

KNIGHTS MODEL UNITED NATIONS INVITATIONAL CONFERENCE

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL: HAITI



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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Hello delegates!

My name is Ava, and I am excited to chair the KnightsMUN United Nations Security Council this year! I am a senior at the Bishop's School and have been in MUN since the 6th grade. Previously at KnightsMUN, I vice-chaired the Greek side of the Trojan War Crisis Committee and chaired the IRA side of The Troubles Crisis Committee.

In recent decades, Haïti has considerably struggled in its infrastructure and political stability. From debilitating earthquakes to poor financing to education and severe increases in violence and gang-controlled territory, the lives of Haïtians and the future of the country are in extreme jeopardy. As Security Council members, you will be able to more carefully develop solutions, that will, in theory, be legally binding for your country: act wisely and thoughtfully!

This topic is particularly dear to me, as I was pen pals with a student from Haïti for a couple of years, gaining a glimpse at life there through letters and videos from her and her classmates. There are real people impacted by these events, and I hope this committee will give you all the opportunity to reflect on that whilst tackling social, humanitarian, and political issues from the perspective of your country.

For general position paper guidelines, please see the Position Paper tab on www.knightsmun.com. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me directly at ava.bradley.24@bishops.com. Best of luck!

I. BACKGROUND (1697-1947)

France gained control of Haïti—known at the time as the western side of the island of Hispaniola—from Spain in 1697. Haïti remained a French colony, its cane sugar becoming a main export and economic asset of the latter country.¹ France tasked African slaves with taking care of the sugar cane; not only were they forced to farm, but they also had to clear new land at the expense of forests, soil quality, and streams, thus creating longstanding environmental problems.² A century after France’s occupation, Haïti’s enslaved population totaled over 500,000. Those who managed to escape the mistreatment formed groups to engage in guerilla warfare against France’s colonial militia.

Eventually, these battles led the way for the Haïtian Revolution, which occurred from 1791–1804. Both Spain and Britain became involved, backing various revolutionary slave and former slave groups. In a last-ditch effort to preserve the colony, France offered emancipation to all slaves who fought on their side, which led to the complete abolition of slavery in 1793.³ A few years later, Toussaint Louverture, a former slave, gained control of many parts of the territory with initial permission from France and made himself governor-general for life. France invaded once more to get rid of Louverture, agreeing to an armistice with him after several months of fighting; they imprisoned him shortly after.⁴ Napoleon Bonaparte was growing progressively more concerned with Haïti, as he wanted to make it into a profitable colony once more, via the potential use of slavery. In 1802, fearing the reinstatement of slavery, Jean-Jacques

¹ Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. n.d. “Haiti (Saint-Domingue).” Slavery and Remembrance. <https://slaveryandremembrance.org/articles/article/?id=A0111>.

² Lawless, Robert. 2023. “History of Haiti | Revolution, Independence, Flag, & Map.” Britannica, October 8, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-Haiti>.

³ Encyclopedia Britannica. 2023. “Haitian Revolution | Causes, Summary, & Facts.” Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Haitian-Revolution>.

⁴ Fagg, John E. 2023. “Toussaint Louverture - Haitian Revolution, Abolitionist, Leader.” Britannica, October 19, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Toussaint-Louverture/Command-of-Hispaniola>.

Dessalines and Henry Christophe gathered forces to fight back, leading France to withdraw from Haïti in 1803.⁵

A year later, Dessalines declared himself emperor but was killed in a revolt against him. In 1806, Christophe assumed power until his rule was threatened by a civil war—with British help he maintained his position and declared himself King.⁶ Most of the leaders that followed for the next decade were either toppled or killed.

Additionally, from 1822 to 1844, Haïti occupied Santo Domingo—now known as the Dominican Republic—until they relinquished control in response to many uprisings. In one instance, thousands of Haitians were killed by Dominican troops, the latter country not compensating the former for the deaths as it had promised. The Haïtian government was not kind to the country, exploiting them for some of their resources while they occupied the territory.⁷

France recognized Haïti's independence but it was not without a price; Haïti was to pay 100 million francs to France a year, putting the already struggling nation into debt. Despite having recognized the country as independent, the United States occupied Haïti from 1915 to 1934 under the Monroe Doctrine, and only became fully detached in 1947.⁸ Thus, despite being its own independent country for over a century, Haïti still actively felt the oppression and influence of Western nations.

⁵ Lawless, "History of Haiti."

⁶ Lawless, "History of Haiti."

⁷ Anacker, Caelen. 2010. "Haitian Invasions and Occupation of Santo Domingo (1801-1844) •." Blackpast. <https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/haitian-invasions-and-occupation-santo-domingo-1801-1844/>

⁸ Lawless, "History of Haiti."

II. BACKGROUND (1948-2023)

Despite being fully independent once more, Haïti was far from stable in the late 1940s. Leader after leader (Élie Lescot, Dumarsais Estimé, Paul E. Magloire, etc.) proved to be corrupt and unsatisfactory to Haïti's people or military—thus, they were removed from power. In 1957, Francois Duvalier was elected president, and, despite initial attempts to overthrow him, he remained in power (assigning himself the role for life).⁹ Duvalier kept a strong police force—Tontons Macoutes—to control the Haïtian people and oversaw many human rights abuses.¹⁰ When Duvalier died, his son was assigned to take power, and he helped fix some of Haïti's international image and economic struggles. He still maintained the same police force as his father, but it was not enough to silence the voices and anger of Haïtian citizens; he had to flee the country after giant protests against him and his regime occurred across the country, making the future of the country uncertain once again.¹¹ Yet, there was newfound hope that Haïti might finally be able to become a true democracy; this hope quickly died when the next president, Henri Namphy, won the election by way of fraud and was then overturned and under different control until that new regime collapsed too.

The early 1990s marked what was widely considered the first legitimate Haïtian presidential election, where Jean-Bertrand Aristide won by a significant margin. Despite being popular with the people, he was removed from office after less than a year of presidency by those who disagreed with him, namely the wealthy elite. With the help of the United States and its military, Aristide was able to take down the corrupted Haïtian military and return to the country. After his term was over, René Préval was elected into office, followed by Aristide once more in

⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica. 2023. "Haiti - Military Regimes, Duvaliers." Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Haiti/Military-regimes-and-the-Duvaliers>.

¹⁰ Lawless, "History of Haiti."

¹¹ Encyclopedia Britannica, "Haiti - Military Regimes, Duvaliers."

2001. The legitimacy of his reelection was questionable, leading him to leave the country and to subsequent violent conflict.¹²

In an attempt to restore order, the United States created a government in Haïti, and after years of unrest, Préval was elected president again. This did little to solve the conflict, as other branches of government were still immensely unstable, leading to a lack of progress.¹³

On the non-political side of things, Haïti was also impacted by African swine fever in the 1970s, leading to the killing of most of its pigs, and thus heightened economic struggle for the lower-class farmers.¹⁴ Additionally, the AIDS crisis hit the nation particularly strongly in the 70s, as well as in the 2000s.¹⁵ In 2010, a 7.0 magnitude quake impacting mostly Port-au-Prince, the nation's capital, killed an estimated 100,000-316,000 people but affected over 3 million, and created immense damage to the city and the surrounding area's infrastructure.¹⁶ In 2012, Hurricane Sandy hit Haïti, exacerbating the damage.¹⁷ Additionally to being under the threat of being targeted, kidnapped, and killed, about 59% of the nation's population lives below the poverty line and earns less than \$2 a day.

Michel Martelly, who was elected right after the initial earthquake, used the two crises as an excuse not to run another presidential election until 2015. Subsequently, he removed the parliament and created his own cabinet instead. He resigned in 2016, leaving the country to an interim government until the next president was elected. Jovenel Moïse took office in 2017. In

¹² Lawless, "History of Haiti."

¹³ Lawless, "History of Haiti."

¹⁴ Weir, Shilo. 2022. "African Swine Fever, Part 1: A Look at the Past." USDA. <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2022/10/11/african-swine-fever-part-1-look-past>.

¹⁵ USAID. 2022. "Human Immunodeficiency Virus in Haiti -September 2022 | Haiti | Fact Sheet | U.S. Agency for International Development." USAID. <https://www.usaid.gov/haiti/fact-sheet/sep-01-2022-human-immunodeficiency-virus-haiti-september-2022>.

¹⁶ The United Nations. 2022. "UN marks anniversary of devastating 2010 Haiti earthquake." UN News, January 12, 2022. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/01/1109632>.

¹⁷ Rosen, Armin, and Amanda Mull. 2012. "The Other Hurricane Sandy: The Storm's Impact in Haiti." The Atlantic, October 31, 2012. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/10/the-other-hurricane-sandy-the-storms-impact-in-haiti/264362/>.

2020, he led the country alone, without any legislators.¹⁸ That year, gang violence rose significantly. In February 2021, when his term was set to end, he avoided an attempt at a coup. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the 2021 7.2 magnitude quake that killed 2,248 Haïtians, he planned to continue to maintain power—this plan was cut short by his assassination, which occurred two days after he nominated his prime minister, Ariel Henry.¹⁹ Ariel Henry was eventually instructed by the U.N. and prominent ambassadors to Haïti to assume the presidency in July of that year; he has maintained the position despite not having been elected by the people. Currently, Henry still controls Haïti.²⁰

Following Henry's assumption of office, gang violence immediately surged—presently, gangs control about 75% of the nation's capital, Port-au-Prince, leading to the deaths of thousands and the displacement of hundreds of thousands more.²¹ Although some gangs operate independently, many are paid for and armed by corrupt government officials and politicians, who regard Haïti's weakened state under Henry as an opportunity to gain power, eliminate threats to their agenda, and earn extra money by taking hostages. Given that Port-au-Prince is, as the name would imply, a port, gangs have also been able to use it to import weapons. There are far more gang members than there are members of the police force, so there is little the Haïtian government can do alone.²² In October 2023, the United Nations Security Council approved

¹⁸ Lawless, "History of Haiti."

¹⁹ Rouzier, Georges H. 2021. "Haiti: Earthquake leaves mounting death toll, injuries and extensive damage." UN News, August 18, 2021. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1098032>.

²⁰ Lawless, "History of Haiti."

²¹ Anderson, Jon L. 2023. "Haiti Held Hostage." *The New Yorker*, July 17, 2023. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/07/24/haiti-held-hostage>.

²² Anderson, "Haiti Held Hostage."

Kenya's proposal to subdue Haïti's gangs by sending some of their own armed forces.²³ Despite these efforts, there is still much that must be done to stabilize the country.

III. UN ACTIONS

The most notable instance of UN involvement in Haïti was in 2004, when Resolution 1529 was passed and thus deployed a Multinational Interim Force (MIF) for Haiti. Shortly after, the UN also created a peacekeeping mission called the MINUSTAH, which took the MIF's role with the help of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Caribbean Community (CARIBCOM). This mission was headed by Brazilian & Chilean military commanders, but a substantial amount of troops came from Nepal.²⁴ As gang violence was prevalent, even at the time, these were not only attempts to stabilize the government but also to protect civilians and remove those responsible for the violence. The UN also investigated human rights abuses by the Haïtian government. Law and order were briefly restored, and the Justice Support Mission to Haïti (MINUJUSTH) took the MINUSTAH's place.²⁵ The mission was immensely controversial; UN peacekeepers sexually abused women and children (sometimes in exchange for food and money) and committed many human rights abuses, the very things the UN had sought to eradicate. Additionally, UN peacekeepers were found responsible for a Cholera outbreak, which has affected nearly 1 million people, because they dumped waste in rivers essential to supplying

²³ Coto, Dánica. 2023. "UN Security Council approves deploying a Kenya-led force to Haiti to fight gangs." PBS, October 2, 2023. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/un-security-council-approves-deploying-a-kenya-led-force-to-haiti-to-fight-gangs>.

²⁴ United Nations Peacekeeping. n.d. "MINUSTAH." United Nations Peacekeeping. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minustah>.

²⁵ The United Nations. 2019. "MINUJUSTH." United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti. <https://minujusth.unmissions.org/en>.

water for many Haïtian towns. Only in 2016 did the UN Secretary-General officially apologize for the latter issue.²⁶

In 2007, UN peacekeepers shot into the Cite Soleil square, which had been controlled by Haïtian gangs. Many civilians were killed in the incident—the UN considered it self-defense, but the witnesses did not.²⁷ Many other acts of violence were done against civilians by these peacekeeping troops.

The UN Security Council also passed a resolution creating the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH). This organization works in Port-au-Prince, where it aims to strengthen the government, ensure peace and stability, and protect human rights.²⁸

The UN Security Council resolution to send in Kenyan troops—as well as a few officers from Jamaica, the Bahamas, and Antigua and Barbuda—was drafted by the United States, and voted for by every country except for China and Russia, which both abstained.²⁹ The mission will take one year and is projected to start in January 2024 at the latest (although some Kenyans and Kenyan courts do not look favorably on this mission).³⁰ The United States has pledged to provide \$100 million to support this effort. This is the first the UN has gotten directly involved in Haïti since sending in the MINUSTAH. Many Haïtians are very apprehensive about the execution of this plan, given the UN’s previous involvement.

²⁶ Figueroa, Mariana C. n.d. “Peacekeeping in Haiti: Successes and Failures | The Pardee Atlas Journal of Global Affairs.” Boston University. <https://sites.bu.edu/pardeeatlas/advancing-human-progress-initiative/back2school/peacekeeping-in-haiti-successes-and-failures/>.

²⁷ Figueroa, “Peacekeeping in Haiti.”

²⁸ The United Nations. 2023. “About | BINUH.” BINUH. <https://binuh.unmissions.org/en/about>.

²⁹ Coto, “Kenya-led force”

³⁰ Agence France-Presse. 2023. “Kenya Court Puts Haiti Deployment on Temporary Hold.” VOA News, October 10, 2023. <https://www.voanews.com/a/kenya-court-puts-haiti-deployment-on-temporary-hold/7304179.html>.

IV. QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Who should control Haïti? Given the previous lack of success in holding non-fraudulent elections, ensuring that presidents do not become corrupt, and having smooth transitions of power, is there a solution? How might other nations get involved and help?
2. Should Kenyan troops continue to be in charge of stopping Haïti's gang violence? What other groups or countries might get involved via UN approval, and why?
3. How can Haïtian citizens be protected? Given the instability and lack of proper government control, what can humanitarian aid be provided? Could citizens be offered temporary asylum in other nations?
4. Given the history of unfortunate UN intervention in Haiti, and its lack of support within the nation, what can the UN do?
5. Should Spain, France, Britain, or the United States—all countries with a long history of intervention in Haïti—get involved or is it better to get aid from countries with little to no previous ties?

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