has been thoroughly and carefully designed to insulate it from misuse. It is centred on humanitarian considerations and is aimed at relieving the effects of extreme poverty in Haïti. To this end, CIDA has organized its aid programme in Haïti around three priorities:

- 1) Aid to the most disadvantaged sectors of the Haïtian population where the objective is to contribute to the self-development of certain key groups of rural and urban people;
- 2) Institutional support which is directed at aiding institutional reforms necessary for the development of the country;
- 3) Aid to the energy sector, which is directed at improving the supply of energy to people in Haïti, notably extending the access to electricity to rural and village regions of the island where the majority of the population lives.

Three different kinds of administrative channels are used to realize these policy objectives in Haïti:

- 1) The bilateral or government-to-government programme which in 1984-85 accounted for \$4.4 million of Canadian aid to Haïti;
- 2) The non-governmental Organizations programme (NGO) which accounted for \$3.4 million and 240 projects. To this amount, we should add \$500,000 from the bilateral programme budget which was used to finance projects of the country focus type administered by NGO's;
- 3) The programme of the industrial co-operation branch which are directed at supporting Canadian private sector initiatives aimed at eventually setting up businesses in Haïti in association with Haïtian firms. To this end, Canadian firms received \$93,000 in 1984-85 to undertake feasibility studies of business opportunities in Haïti.

It should be noted that no money allocated by the aid programme to Haïti for the completion of bilateral or government-to-government projects is delivered to Haïtian authorities, and all money spent on projects in Haïti is subject to careful scrutiny to ensure that the resources are used as intended. Furthermore, we are able to affirm that no Canadian bilateral aid money has been spent by the Government of Haïti on the purchase of arms.

Although the execution of projects financed through the bilateral programme is subject to the signature of a Memorandum of Agreement between the governments of Canada and Haïti, the projects themselves are without exception implemented via a Canadian organization which has the responsibility for attaining the objectives of the projects, and managing the human, material and financial resources devoted to its realization.

During 1984-85 approximately 42% of the total Canadian aid budget to Haïti has been allocated to projects undertaken by the non-governmental sector. This is in recognition of their success in organizing and delivering essential services, particularly to the most disadvantaged sectors of the Haïtian population.