

Statement

Secretary of
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**A STATEMENT ON
THE SITUATION IN HAITI
BY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA McDOUGALL,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,
TO THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**NEW YORK, New York
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President,

Over the past year, we have seen the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe taking great risks to try to break free of the grip of totalitarianism and dictatorship.

We have also seen courageous men and women from many countries fight against a dictator who invaded the sovereign country of Kuwait.

International and multilateral organizations have played a key role in promoting the protection of human rights, the respect for law and the promotion of democracy during this tumultuous period.

I am deeply disappointed that circumstances should now require the Assembly to meet on the evolving tragedy in Haiti. I am here to express the increasing anxiety and outrage of the Government of Canada at the turn of events in that country.

Mr. President, on September 25, Haiti's legitimately elected President, Jean Bertrand Aristide, spoke in this Chamber of his pride and his country's new democracy. Shortly thereafter, that same day, I myself spoke in this Assembly stressing the need for nations to recognize the interdependence of nations and the need for collective security. Canada continues to uphold and promote those principles whether it be in Europe, Asia or Latin America.

In June, many of us attended the annual meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Santiago. For the first time in the history of the OAS, all member states represented there had been democratically elected. While the world watched the fall of the Iron Curtain and the move to democracy brought about because of the resolve of the European people, Latin America was just as boldly moving away from dictatorship.

It is my strong belief that neither the Haitian people nor the international community are prepared to tolerate a reversion to the arbitrary and coercive rule of earlier times.

Canada is proud to have joined the OAS, the only organization that is devoted to hemispheric issues. In our first year, we put forth a resolution which created the unit for democracy, the purpose of which is to promote all aspects of democratic development in the hemisphere.

In Haiti itself, the recent elections were welcomed by observers of the United Nations and the Organization of American States as free and fair. The Government of Canada placed its faith in the electoral process, and made a substantial contribution in money, observers and expertise to ensure its success. For the first time in their tumultuous history, the people of Haiti exercised full sovereignty over their political destiny. When viewed from this perspective, the coup in Haiti stands out as an anachronistic event, and a perfectly cynical exercise.

More fundamentally, the coup in Haiti tests the very principles that underlie democratic governance. History is replete with examples of those who have abused power or taken it unto themselves in the name of the greater good of the population. This offers neither a reason nor a justification for usurping the authority of democratically elected representatives.

The coup also presents a bold challenge to the international community. Will the new international political order, which we are all engaged in building, permit a lapse into arbitrary and coercive rule, the likes of which we are witnessing in Haiti?

Of course, the answer to this question is all too evident. Canada considers it the duty of the international community to exercise the necessary moral force and political will to help restore legitimate government and basic security to the Haitian people. This past June, Canada supported OAS Resolution 1080 which provided for action to be taken by the OAS if democratically elected governments of member states were illegally overthrown. Canada believes that the promotion of democracy, security and human rights requires more than just words. Words cannot turn famine into bounty, discrimination into equality, repression into freedom or brutality into compassion. They mean little if we fail to give ourselves the tools for effective action or if we succumb to the temptation of unilateralism.

Last week Canada expressed its outrage at the overthrow by a military junta of the democratically elected Haitian government of President Jean Bertrand Aristide.

Canada immediately suspended our development assistance program for Haiti and others also acted in quick response. But the individual actions of governments are not likely to restore democracy in Haiti. Canada felt that only multilateral pressure could bring about the restoration of President Aristide to his legal position.

For this reason, I attended an emergency meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the OAS one week ago in Washington. I expressed Canada's desire for the OAS to do more than express outrage. We put forth the tools for the OAS to begin taking real steps to restore constitutional order.

I am encouraged to report that our efforts to achieve concerted action in the OAS met with considerable success. With the adoption of the resolution on support to the democratic Government of Haiti, the OAS has demonstrated a new-found unity and sense of purpose, and has shown that it is capable of taking measures, both punitive and supportive, in the interests of restoring to the Haitian people their legitimate rights.

The OAS immediately took action. Economic, military and diplomatic sanctions were recommended. The OAS agreed to send a committee of Foreign Ministers to Haiti to express the OAS' rejection of the action of the military.

Over the period of four days, our committee travelled to Port au Prince three times and met with all sectors of Haitian society for more than 23 hours.

Canada was an active participant in this mission because we are absolutely convinced that this military coup is a grave threat not only to democracy, human rights and economic growth in Haiti, but also to the strength and preservation of democracy in our hemisphere. We, in this hemisphere, must not permit the military to have a veto over the democratic will of the people. All members of the OAS clearly feel the same way and have dedicated unprecedented time, effort and resources to resolving this situation.

The situation in Haiti is difficult and could deteriorate rapidly. Many Haitians have died as a result of this coup. The possibility of many more dying will be greatly enhanced if nations fail to act.

What happened in Haiti last week has deep roots in Haitian history, which is one of poverty, dictatorship and systematic abuses of human rights. The inauguration of President Aristide last February raised high expectations that decisive steps would be taken by the President to strengthen the rule of law, protect human rights and to respect the separation of powers as provided for under the constitution. These expectations were not realized. Rather, the continuation and even encouragement of mob rule provoked the coup.

But a coup is an illegal act, one that pulls democracy up by its roots. We cannot accept that military intervention is the means to an end and that the people's will is overturned by the interests of the few.

Mr. Chairman, when a coup has overturned a democracy, member nations of this Assembly must act to protect principles wherever they are threatened. I urge all countries to join with the OAS to try to restore constitutional stability in the region.

On Tuesday, OAS Foreign Ministers met again to consider the report of our ministerial mission and to consider what further actions should be taken. We recommitted ourselves to implement the actions put forth in our earlier resolution. We condemned the use of violence and military coercion used to illegally replace the constitutional President of Haiti. All OAS members will refuse to recognize any government set up under these

circumstances or any government elected as a result of these illegal actions.

We have requested that all OAS members immediately impose a freeze on all assets of the Haitian government and impose a trade embargo on Haiti, except for humanitarian aid.

I believe that the new rulers cannot rule Haiti, and that these actions by the OAS will convince those currently in charge that they must return power to democratically elected President Aristide.

This will address the short-term but not the long-term problem in Haiti.

During our visits to Haiti it became clear that substantial multilateral involvement would be required to establish strong democratic institutions. It is for this reason that the OAS has accepted the invitation of President Aristide to establish a civilian mission for the support and strengthening of constitutional democracy in Haiti (OEA - Democ) which will go to that country in order to assist Haitians in:

- 1) strengthening democratic institutions;
- 2) ensuring the full application of the constitution;
- 3) instilling respect for human rights for all Haitians;
and
- 4) improving the administration of justice and the functioning of all institutions that support democracy.

The organization of a special fund to finance this activity has been entrusted to the Secretary General.

The mission cannot be put in place without an appropriate guarantee of the security of its members. Conditions within Haiti must be such that the mission can effectively carry out its functions. To this end, channels of communications will be maintained with democratically constituted political institutions and other sectors in Haiti to facilitate dialogue with a view to ensuring the conditions that will be made possible for President Aristide to return to office.

Mr. Chairman, this represents a long-term commitment to Haiti and to the strengthening of its institutions. Haiti will also need substantial new resources for its economic development, particularly to enhance prospects of the vast majority of Haitians who live in abject poverty. I can assure all representatives here today that Canada is seriously committed to assisting Haiti in the development of its democratic institutions and its economy, not just for now but over the long term.

These initiatives are key in the view of all countries in the Americas to the restoration of Haiti's constitutional democracies. The contribution of all OAS members is the key to the success of these efforts. The participation of other nations in these sanctions and other actions will enable these efforts to be more effective and efficient.

All nations have an interest in protecting regional security. All nations have an interest in the protection of human rights and all nations have an interest in respect for the rule of law. For these reasons, I urge the members of this Assembly, on behalf of Canada, the OAS, and -- most importantly -- on behalf of the people of Haiti, to join the OAS in our efforts to ensure the rule of law is respected in Haiti and call for the restoration of the legitimate Government of Haiti.

Chapter VIII of the UN Charter provides for a central role for associations like the OAS in matters like this. Actions taken by that organization in the present case were clearly envisaged by the founders of the United Nations.

Although the OAS has assumed its rightful position as the "forum of first instance" in considering the Haitian events, the United Nations is also directly implicated.

Practically speaking, this fact was already amply recognized by the UN before the current troubles, when a UN mission was dispatched to ensure the success of the electoral process in Haiti and when the Security Council met to hear an appeal from the democratically elected President for a return to constitutional government.

Having made these contributions, I am confident that the UN will support the OAS in its attempt to mediate and resolve this crisis, while remaining engaged in the longer-term challenges of democratic and socioeconomic development. This would be in keeping with the UN's role as voice and conscience of the international community.

This hemisphere and the broader international community are seized of the United Nations' new-found resolve. That knowledge will be ignored at the peril of those who seek to supplant democratically elected government in Haiti.