

Statement

Secretary of
State for
External Affairs



Déclaration

Secrétaire
d'État aux
Affaires
extérieures

91/53

STATEMENT ON HAITI BY

THE HONOURABLE BARBARA McDOUGALL,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,

TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

**OTTAWA, Ontario
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Affaires extérieures et
Commerce extérieur Canada

External Affairs and
International Trade Canada

Canada

Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to outline the steps Canada is taking in the international effort to restore democracy in Haiti.

The winds of democratic change that have blown stronger around the world have been a source of much hope to all of us. Real progress has been achieved in many countries, including dramatic change in this hemisphere where for so long military dictators dominated political life.

In December 1990, less than one year ago, Haiti joined the community of democratic nations with a free and democratic election. This election was clearly a source of much pride and much joy to Haitians. It was also a source of much satisfaction for Canadians who had watched the people of that troubled country tormented for so long under the oppressive yoke of dictatorship. Canada, along with other countries from the Organization of American States (OAS) and the UN, helped this transition to democracy through direct electoral assistance and observation to ensure that the election of President Aristide was free and fair. The conclusion of all international observers was that President Aristide had won by a landslide in a remarkably fair election.

The coup that overthrew the legitimate and democratically elected government of President Aristide flew in the face of the will of the Haitian people and the democratic achievements throughout the Americas. It was totally unacceptable, and remains totally unacceptable.

Canada moved quickly and decisively in response to the coup. The government immediately suspended our Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) bilateral government-to-government assistance program in Haiti. We supported an early meeting of Foreign Ministers of the OAS, which this government had joined less than two years ago, to develop an effective regional response to this threat to democracy in our hemisphere.

Mr. Speaker, the OAS acted. Within days of the coup, Foreign Ministers met and sent a delegation of Foreign Ministers to Port au Prince to demand the restoration of democracy. I was a member of that delegation which flew to Haiti on a plane provided by the Canadian government. On our return, OAS Foreign Ministers met again and passed a second resolution calling on member states to impose trade, economic and financial sanctions against the illegitimate authorities in Haiti. There can be no doubt of the OAS's resolve -- these resolutions were passed unanimously by all 34 OAS members.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to outline how Canada will give effect to these OAS resolutions.

First, the government has placed Haiti on the Area Control List and the Import Control List under the Export and Import Permits Act; this will halt bilateral trade with Haiti. The government will only allow exports of food that we judge are required for humanitarian reasons.

Second, the government has suspended all other bilateral development assistance in Haiti that has been executed by non-governmental organizations. Since 1987, this has formed the bulk of our bilateral program in Haiti.

Third, the Export Development Corporation, the Canadian Commercial Corporation, the CIDA Business Co-operation Division and the Trade

Facilitation Office of Canada have been instructed that funds, credits and advice are no longer to be made available for applications involving Haiti.

Fourth, activities relating to Haiti are no longer eligible for funding under the Program for Export Market Development.

Fifth, the Trade Commissioner Service of External Affairs and International Trade Canada has suspended all assistance to exporters to Haiti.

Sixth, Canadian representatives at the multilateral development banks have been instructed to oppose any proposals for new credits or loans, or the provision of technical assistance to the illegitimate regime in Haiti; Canadian representatives at the International Monetary Fund have also been instructed to oppose any stand-by or credit any other arrangement for Haiti.

Seventh, federal government departments and relevant Crown corporations have been instructed to suspend activities involving Haiti.

Mr. Speaker, our aim in implementing these measures is not to increase the suffering of ordinary Haitians who are having a difficult time. Our quarrel is with the perpetrators of the coup, not with the Haitian people. For this reason, and consistent with the OAS resolutions, Canada will continue to provide humanitarian assistance through multilateral and non-governmental organizations.

Finally Mr. Speaker, this government will shortly introduce legislation that will allow Canada to freeze all assets of the Haitian government in Canada. We have already advised financial institutions in Canada to exercise special prudence so as to ensure any unauthorized transfer of Haitian government funds does not occur.

It is especially heartening that the Organization of American States has seized this occasion to assume its proper role in the maintenance of hemispheric security and the defence of democratic values so dearly won in this hemisphere. All active OAS members, with the exception of Haiti, now enjoy democratic government. Many countries in this hemisphere, however, have military establishments with a tradition of interference in civil affairs. The governments of these countries share our determination to send a clear message to military establishments and others: the nations of this hemisphere, acting through the OAS, will not tolerate interference in the democratic process.

Canada's goal is simple, and through these actions our determination must be clear to everyone. With the measures I have just announced, we have gone as far as any country in the hemisphere in responding to the OAS call for a strong signal to the regime in Port au Prince that we will not tolerate that the will of the Haitian people will be thwarted. Together with our OAS partners, we are determined to restore democracy in Haiti.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.