

## **HAITI NEWS ROUNDUP: MAY 8 – 17, 2006**

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### **Annan names Guatemalan diplomat as new head of UN mission in Haiti**

**China View News**

**May 17, 2006**

UNITED NATIONS, May 16 (Xinhua) -- UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has informed the Security Council that he will appoint the Guatemalan ambassador to the European Union, Edmond Mulet, as his new special representative in Haiti and head of the UN Stabilization Mission (MINUSTAH) there, a UN spokesman said Tuesday.

Mulet, who will succeed Juan Gabriel Valdes of Chile, has served as ambassador to the European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg since June 2000, negotiating tourism, trade and economic cooperation, as well as political issues. He has also taken part in preparing several summit meetings between the EU and the Latin American and Caribbean group.

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An active political presence in his country since 1976, Mulet has promoted human rights, democracy and the resolution of indigenous issues. When Guatemala was ruled by military regimes, he was forced to leave a number of times and was wrongly imprisoned for a short period in 1981 before winning the first of many elections to Guatemala's National Congress in 1982.

## **Governor General visits her family's hometown in Haiti**

**Tue, 16 May 2006**

**CBC News**

Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean paid an emotional visit to her family's hometown in Jacmel, Haiti, on Tuesday.

Jean said she wanted to bring hope to the people of the town where her mother and grandmother were born.

Jean was born in Port-au-Prince, but says she visited Jacmel many times before her family fled Haiti when she was 11 years old.

The Governor General was presented with the key to the town, and promised that she will use the key to open all doors.

Jean said she didn't want to be the focus of the visit.

"I want to see what the people are up to."

Residents relay their concerns

Jean was taken from event to event.

But outside a power plant she was due to inspect, Jean was greeted by local singers who waved signs saying, "Don't forget us."

Jean read the signs and then spent a couple of minutes joining the dancing.

Local residents Danielle Cornay and Beatrice Villeneuve said there are lots of problems in Jacmel.

"The power plant doesn't run all the time," they said. And they need better schools and health care.

At the last event of the morning, the Governor General was treated to a short concert at a school that is trying to keep children off the streets.

"Music," said Jean, "is important. It gives us hope."

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## **In Haiti, Jean speaks of hope over adversity**

**INGRID PERITZ**

**Globe and Mail, Canada**

**May 16, 2006**

Port-au-Prince — Governor-General Michaëlle Jean invoked the tenacity of her own grandmother, who sewed clothes and sold them on the street to put her children through school, as a source of inspiration for ordinary Haitians yesterday.

In a day that took her through the teeming streets of the Haitian capital to meet business leaders, students, women's groups and street vendors, Ms. Jean returned again and again to her message of hope over adversity.

She invoked the family matriarch, Dianira Oriol, who paid for her five children's education by selling homemade clothes on the sidewalks and marketplace of Jacmel.

She recalled her political exile to Quebec with her mother and sister, landing in a semi-basement apartment where "the only horizon is a sidewalk."

Ms. Jean looks like she belongs on a fashion runway and speaks a polished French that wouldn't be out of place in the Élysée Palace. But she repeatedly insisted on using creole, the language of the Haitian masses that's shunned by the country's elite, to reach out to her audiences.

In her speeches, Ms. Jean's family story of struggle against adversity became a metaphor for all of Haiti, which hopes the inauguration of its new President, René Préval, will begin to lift it out of years of misery and instability.

"For Haitians, hope has always been the golden rule of life," Ms. Jean said when addressing local business leaders. "Even when it was only held together by a thread."

She urged her audience to set aside their political differences to work for "a common good."

"We all share the same responsibility -- the responsibility that will put an end, once and for all, to despair in Haiti."

Her own Cinderella story, which took her from the basement apartment to Rideau Hall, has clearly touched people in her homeland.

As he introduced her to the business audience, a local official, Rosny Desroches, said Ms. Jean's trajectory proves that no situation in life is too desperate.

He invoked her parents' anguish when they decided to flee the Duvalier dictatorship in 1968, and "the sorrow of a little girl from the tropics who confronted the rigours of the Canadian winter.

"You showed resilience. You overcame adversity. Today, it's with honour and pride that the entire Haitian nation welcomes you."

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Ms. Jean seems intent on proving she is taking the largely ceremonial position of Governor-General beyond ribbon-cutting. After the pomp-filled swearing-in of President Préval, she decided to remain in Haiti.

"If I was only coming here for ceremony, I would be gone by now," she told reporters. "I'm not on holiday here."

Her deep roots and attachment to her homeland surfaced over and over.

She even brought up her daughter, Marie-Éden, adopted in Haiti, when speaking about orphaned children in the country.

"When I'm here, I see them, I see them in the streets. And I see my daughter."

Ms. Jean hopes her trip will draw Canada's attention to the many woes of Haiti, where half the nation is illiterate, the average Haitian earns \$390 (U.S.) a year, and life expectancy is 53.

"We know that misery can be a powder keg," she said.

Canada has contributed \$190-million in aid to Haiti in the past two years.

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## **Haiti welcomes Jean with love**

**May 16, 2006**

**FRANCINE KOPUN**

**The Toronto Star**

### **Governor General accepts praise wiping away tears Says mission is to bring hope to her country of birth**

Port-au-Prince—It was a day of high emotion in Haiti for Canadian Governor General Michaëlle Jean, as she neared the end of her four-day visit to the country where she was born and which remains close to her heart.

Hailed yesterday as a hometown hero in meetings with merchants, students and women's groups, Jean wiped away tears as she accepted lavish praise and revealed her difficult childhood. Raised by a single mother, who had herself been raised by a single mother of five, Jean said she knew adversity as a child. She and her family fled the murderous Duvalier regime in Haiti in 1968 when she was 11 and moved to small-town Quebec. Some of her neighbours had never seen a black person.

"Living in exile isn't easy — living with your mother and sister in a one-bedroom basement apartment, the sidewalk your only horizon," Jean said. "But there was a sense of pride, of dignity, and of will, and that's maybe what brought me here today."

She said her mother was a teacher in Haiti, but could not get work in her profession in Canada. She worked in a factory with other immigrants to support her two young girls.

Jean said her grandmother, who lived in the seaside town of Jacmel, laboured over a sewing machine day and night to make clothes to sell to put her five children through school.

Jean is scheduled to visit Jacmel today. Asked why she did not meet with children in the teeming slums of this impoverished city, Jean said those are not the images of Haiti she wants projected in the media.

"Believe me, I know Cité Soleil. I was born here; I'm from this country," she told Canadian journalists. She rejected the idea that she had come for Sunday's inauguration of President René Préval and had little to offer Haitians besides words.

"If I was only coming here for a ceremony I would be gone by now; the ceremony's over," she said. "I'm not going to Jacmel for personal reasons, or to visit my family. I'm not on holiday here."

Her purpose has been to bring hope to Haitians, who live in the poorest country in the Western hemisphere, and in that she seems to have succeeded.

Her speech about hope and peace was so well received at a meeting with the Haitian-Canadian Chamber of Commerce in the morning, that Haitian Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, who had been scheduled to speak after her, announced that he wouldn't be speaking at all.

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"After a speech like that, it's better to be quiet," he said, to peals of laughter from the audience.

She was lauded at the meeting as the most successful emigrant Haiti has known.

"They are numerous, our compatriots in the diaspora who have distinguished themselves here and there in the world, in literature, medicine, architecture and music. But no one among them, of either sex, has attained the summit where you sit so royally," said Frantz Liautaud, a Chamber of Commerce official.

In the afternoon, Jean met with university students who gave her a standing ovation.

"I have the impression, not only that this whole room loves you, but that it adores you," said Denis Régis, executive director at the Centre for Diplomatic and International Studies, and one of the organizers of the meeting with students.

Jean said she is not surprised at the strength of the support she enjoys among Haitians. She said that when she was appointed to the office, she was deluged with messages of support.

Asked to recall her childhood in the city, her anger at what was done to the people of her country resurfaced.

"It was Papa Doc, it was dictatorship. It was one of the worst moments in Haiti's history. Hundreds and thousands of people died," she said.

"It's part of my story. It's still in me."

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**UN urges Haiti's executive and legislative branches to cooperate**  
**Tuesday, May 16, 2006**  
**Caribbean Net News**

UNITED NATIONS, (AFP): The UN Security Council on Monday urged Haiti's executive and legislative branches to work together in a constructive manner following the swearing-in of President Rene Preval.

The 15-member body also stressed that "the timely holding of municipal, local and remaining parliamentary elections is fundamental to democratic governance."

In a statement read by its president for May, Congolese Ambassador Basile Ikouebe, the council highlighted the other challenges facing Haiti, "including the need to ensure a secure and stable environment, strengthen its democratic institutions, foster national reconciliation and political dialogue and protect human rights and the rule of law."

It also stressed the need to reform and strengthen the country's police, judiciary and correctional systems and to implement "highly visible and labor intensive projects that help create jobs and deliver basic social services."

Preval, a 63-year-old agronomist seen as a champion of the poor, was sworn in as president on Sunday, two years after his predecessor Jean Bertrand Aristide fled the impoverished Caribbean nation.

The mild-mannered moderate leftist took the oath of office for a five-year term at a ceremony in Port-au-Prince attended by foreign dignitaries and members of Haiti's newly elected parliament.

Preval, who was elected president on February 7 with 51 percent of the vote, enjoys wide support among the poor in the nation of eight million. He served as prime minister under Aristide and as president from 1996 to 2001.

A one-time ally of Aristide, Preval has distanced himself from the former president who resigned in the face of an armed rebellion and a loss of international support.

Aristide currently lives in exile in South Africa.

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## **Haitian-born Canadian figure inspires hometown**

**16 May 2006**

**Reuters Alertnet**

**By Tom Brown**

JACMEL, Haiti - A Haitian-born filmmaker who fled political violence as a child returned to her hometown on Tuesday as Canada's governor general hailed as an inspiration for Haiti's struggling people.

Canadian Governor-General Michaëlle Jean, the first black person to become the personal representative in Canada of head of state Britain's Queen Elizabeth, made her third visit to her hometown of Jacmel since her parents fled the "Papa Doc" Duvalier dictatorship in 1968.

She urged Haitians to throw their support behind newly installed President Rene Preval to help build a better future for the poorest nation in the Americas.

"The whole world wants to see Haiti seize this important moment and do what it takes to lift Haiti out of misery," Jean, 48, told townspeople packed into the tree-rimmed central square in Jacmel, the place she considers her hometown.

Onlookers said Jean's success was an example to them. "She's proof that being Haitian doesn't have to mean being a failure. That inspires us a lot" said Dorothy Belizaire, a 19-year-old high-school student.

Natalie St. Louis agreed. "She's a model of success that we would like to follow," she said.

Jean, who fled to Canada's French-speaking Quebec province when she was still a child and later became a documentary filmmaker, called on Haitians to join forces.

"The time for tensions and divisions is over," she said, speaking in Creole, to people in Jacmel.

The city of around 40,000 on the country's southern coast has relatively clean streets and reliable electricity supplies -- largely due to Canadian aid -- and contrasts starkly with the squalor and decay elsewhere,

Preval, who was installed on Sunday as Haiti's first democratically elected leader since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in an armed revolt more than two years ago, faces daunting challenges.

Eighty percent of Haitians live in abject poverty. Less than 2 percent of the Caribbean country's forest cover remains. And deep mistrust between the poor masses and a small wealthy elite has sparked frequent bloodshed and political instability that has so far undermined efforts to establish full democracy after decades of dictatorships.

(Additional reporting by Joseph Guyler Delva)

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## **World Bank official urges quick aid for Haiti**

**Mon May 15, 2006**

**Reuters**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters) - International donors must work quickly to help Haiti's new government stabilize the country and start tackling the desperate poverty and violence, a senior World Bank official said on Monday.

Heaping praise on President Rene Preval, who took office on Sunday, Caroline Anstey, World Bank Director for the Caribbean, called his election "a great beacon of hope" for Haiti.

Preval, a one-time ally of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, is Haiti's first democratically-elected leader in more than two years.

Sounding a similar note to Preval himself, Anstey said there were no short-term fixes for the poorest nation in the Americas. But a democratic election marked a new beginning for a country often seen as a poster child for failed states.

"Haiti will need long-term support and long-term resources to really be able to enter onto a path of sustainable development and break what has been a cycle of conflict, instability and poverty," Anstey told Reuters.

An aid umbrella group for Haiti -- a 26-member body known as the International Cooperation Framework -- will meet on May 26 in Brasilia to discuss calls by Preval for new funds.

Anstey suggested Preval had given the meeting a sense of urgency with recent warnings that Haiti's latest experiment with democracy, and the chance to build a better future, could be eroded by a lack of international support.

"I think there is a very strong feeling that the window of opportunity is there but it's not going to be there forever," said Anstey. "Both the new Haitian authorities and the donors need to move fast," she added.

Haiti needs far more aid than the estimated \$700 million that the ICF has paid out since \$1.08 billion was pledged in July 2004 and Anstey noted other unstable nations were competing for the same pool of international funds as Haiti.

"There is a lot of attention right now, rightly so, on Sudan, on Liberia, and there's continued attention on Afghanistan," said Anstey.

Anstey said donors have often lost interest in Haiti, where the average inhabitant lives on less than \$2 a day and over half are malnourished.

"Donors have had a history in Haiti of coming in with big money and, within two years, pulling out. We need to see that spigot of aid turned on and remain on," Anstey said.

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## **U.S. Participating in International Meetings To Help Haiti Rebuild Ministerial meeting in May precedes donors' conference in July**

**By Eric Green**

**Washington File Staff Writer**

**US State Department**

**May 16, 2006**

Washington -- The United States is participating in two upcoming international meetings to help Haiti meet many of its daunting economic and social challenges, officials at the U.S. State Department have confirmed.

A May 23 ministerial meeting is set for Brazil's capital of Brasilia, with the U.S. delegation at that event led by Thomas Shannon, assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, and Adolfo Franco, assistant administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean at the U.S. Agency for International Development. The World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the United Nations, the Organization of American States and other multilateral groups are among those expected at the meeting.

A State Department official said in an interview that the May 23 meeting in Brasilia will provide an opportunity to review the status of international financial assistance provided to Haiti over the last several years and to prepare for a donors' conference for Haiti in July. The exact date in July and site for that conference have yet to be finalized, the official said.

International financial aid to Haiti is being guided under what is called the Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF). In operation since July 2004, the ICF outlines Haiti's many needs, from restoring electricity services to feeding disadvantaged children and getting them to enroll in school.

Between July 2004 and the end of 2005, international donors had disbursed to Haiti some \$780 million, with the United States contributing \$277 million of that total. The United States is by far the world's leading donor to Haiti. (See related article.)

The Bush administration made a budget request on February 7 to the U.S. Congress for \$193 million in fiscal year 2007 for Haiti, for humanitarian aid and economic assistance. That request is pending in several committees in the Congress, another State Department official said.

### **SECURITY COUNCIL CONGRATULATES PRESIDENT PREVAL, NEW PARLIAMENT**

The U.N. Security Council congratulated Haiti's newly inaugurated President René Préval and the country's new parliament, and called on them to build a better future for the Caribbean country. Préval was sworn into office May 14.

Reviewing the list of challenges that the country faces, the Security Council highlighted "the need to ensure a secure and stable environment in Haiti, [and to] strengthen its democratic institutions, foster national reconciliation, inclusiveness and political dialogue, promote and protect human rights and the rule of law, and build governmental capacity." (See related article.)

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The Security Council also emphasized the need to reform and strengthen Haiti's law enforcement systems. In that regard, the Security Council said it looks forward to the results of discussions to be held between the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the new Haitian authorities on security-related issues.

The full text of the Security Council statement is available on the U.N. Web site.  
For additional information on U.S. policy, see Haiti.

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**Preval Sworn In as Haiti's President**  
**By Amelia Shaw**  
**Port-au-Prince**  
**15 May 2006**

On Sunday, Haiti swore in Rene Preval as its first democratically elected president since former president Jean Bertrand Aristide was forced into exile two years ago, following a bloody uprising. Analysts say President Preval is facing a difficult term in office.

Jubilant crowds greeted Mr. Preval as he made his way to the National Palace in downtown Port-au-Prince, shouting "long live Preval, long live Aristide!" It was a historic day for many Haitians, who hope that Mr. Preval will bring change to the impoverished country.

Rene Preval is sworn in in Port-au-Prince, Sunday  
The new president has widespread support among the poor, who see him as a close ally of exiled president Jean Bertrand Aristide.

While foreign dignitaries moved between the parliament and the palace, hundreds of U.N. peacekeeping troops patrolled the capital.

In his inaugural address, Mr. Preval appealed for peace. He said the future of Haiti is in the hands of all Haitians, but they will need the support of the international community.

The inauguration drew international attention, with many countries sending dignitaries. Governor of the U.S. state of Florida and President Bush's brother, Jeb Bush, was in attendance. He said Haiti's future will depend on its ability to establish law and order.

"I hope and believe again under the leadership of the new president there will be greater security, which will make it possible for more prosperity, more jobs created, and more economic prosperity," he said.

Besides establishing stability, analysts say Mr. Preval must begin a process of social and political reconciliation to bridge the enormous gap between the rich and poor. Haiti has a tiny minority of wealthy elite, but eight out of 10 people live on less than a dollar a day.

While mostly peaceful, the inauguration day was not without incident. Shortly before the ceremony began, a riot broke out in the national prison, shattering the fragile peace in the capital. U.N. troops quickly restored order.

The United Nations deployed its peacekeepers in Haiti in 2004 to help stabilize the turbulent country.

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## **Haiti poor fear new president may turn against them**

**By Joseph Gyler Delva and Tom Brown**

**Reuters**

**Washington Post**

**Monday, May 15, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (Reuters) - As their new president took office, some among Haiti's poor majority who helped propel him into power fear he may soon be distanced from them or "hijacked" by the Caribbean nation's tiny but wealthy elite.

Rene Preval, 63, won a February election largely because he is seen, like ousted former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, as a champion of the poor. His most vociferous opponents were the impoverished nation's business and light-skinned upper classes.

He spent the first few hours in office on Sunday among diplomats and the wealthy, however, while the masses huddled in sweltering heat behind a fence surrounding the ramshackle capital's ornate presidential palace.

The crowd jammed into Port-au-Prince's central plaza grew angry when told they would not be allowed to watch Preval give his inaugural address unless they stood behind cement barriers erected well away from the palace gates.

They eventually surged forward anyway, ignoring orders from the police. Many were pinned by the weight of the crowd against the palace's gates and wrought iron fence, only to be pushed back by police in a noisy and sweat-soaked sea of humanity.

"We voted for Preval, now they are telling us that we can't see him deliver his inaugural speech," complained Marline Joinville, 20, one of the many hoping to get a glimpse of Haiti's first elected president in more than two years.

While the people were in the streets, she said, "those who used to kill us, who used to try to prevent Preval from becoming president, are inside."

Well-wishers at a party thrown in the gardens of the palace after Preval's address included former dictator Prosper Avril and outgoing Prime Minister Gerard Latortue, who headed an interim government installed after Aristide fled into exile, facing an armed revolt, in February 2004.

The interim administration has been accused of human rights violations against Aristide's -- and now Preval's -- supporters in the slums.

Preval paid tribute to both Latortue and outgoing President Boniface Alexandre in his inaugural address, saying they had organized the election under difficult circumstances. But Preval himself has said the election was marred by fraud aimed at preventing him from taking office, and the crowd jeered and gave a thumbs-down on hearing his mention of the two.

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"Preval should bar those people from leaving the country and arrest them," said Lesly Cherubin, a young man wearing a T-shirt with Preval's image emblazoned across his chest.

"The bourgeoisie wants to hijack the president. They are all over him, while, we, who elected him, can't even see him," Cherubin said.

The United States, a powerful foreign player in Haiti that was accused of undermining Aristide, has welcomed Preval's election and Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, the U.S. president's younger brother, attended Sunday's inauguration.

U.S. officials have warned Preval not to bring Aristide back from exile, but demands for just that rang out outside the palace and the Parliament building where Preval was sworn in.

"Whether they want it or not, Aristide should come back," chanted the demonstrators outside Parliament.

The crowd also chanted "long live Preval." But analysts say that could change if he blocks the return of Aristide, who is despised by the elite as much as he is beloved by the masses.

A one-time ally of Aristide, Preval has said there's nothing to prevent the fiery Roman Catholic priest from returning from his exile in South Africa

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## **Haiti's New President Urges People to Make Peace Through Dialogue**

**By VOA News**

**15 May 2006**

Haiti's new president, Rene Preval, has urged his nation's divided people to make peace through dialogue, two years after an armed uprising ousted former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Mr. Preval made the appeal Sunday in his inaugural address to thousands of supporters outside the presidential palace in the capital, Port-au-Prince. He said the solutions to the country's problems are in Haitians' own hands.

Mr. Preval took his oath of office at a ceremony in Haiti's parliament, attended by foreign dignitaries such as President Bush's brother - Florida Governor Jeb Bush - and Canadian Governor-General Michaëlle Jean.

Shortly before the ceremony, gunfire was heard at a nearby prison where some inmates had climbed onto the roof. Police quelled the disturbance, and the atmosphere in Port-au-Prince remained largely festive.

Mr. Preval won the country's presidential elections in February. The 63-year-old leader replaces an interim government backed by United Nations peacekeepers from Brazil.

Mr. Preval has promised to help reunify the Caribbean nation, which has suffered waves of violence since Mr. Aristide fled into exile in 2004.

It is the second time Mr. Preval has served as Haiti's president. His first term was from 1996 to 2001.

**Preval to lead Haiti again**  
**By Stevenson Jacobs**  
**Associated Press**  
**San Jose Mercury News**  
**May 15, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Rene Preval, the only elected president in Haiti's history to finish his term, was sworn in Sunday to again lead the impoverished nation in its latest attempt at democracy after decades of armed uprisings, lawlessness and foreign intervention.

Preval took the oath of office in a sweltering, packed parliament chamber. Afterward, he stood and waved as about 300 legislators and foreign dignitaries, including Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, Canadian Gov. General Michaëlle Jean and the actor Danny Glover, gave him a standing ovation.

The inauguration was the final step in Haiti's return to democratic rule two years after a bloody revolt ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and plunged the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation into chaos.

In his inaugural address later outside the national palace, Preval urged unity among Haiti's fractured society and a return to peace after the February 2004 revolt.

``We need to make peace through dialogue and talking to each other so we can decide where we want to go together," Preval said. ``If we don't talk, then we will only fight and there will be no peace."

Thousands cheered Preval, pressing up against the green iron gates surrounding the palace and waving Haitian flags as dozens of U.N. peacekeepers stood guard. Others danced and sang as traditional bands snaked through the crowd playing homemade horns and drums.

Preval urged Haitians to help maintain security so the country could create jobs, build roads and hospitals and move forward ``without the presence of foreign troops."

``Haitian people, the solution to our problems is in our hands," he said. ``Please help me, help the country, help yourself."

Preval, who governed Haiti from 1996 to 2001 and replaces a U.S.-backed interim government appointed after the revolt, is a former Aristide ally and champion of Haiti's poor.

The 63-year-old agronomist faces big challenges, including a corrupt state bureaucracy, a wrecked economy, roiling insecurity and the plight of prisoners.

Hours before the inauguration, prisoners demanding their freedom rioted at Haiti's national penitentiary, about a half-mile from the parliament building. There was no official word on casualties, though scores of inmates massed on the roof holding what appeared to be two dead bodies.

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**Préval inaugurated in Haiti**  
**By Los Angeles Times and Knight-Ridder Newspapers**  
**The Seattle Times**  
**May 15, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — René Préval was sworn in as Haiti's president for the second time Sunday, restoring legitimacy to the troubled nation's government after more than two years of anarchy and violence that followed the flight of Jean-Bertrand Aristide to escape an armed rebellion.

A soft-spoken agronomist and the only president ever to serve out his full term, Préval, who previously served from 1996 to 2001, inherits a nation occupied by foreign peacekeepers, in economic shambles and deeply conflicted over the legacy and future of Aristide.

In a ceremony at the Parliament that hasn't functioned properly in five years, the red-and-blue presidential sash was bestowed on Préval, who then appealed in a 15-minute speech for national unity and social peace to pull Haiti out of its misery.

"Only we Haitians can solve our main problem, which is division. We have to work together. Foreigners can't do that for us," he said.

While the inauguration was attended by 300 Haitian and foreign dignitaries including Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, average Haitians thronged the streets, their ears bent to radios to follow the fanfare. Thousands amassed outside the National Palace to cheer as the presidential party arrived for a reception and another brief address by Préval to those gathered on the manicured lawn or listening from behind the wrought-iron fences.

Blocks from the inauguration ceremony, inmates rioted Sunday at the National Penitentiary, where an estimated 80 percent of detainees have not seen a judge. Dozens of prisoners reached the roof and said they expected to be released now that Préval is president. U.N. soldiers stormed in to restore order.

Préval and Aristide were leaders of the democratic movement that ousted Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier 20 years ago.

Préval's first presidency was paralyzed by political opposition in the parliament and the sense that his mentor, Aristide, was the real power behind the throne.

This time around, Préval, whose base is among the poor masses, has courted the Haitian business community and international donors in hopes of easing those old hostilities. He has traveled to Washington to seek trade preferences and aid, to Cuba for medical help, to the Dominican Republic to ease tensions along the border and to Venezuela for cheaper oil — 100,000 barrels of which arrived this weekend.

For now, he appears to have the support of most key sectors, both at home and abroad. But many observers say he must act quickly to maintain that delicate cohesion in such a fractured society.

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More than half the country lives on 44 U.S. cents per day per capita, according to the World Bank. A half-million children have no access to primary school. Only 10 percent of Haitians have electricity, and less than 50 percent have access to clean drinking water.

Haiti ranks among the poorest and least-developed countries in the world, behind war-ravaged nations like Congo, Sudan and East Timor.

Foreign observers say Préval must establish transparent and effective governance to open the flow of foreign aid — including \$554 million in financing available from the Inter-American Development Bank.

Some urgent measures widely agreed upon: increase the number of hours of electricity in the cities; work with the U.N. peacekeepers to vet police officers and disarm gangs and former soldiers; restore water and sanitation services; revamp the public-education system in which teaching is often rote, standards are inconsistent and fees prevent nearly half of Haiti's children from attending; promote rural and agricultural development; and improve the collection of taxes from the business sector and upper classes.

Haitian leaders are also pinning their hopes on the so-called HOPE Act before the U.S. Congress, which would give some Haitian exports preferential access to U.S. markets. Préval has said the bill could create up to 80,000 jobs.

Perhaps the diciest political subject facing Préval is Aristide, who is living in exile in South Africa. Aristide's more vigilant supporters want him to return, and could paralyze the country with violence if they do not get their way. Foreign diplomats are strongly discouraging his return, seeing it as potentially destabilizing.

Préval has been coy on the subject but reportedly has told U.S. and other diplomats that he does not favor Aristide's return.

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## **New Haiti leader appeals for peace**

**By Manuel Roig-Franzia**

**Washington Post**

**May 15, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE -- President René Préval pleaded with Haitians to bring peace to the Western Hemisphere's poorest country as he was inaugurated yesterday during a ceremony that drew thousands to the whitewashed National Palace and marked the return of democratic rule in Haiti.

Crowds sang "Préval, Préval, we've been waiting for you" at each stop in the four-hour event, which his supporters hope will set Haiti on a new course two years after the violent ouster of Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Signs of the chaotic situation inherited by Préval -- a soft-spoken agronomist who once owned a bakery in Port-au-Prince -- were everywhere: As he prepared to be inaugurated, inmates at a central Port-au-Prince jail known for holding political prisoners protested, occupying a rooftop and chanting "we want justice."

The power briefly went out during a Catholic Mass Préval attended as part of the ceremony; Port-au-Prince was without electricity for much of the week before the inauguration and has persistent supply problems.

Later, at the National Palace, a crowd of invited guests and passers-by overwhelmed security guards, pushing past metal detectors and streaming across the gated compound. They arrived at the palace after traversing streets guarded by heavily armed United Nations soldiers and tanks.

Known for his brevity, Préval spoke for less than 10 minutes, prescribing a one-word solution for a nation plagued by political turmoil: "peace."

"The answer is simple, the answer is clear: We have to build peace," Préval said, drawing cheers. "If we don't talk to each other, we're going to fight each other."

Préval, who served as Haiti's president from 1996 to 2001, took his second oath of office after being draped with a red and blue sash at the national parliament building.

In a symbolically charged moment, he left the building at the side of outgoing president Boniface Alexander, who headed the US-backed interim government put in place after Aristide fled into exile.

The democratic succession was only the second in Haiti's tumultuous 202-year history. Préval's inauguration in 1996 was the first.

Préval faces huge challenges trying to bring order to a nation that the nonprofit International Crisis Group calls "a perennial candidate for failed state status."

Préval has kept expectations low and has asked for the patience of Haitians, particularly the poor who turned out in large numbers to elect him Feb. 7.

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During a recent visit to the United Nations, he asked the donor nations that have kept Haiti solvent to make a 25-year commitment. An international donor conference is set for July.

Préval was declared winner of the presidential election after an internationally brokered agreement ended days of fiery protests and averted a runoff.

Since then, he has traveled extensively, including visits to Venezuela and Cuba, which have strained relations with the United States. He secured a preferential oil deal with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez; a Venezuelan oil freighter sat off shore prepared to make the first delivery yesterday.

The United States was represented by Governor Jeb Bush, Republican of Florida, which has the largest Haitian American population in the country.

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## **René Préval Is Inaugurated as President in Uneasy Haiti**

**By REUTERS**

**The New York Times**

**May 15, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, May 14 (Reuters) — President René Préval took office and appealed for peace in Haiti on Sunday as his troubled Caribbean nation inaugurated its first democratically elected leader since Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled more than two years ago.

Scores of people chanted for Mr. Aristide's return from exile in South Africa as Mr. Préval took the oath of office.

Shortly before the ceremony, the police and United Nations peacekeepers fired tear gas at the nearby National Penitentiary to quell a riot.

Mr. Préval, a 63-year-old agronomist who was president of Haiti from 1996 to 2001, takes the place of a United States-backed interim administration appointed after Mr. Aristide left Haiti in February 2004 in the face of a rebellion and under pressure from Washington and Paris to quit.

Mr. Préval appealed for peace in Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas. Haiti is struggling to establish a stable democracy after decades of dictatorship and military rule and recent political violence that took hundreds of lives.

"If we don't talk to each other, we are going to fight each other, and there will be no peace," he said on the steps of the National Palace. "Peace is what we need. Peace is the key to opening all the doors."

Tens of thousands of Haitians viewed the ceremony under the watchful eyes of blue-helmeted United Nations peacekeepers perched on rooftops.

No foreign leaders attended the inauguration, but guests included Canada's Haitian-born governor general, Michaëlle Jean, and Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida.

Mr. Préval took office more than two months after he was declared the winner of the chaotic Feb. 7 presidential election, a vote he claimed was tainted by fraud.

Haiti's capital was under tight security with about 4,500 Haitian police officers and United Nations peacekeepers perched on armored vehicles and patrolling the streets.

Shortly before Mr. Préval took the oath, the police and troops fired tear gas to halt a riot at the overcrowded penitentiary. Prisoners said as many as 12 people were killed in the uprising, but officials said several inmates were only wounded.

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**Prison riot mars Haitian president's inauguration**  
**CTV.ca News Staff**  
**May 14, 2006**

A prison riot just 800 metres away almost overshadowed the inauguration of Haitian President Rene Preval.

"It's very intense," said CTV's Lisa LaFlamme, reporting from Port-au-Prince on Sunday. "This is a prison that can hold about 800 people. Instead there are 2000 inmates. There's so much unrest because only about 40 of them have actually been charged with anything."

Inmates paraded what appeared to be two dead bodies from the prison's walls and called for amnesties for political prisoners jailed during the uprising against the last president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Outside, relatives screamed for calm.

UN soldiers fired tear gas into the compound.

LaFlamme said there was a heavy security presence outside the prison, and UN peacekeepers and police had surrounded the facility.

The inauguration

Upon being sworn in, Preval called on his citizens to make peace so Haiti, the Western hemisphere's poorest country, could emerge from its misery.

"Please help me, help the country, help yourself," he said.

About 300 foreign dignitaries were there to watch the ceremony, including Canada's Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean, who was born in Haiti. Canada has provided \$190 million in aid in the past two years and has 125 RCMP officers there helping train the Haitian police.

Some other notables present included Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and American actor Danny Glover.

Preval's inauguration marks Haiti's return to democratic rule two years after a bloody revolt culminated with the exile of Aristide, a former ally of Preval. Aristide now lives in South Africa.

Aristide supporters gathered outside the ceremony. They held up his portrait and calling for his return from exile. They chanted "Aristide's blood is our blood!" and "We want him back!"

Preval has said that Aristide or any other Haitian citizen can enter the country, although he wouldn't say if he would welcome the ex-president's return.

The U.S., a significant financial supporter of Haiti, has made it clear that it opposes Aristide's return.

Preval has a minority government. While the poor like him, the wealthy elite do not.

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The 63-year-old agronomist, who served as president from 1996-2001, has pledged to unite Haitian society and restore peace.

"Today, we have to sit down together and make peace between us in order to emerge as a country without foreign troops," Preval told the crowd, garnering widespread applause. "Haitian people, the solutions to our problems are in our hands... we don't need anyone's help."

Experts say that Preval's political skills will determine whether the one-time French colony can move toward stability or remain dysfunctional.

"We're hoping he'll do what he says he will," said Charles Henri Baker, a businessman and the third-place presidential finisher. "If so, Haiti will be off to a good start."

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**Editorial: Canada's Haiti test**  
**The Toronto Star**  
**May 16, 2006**

Haitian President René Préval preached a message of peace, prosperity and hope during his inaugural address this week.

And Haiti's spirits have indeed been buoyed by the Feb. 7 election that brought a moderate politician to the presidency and restored democracy in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country.

But 8.5 million people cannot dine on hope alone. That's why Canada and other international donors who profess an interest in Haiti's welfare must help the new government provide security, schooling, health care, and jobs for the very poorest in order to narrow the country's calamitous rich-poor gap.

Haiti's need far outstrips current assistance pledges of \$1.3 billion (U.S.), only a fraction of which has been delivered to date.

The Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola and has a comparable population, generates \$17 billion in wealth a year, in comparison to Haiti's \$4 billion. Restoring hope in Haiti cannot be done on the cheap.

While Governor General Michaëlle Jean's presence at Préval's swearing-in was a high-profile token of Canada's goodwill, Ottawa can and should do more. Haiti may be "the largest beneficiary" of Canadian aid in the hemisphere, but even at that our per capita help is modest.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper recently pledged \$48 million (Canadian) more in reconstruction and development aid, for a total of \$238 million in the past two years. That is less than \$15 a year per capita. It is spread thinly, to help small business and farms, ease debt and strengthen democracy. We have also sent 125 police trainers.

Despite the presence of 9,000 United Nations personnel, troops and police, Haiti is fated to remain "a perennial candidate for failed state status" unless it gets more aid, warns the International Crisis Group, which analyzes global conflicts.

Harper should step up Canada's aid in the run-up to a crucial donors conference in July in Port-au-Prince. He also should challenge the United States and other "friends of Haiti" to do the same.

Donors should commit to a stable 10-year governance and development pact. Under former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, official foreign aid all but dried up between 2000 and his ouster in 2004. That hurt the poor and fuelled unrest.

Préval must move quickly to give Haiti's poor a sense that jobs and social help are on the way, even as he reassures the wealthy elite that they are not threatened by his regime.

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He needs to fix Haiti's crumbling power grid, preserve calm in the capital, create jobs, pay civil servants, provide affordable schooling for the poor, reform the police and courts and disarm gangs. But Préval cannot do any of it with empty hands.

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**Security Council hails Haiti's new Government while noting challenges ahead**  
**UN News Centre**  
**May 16, 2006**

15 May 2006 – The United Nations Security Council today congratulated Haiti's newly inaugurated President, his Government and the new parliamentarians and called on them to build a better future for the Caribbean country and to finish the cycle of municipal, local and remaining parliamentary elections.

In a statement on President René García Prével's inauguration yesterday, the Council president for the month of May, Ambassador Basile Ikouébé of the Republic of Congo, underscored the importance of the mandate given to newly elected parliamentarians by the Haitian people "to work constructively to build a better future for their country."

Towards that end, the Council urged the executive and legislative powers "to establish a fruitful and collaborative relationship," Mr. Ikouébé said.

The Council stressed that holding municipal, local and the remaining parliamentary elections in a timely fashion was fundamental to democratic governance.

Reviewing the list of challenges which the country faces and which Mr. Prével has pledged to tackle, the Council highlighted "the need to ensure a secure and stable environment in Haiti, strengthen its democratic institutions, foster national reconciliation, inclusiveness and political dialogue, promote and protect human rights and the rule of law, and build governmental capacity."

It also emphasized the need to reform and strengthen Haiti's law enforcement systems. In that regard, the Council looked forward to the results of the discussions between the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the new authorities on security-related issues.

The Council repeated that the country needed the quick implementation of highly visible and labour intensive projects that help to create jobs and deliver basic social services and it looked forward to the upcoming donors' ministerial meeting to be held in Brasilia, Brazil, on 23 May.

The intention of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to reintegrate Haiti fully into its activities was welcome, the Council said, also expressing its appreciation for the contribution of the Organization of the American States (OAS) to the electoral process.

"In this regard, the Council supports the commitment of the new Haitian authorities to enhance cooperation with regional partners in order to address issues related to regional stability," the President said.

The Council also thanked Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Special Representative, Juan Gabriel Valdés, for his dedication to the success of the UN presence in Haiti.

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## **Haiti asks for UN peace force to remain**

**Mylena Fiori**

**Agência Brasil**

**May 16, 2006**

Brasília - Since April, 2004, the United Nations (UN) has maintained a stabilization force in Haiti. At that time the blue helmets replaced a temporary military force composed of troops from the United States, Chile, Canada, and France. The UN has extended the mission's mandate several times. In February the Council approved a six-month extension to cover the transition period between the provisional government and the inauguration of president-elect René Preval.

"The UN peace forces, especially the peace forces from Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, play an essential role in the maintenance of peace and security here. President Preval has reaffirmed the need for our forces to be maintained," observed Brazilian ambassador, Paulo Cordeiro, this Sunday (14), prior to the ceremony to inaugurate the new president.

Translation: David Silberstein

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**Give Preval a Clean Slate: Cancel Haiti's Debt**

**by Jubilee USA Network \* [www.jubileeusa.org](http://www.jubileeusa.org) Monday, May. 15, 2006 at 7:34 PM  
May 12, 2006**

**Contact: Debayani Kar, 202-783-0215, 202-246-8143**

**Neil Watkins, 202-783-0129, 202-421-1023**

**Rich Nations Must Cancel Impoverished Nation's Debt, Leftover from Duvalier Era  
San Francisco Bay Area Indymedia**

WASHINGTON – Jubilee USA Network, the US arm of the global movement for debt cancellation in impoverished countries, released the following statement today:

“Haiti’s massive debt burden of \$1.4 billion is both unpayable and unjust, and Jubilee USA Network calls on this odious debt to be cancelled immediately. The newly elected president Rene Preval, who is set to take office this Sunday, May 14, campaigned on a platform of alleviating the misery of the country’s impoverished majority. This majority will not see any benefit from new economic programs without first obtaining 100% cancellation of its external debt. Much of Haiti’s debt was contracted under 30 years of Duvalier regimes, notorious for their human rights abuses and opulent lifestyle financed by Haiti’s poor and by foreign assistance.

“Haitians cannot afford to continue to service their debt burden. In 2005, the Haitian government spent more than \$70 million on debt payments, a significant portion of its budget. Yet less than half of the population has access to basic rights such as healthcare, education, and potable water. The World Bank estimates that three-quarters of Haiti’s 8 million people live in poverty; half the population lives on less than US\$1 per day. This past Tuesday, Haiti’s newly elected Parliament was sworn in by candlelight, because of persistent blackouts in Port-au-Prince.

“Though the country was added in April to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank’s debt relief program, under the program’s onerous economic policy conditions, Haiti will not see irrevocable debt cancellation for three or more years. Even the World Bank’s optimistic estimates assert that Haiti will qualify for cancellation only in 2009. Policies other countries have been mandated to implement to qualify for initial debt relief and then full cancellation include privatization of water and electricity. Haiti already ‘opened up’ its economy in the 1990’s – its tariffs are lower than the US’s – with disastrous results. Haiti cannot wait years or suffer through more such policies to see its debt cancelled; delays to debt cancellation cost lives.

“The illegitimate origins of Haiti’s debt provide another compelling argument for cancellation. More than half the country’s debt was contracted by the Duvalier family dictatorship (1957-1986). Harvard economist Michael Kremer reports that Jean-Claude Duvalier stole \$900 million from the Haitian people. According to a 2006 UN sponsored census, half of Haiti’s population was born after the Duvalier era and forced to carry this debt burden from birth. The Haitian people were not consulted about these loans, and received little benefit from them. But now they are forced to repay them. Such “odious” debt must be cancelled.

“Given the harsh realities faced by the Haitian people today, the people of Haiti need a clean slate to have any hope of meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or achieve sustainable development. We join with Haitian civil society groups in calling on creditors, especially at the IMF,

World Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank, to cancel Haiti's debt, immediately and without harmful economic conditions attached."

Jubilee USA Network is the US arm of the international movement working for debt cancellation for impoverished nations. Jubilee USA is a network of 75 religious denominations and faith-based groups, labor groups, environmental organizations, and community and advocacy groups working for freedom from debt and economic justice for countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

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**Haiti joins Petrocaribe  
Venezuela sends fuel to Haiti  
El Universal, Venezuela  
May 15, 2006**

Venezuelan Executive Vice-President José Vicente Rangel and the new Haitian President René Prével Sunday initialed an agreement for Haiti to join Petrocaribe, following Prével's inauguration.

In Port-au-Prince, Rangel attended Prével's inauguration on behalf of President Hugo Chávez, who is currently touring Europe and North Africa.

Following the inauguration ceremony, Rangel and Prével signed the Energy Cooperation Agreement between the Republic of Haiti and Petrocaribe.

Rangel said Haiti joined the mechanism under the same terms as the other members, but the flexibilization of some conditions for Haiti is under consideration.

Under the energy initiative, Haiti is to pay 60 percent of oil bills within 90 days, while it will repay the remaining 40 percent in 25 years, at one percent interest rate and a two-year grace period.

With this agreement, Venezuela is to meet Haiti daily fuel demand of 11,000 bpd. Venezuela is to provide 7,000 bpd under Petrocaribe, and 4,000 bpd under the Agreement of San José.

Venezuela is also to donate 120 monthly tons of asphalt for 12 months, to complete paving works all through the island.

Rangel claimed that Venezuela does not intend to use these agreements to get a grip on Haiti, but to contribute to social and political growth in this nation.

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## **Haiti prepares to inaugurate new president amid heavy security**

**Canadian Press**

**Associated Press**

**Saturday, May 13, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) - UN troops increased patrols and workers swept trash-strewn streets Saturday as foreign dignitaries began arriving for the inauguration of Haitian president-elect Rene Preval.

Delegations from some 40 countries were expected for Sunday's swearing-in ceremony, the last step in the impoverished Caribbean country's return to democratic rule two years after a revolt toppled former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Preval, a former Aristide ally and champion of Haiti's poor, has pledged to unite the country's fractured society and restore the peace that vanished after Aristide fled into exile.

But observers said the 63-year-old former president will have to overcome big challenges, including a corrupt state bureaucracy, a wrecked economy and roiling insecurity.

The UN envoy to Haiti, Juan Gabriel Valdes, said one of Preval's main priorities should be fixing Haiti's broken justice system.

"In Haiti, impunity is quasi total for many criminals who roam free, while the innocent and those wrongly accused of a crime stagnate in prisons," Valdes wrote in an editorial published Saturday in Montreal's *Le Devoir* newspaper.

In the Haitian capital, work crews cleaned trash from gutters as 4,500 UN troops and Haitian police in armoured personnel carriers and on foot began cordoning off downtown areas where the ceremony will be held.

Preval will take the oath of office before members of Haiti's legislature, which was only installed this week. He will then attend a special mass at the capital's cathedral before addressing citizens on the lawn of the national palace.

Jela Altius, a 31-year-old food vendor, said she wants Preval to improve security.

"We want to be able to go out at any time of day and not worry that something is going to happen to us," Altius said.

Among the foreign officials who arrived Saturday was Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean, who was born in Haiti.

Experts said Preval's skills at governing and healing Haiti's deep social rifts will largely determine if the former French colony can move toward stability or remain mired in turmoil and despair.

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Preval, who also ran Haiti from 1996 to 2001, has begun reaching out to rival political parties in a bid to cobble together a coalition in Haiti's legislature, which has members from 16 political parties. He has also sought ties with members of Haiti's business elite, some of whom opposed Aristide and campaigned against Preval.

"We're hoping he'll do what he says he will. If so, Haiti will be off to a good start," said Charles Henri Baker, a wealthy industrialist and the third-place presidential finisher.

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**New Orleans was changed forever by events in Haiti that took place over 200 years ago**  
**By Mary LaCoste, Contributing Writer**  
**Louisiana Weekly**  
**May 15, 2006**

The Historic New Orleans Collection is featuring an unforgettable exhibit, Common Routes: Saint Domingue - Louisiana, showing now until June 30.

Many locals have been amazed to find out how much the bloody revolution in Saint Domingue, now called Haiti, enriched New Orleans' culture and population. Refugees who left the island two centuries ago found new homes in South Louisiana, and their descendants are here today, sometimes unaware of their Haitian roots.

And they came in large numbers, too. Between 1794 and 1810, rich and poor, black and white, free and enslaved flocked to the shores of South Louisiana from the wealthiest of the French colonies that maintained close ties to Paris. Among them were highly educated persons of color who became community leaders, teachers and writers. They also brought with them a renewed interest in an old African naturalistic religion . . . Voodoo.

The exhibit at the Historic New Orleans Collection displays the evidence of the influences felt in New Orleans. One is a remarkable book of romantic poetry, *Les Cenelles*, written by a talented group of free persons of color with family roots in San Domingue. The family of A.P. Tureaud rescued the copy of the book in the exhibit from obscurity.

The marriage certificate of the legendary Marie Laveau is featured. A New Orleans native, she acquired much of her knowledge of Voodoo from a man from Haiti, a land with a rich tradition of Voodoo beliefs and practices. Documents about her life are nestled in an alcove between rooms of paintings, artifacts and portraits. Names of the families mentioned are familiar to families here today.

A startling fact revealed by the exhibit explains why Napoleon sold Louisiana to the US. His troops were beaten so badly by the Haitian revolutionaries that he wanted to rid himself of his colonies in the New World. The result was the Louisiana Purchase. Another fact answers the question of why wealthy Haitians were allowed to bring their slaves with them after the time the US had banned the importation of slaves from other countries. It seems that the first Governor of Louisiana, W.C.C. Claiborne, argued that since Louisiana was still a territory, not yet a state, the law did not apply.

The exhibit is divided into three parts. A large exhibit room displays a collection of paintings by one of the twentieth century's most notable African American artists, Jacob Lawrence. It details the progress of the revolutionaries, for the most part, freed slaves, who aspired to the motto of the French revolution, "Liberty, equality, fraternity." It follows the rise to power of General Toussaint Louverture, their leader. The paintings, on loan from Amistad, are vivid, dramatic and convey the spirit of the times.

There is a video playing that reacquaints visitors with the actions of Napoleon and the historical facts surrounding the period. The heart of the exhibit is on the second floor (elevator provided) and includes

several rooms. This part requires a \$10 ticket but is free to Louisiana residents between 4:30 and 7:30 on Wednesdays.

The exhibit closes June 30. Schools groups are free and will be shown through by knowledgeable guides. Common Routes: Saint Domingue-Louisiana was planned as a major exhibit long before Katrina struck. Attendance has been slow, even by school groups, perhaps because people here have so many other things on their minds. Those that have come have felt a kinship to those refugees of long ago, perhaps because they have had a taste of what it is like to be a refugee.

Location: 533 Royal Street, New Orleans

Hours: 9:30 - 4:30 Tuesday through Saturday

Tel: 504-523-4662

Tickets: Free downstairs and \$10 for upstairs

exhibits, all is free for LA residents on

Wednesdays, 4:30 til 7:30

Special event: Wednesday evening, May 17,

Haitian dancing demonstrations

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## **Haitian President René Préval is inaugurated**

**By JOE MOZINGO**

**Miami Herald**

**Sunday May 14, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE - Réne Préval, a quiet bakery owner who five years ago became the only elected president to leave office after a full term, was sworn in again as president today, restoring constitutional rule to Haiti for the first time since an armed rebellion forced President Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile two years ago.

Préval's inauguration brings the troubled nation a rare glimpse of hope in a bleak 202-year history of predatory rule, perpetual insurrection, crushing poverty and scant development.

On the steps of the National Palace, in front of thousands of people, Préval urged Haitians to stop fighting each other and begin talking about how to rebuild.

"We have to make peace," he said. "We have to have a dialogue ... Peace is the key to open doors -- the door of investment to create jobs and employment, the door for tourists to come the country, for roads, more schools, more hospitals."

Florida Gov. Jeb Bush led the U.S. delegation to the inauguration ceremony, which took place in the sweltering parliamentary chambers. Also in attendance were Canadian Governor General Michaëlle Jean, Actor Danny Glover, OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza and Venezuelan Vice President José Vicente Rangel.

"This means new beginning, a new sense of purpose," said Glover, who was a vocal supporter of Aristide, in an interview. "What's really important is that all the resources that have been promised, promised, promised to Haiti will be given to it."

The Archbishop in Port-au-Prince said Haiti was at a historic crossroads after "20 years of deceit" since the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship.

Préval, whose political support comes largely from Haiti's poor, has courted the country's elite and business community in hopes of easing deep hostilities that exploded during Aristide's rule. He has traveled to Washington to seek trade preferences and aid, to Venezuela for cheaper oil, to Cuba for medical relief and to the Dominican Republic to ease tensions along the border.

For now, he appears to have the support of most key sectors, both at home and abroad. But many observers say he must act quickly to maintain that delicate cohesion in such a fractured society.

"There is a unique and very rare hope for Haiti with this election, and this inauguration, and he has to take advantage of that quickly," said Mark Schneider, a senior vice president of the International Crisis Group, a Brussels-based think tank that monitors conflicts around the world.

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"First, he has to convince the Haitian people that this is going to be different, that there really is going to be action to make their lives better," Schneider said. "And he needs to take action that speaks to the international community such as, 'I've talked to World Bank about monitoring government expenditures.'"

The obstacles Préval faces are tremendous -- constructing a modern nation almost from scratch.

Since Haiti was born of a bloody slave revolt from France, and then isolated for decades by the United States and colonial Europe, Haitian leaders have done little more than strive to consolidate their own power, most often through tyranny. Very few have tried to build infrastructure, a functioning economy, an educated society or a true democracy.

And of those sporadic improvements that have been made -- roads, factories, schools -- many have either fallen into disrepair or been destroyed during dozens of rebellions and uprisings.

In a speech to the U.N. Security Council in March, Préval called Haiti "a country waiting to be built."

The last insurrection, in February 2004, left untold hundreds dead, decimated the feeble police force, left government buildings looted and nearly destroyed the capital's duty-free assembly sector, one of its few sources of employment. Losses were estimated at 5.5 percent of Haiti's Gross Domestic Product.

When Aristide fled into exile, Haitian political and business leaders with U.S. backing scrambled to set up a transitional government, led by Gerard Latortue, a Haitian American businessman.

With huge help from a 9,000-member U.N. peacekeeping force, the new government restored minimal services, began rebuilding the police force, organized the presidential and parliamentary elections in February and March, and worked with international donors on an economic recovery plan.

But the interim government gained little credibility among the populace and did little to relieve Haiti's misery.

More than half the country lives on 44 U.S. cents per day per capita, according to the World Bank. A half million children have no access to primary school. Only 10 percent of Haitians have electricity, and less than 50 percent have access to clean drinking water.

Just 650 miles from Miami, Haiti ranks among the poorest and least developed countries in the world, behind war-ravaged nations like the Congo, Sudan and East Timor.

Préval, known for his low-key demeanor and honesty, is the first to say he cannot fix Haiti during this five year term. He is not prone to sweeping promises or fiery rhetoric. He talks of lowering the price of fertilizer, getting U.S. trade preferences for Haitian textiles, building schools, fixing roads.

He plans to meet with international donors in Brazil in July to discuss his short-term initiatives.

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Foreign observers say Préval must establish transparent and effective governance to open the flow of foreign aid -- including \$554 million in financing available from the Inter-American Development Bank. And he must move quickly to make visible improvements and ease tensions in the country.

Préval's supporters expect him to release prisoners from Aristide's Lavalas Family party who were arrested by the interim government. Many were locked up on flimsy charges -- or no charges at all-- and prominent ones, like former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune, have been dubbed political prisoners by Amnesty International.

Préval has acknowledged the entire system of justice -- decrepit and perpetually partisan -- must be rebuilt.

Other urgent initiatives widely agreed upon: increase the number of hours of electricity in the cities; work with the U.N. peacekeepers to vet police officers and disarm gangs and former soldiers; restore water and sanitation services; revamp the public education system in which teaching is often rote, standards are inconsistent and fees prevent nearly half Haiti's children from attending; promote rural and agricultural development; and improve the collection of taxes from the business sector and upper classes.

Haitian leaders are also pinning their hopes on the so-called HOPE Act before the U.S. Congress, which if passed would give specific Haitian exports preferential access to U.S. markets. Préval has said the bill could create up to 80,000 jobs.

Perhaps the most dicey political subject facing Préval is Aristide, who is living in exile in South Africa. Aristide's more vigilant supporters in the urban slums, who turned out en masse for Préval at the polls, want the former slum priest to return and could paralyze the country with roadblocks and violence if they do not get their way. Foreign diplomats are strongly discouraging his return, seeing it as potentially destabilizing.

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Préval has been coy on the subject, but has reportedly told U.S. and other diplomats that he does not favor his mentor's return. Whether pressure will mount in the slums, observers say, will likely depend on how quickly Préval can provide minimal relief to the most forsaken.

**Cheap Canadian water filter improving life in Haiti**  
**Fri, 12 May 2006**  
**CBC News**

A simple filter created by a Canadian inventor is helping prevent child deaths by purifying household water supplies across Haiti.

"It's a good thing," Camilla says in Creole as she empties a pail of untreated water into her concrete and sand Bio-Sand filter, invented by Canadian David Manz, who has donated the technology to help save lives in impoverished places such as Haiti.

A big grin spreads across her face when Camilla shows off the clean, safe drinking water pouring out the spout. "It's even safe enough for the baby to drink!" she says.

Camilla cooks for the Canadian mission in the seaside community of Pierre Payan, so she got her household filter for free.

Anyone else who wants one has to pay the equivalent of \$6 – about a week's worth of wages for Haitians lucky enough to have a job.

Charging for filters a deliberate tactic

Technician Chris Rolling of Clean Water for Haiti says that's been a real dilemma for the mission.

"The temptation is to just give them away and get them into as many houses as quickly as possible," he says of the filters, each of which costs \$30 to build. "But when we give filters they don't necessarily get used. People really take care of the filter if they put a little bit of money into it."

The top is filled with sand that is alive with bio-organisms. They attack and kill deadly microbes and parasites as dirty water is poured through.

What comes out the other end is safe to drink, and capable of saving lives.

Most child deaths blamed on bad water

"One in eight children in Haiti doesn't make it to the age of five, and most of those deaths are because of water-related diseases," says Rolling. "And there are more deaths caused by bad water than there are by AIDS, even though Haiti has the highest rate of AIDS outside of Africa."

On top of the health benefits, the filter saves time and money for Haitian families. They don't have to buy nearly as much coal because they no longer have to boil water for drinking.

The country's high infant mortality rate is only one of the problems that René Prével will have to face after he is officially sworn in as president on Sunday.

Préval has spent much of his time since February's election touring the world to ask for more financial support for the impoverished Caribbean country, the poorest in the western hemisphere.

Canada's Haitian-born Governor-General, Michaëlle Jean, is scheduled to attend the Préval swearing-in ceremony.



**PM Spencer signs joint declaration  
The Antigua Sun, Antigua and Barbuda  
Friday May 12 2006**

Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer has called the just concluded third Caricom-Spain summit in Madrid, Spain a success.

The country's leader said of importance, in the Joint Declaration which he signed, was the commitment made by Spain to collaborate with Caricom in its efforts to advance its regional integration mechanisms, in particular the full entry into force of the Caricom Single Market.

"Spain will give support in exchanging of experiences it garnered during its entry into the European Union and it will also offer collaboration to Caricom to achieve the establishment of the Caricom Regional Development Fund which complements the operations of the Common Market," Prime Minister Spencer said.

He also pointed out that both sides expressed pleasure in the recent elections held in Haiti and committed themselves to supporting Haiti's return to full democratic institutional normality, and its complete reincorporation within Caricom.

"Both parties will jointly explore the possibility of collaborating on projects to achieve that goal. We also underlined the need for the continuing financial and other forms of support from the international community to consolidate the democratic gains made and to ensure the political and economic stabilisation of Haiti," he said.

He also said agreements were reached on the increase in trade and investment exchanges; the expansion of Spain's development in tourism in the region; and Spain contributing to the Special Development Fund of the Caribbean Development Bank, as a first step towards becoming a member of that institution.

Prime Minister Spencer now moves on to the European Union – Latin America and Caribbean summit being held in Vienna, Austria. On Friday, the prime minister and other members of his delegation will participate in round table discussions, with regional and international leaders, lead by Federal Chancellor of Austria Wolfgang Schussel and Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs Ursula Plassnik.

Before the summit ends Saturday morning, Prime Minister Spencer will hold bilateral meetings with the leaders of Guatemala, Turkey and Venezuela.

## **Huge task awaits incoming Haiti president**

**By STEVENSON JACOBS**

**ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER**

**Seattle Post Intelligencer**

**May 12, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- As jobs go, incoming Haitian President Rene Preval will have one of the toughest.

The soft-spoken 63-year-old former president takes power Sunday for the second time in a decade, inheriting the leadership of a battered nation with a deep split between rich and poor, a corrupt state bureaucracy, a broken justice system and an economy in ruins.

"The magnitude of the challenges is enormous," said Mark L. Schneider, a senior vice president of the Brussels, Belgium-based International Crisis Group. "Every possible characteristic of an undeveloped, failed state is present in Haiti."

Few expect fast changes under Preval, Haiti's first elected president since a bloody February 2004 revolt that ousted former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide and plunged the nation into chaos.

But observers say Preval's skills at governing and healing long-simmering rifts in Haiti's society will largely determine if the Western Hemisphere's poorest country can finally move toward stability - or continue down a seemingly endless path of misery.

Preval, an agronomist and a champion of Haiti's poor masses, so far has been guarded about his agenda. Meeting with journalists this week, he pledged to create "cohesion" in Haiti's fractured society and restore peace.

Bridging Haiti's deep and complex social divide won't be easy.

"From everywhere there is going to be pressure to deal with the things that Haiti badly needs," said Jocelyn McCalla, executive director in New York of the National Coalition for Haitian Rights.

Unless Preval can provide quick results, such as jobs, McCalla said, "you're going to have a mass of people who are restless ... and will do whatever they can to survive, including getting involved in violent crime."

Still, there is renewed optimism among many Haitians that their troubled nation may finally improve. Kidnappings and killings have fallen dramatically since Jan. 1, and the Haitian currency this week strengthened slightly against the U.S. dollar for the first time in months.

Preval's inauguration will be held under the protection of U.N. peacekeeping troops, who began arriving in Haiti after Aristide's ouster. The U.S. delegation will be led by Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, brother of President Bush.

Jean Paul, a 45-year-old air conditioner repairman, said he hopes Preval will fulfill his pledge to bring jobs to the Caribbean nation.

"The elite who control the economy have never done anything for poor people like me, so we're hoping that Preval will. That's why we voted for him," Paul said.

In his first steps to forge unity, Preval has reached out to rival political parties in Haiti's splintered parliament while forging ties with slum-based popular organizations loyal to Aristide, Preval's former ally. He also has visited the U.S., Canada and several Latin American countries to seek support for Haiti.

Preval's representatives on Thursday contacted third-place presidential finisher Charles Henri Baker, a prominent business leader, who had predicted more chaos if Preval became president again.

But Preval apparently hasn't held talks with Aristide's Lavalas party, whose supporters flocked to the polls on Feb. 7 to elect Preval. Some have interpreted the snub as a sign that Preval has moved from Aristide's shadow.

Rudy Heriveaux, a Lavalas senator, warned that national reconciliation won't be possible without Lavalas, which is calling for Aristide's return from exile in South Africa and the release of dozens of Aristide loyalists jailed without charge under the U.S.-backed interim government.

Preval has said Haitian law allows Aristide to return but has stopped short of saying whether he'd welcome back his former political mentor. Washington has warned that any return by Aristide would destabilize Haiti.

## **René Préval: Haiti May Get One Last Chance in Spite of Washington's Best Efforts**

### **COHA REPORT:**

**Weekend Release: Saturday, May 13, 2006**

With his official inauguration planned for May 14, Haitian President-elect René Préval faces a Brobdingnagian challenge in rebuilding his shattered country. Succeeding a U.S.-installed de facto government headed by Interim Prime Minister Gérard Latortue, which couldn't have performed more poorly, Préval must search for a precise balance between the interests of foreign donor governments and bitterly divided domestic forces. In recent weeks, Préval has shown a genuine interest in consulting with the competing pressure points that will soon enough affect his new government.

On the domestic front, there is a near consensus that Préval has inherited a broken country from Latortue. Because of this, once inaugurated, the new president will need to act quickly to prove his credibility after a questionable election process, which almost illicitly consigned him to an unwarranted run-off. He must also prevent a flare up of domestic political malcontents; create an effective coalition among the several parties in his government; and constructively assess former President Aristide's possible request to return to Haiti.

Not only has the president-elect initiated his efforts on the domestic front, but he has already made various strategic foreign visits, and has attempted to build a consensus with the international forces that have had a historic presence in Haiti, such as the U.S. and Canada. However, he is also attempting to form new alliances elsewhere, with Cuba and Venezuela for example, breaking away from a traditionally Washington-controlled Haiti.

#### Préval's efforts on the domestic front

Préval's victory is a positive sign for many of Haiti's poor. His inauguration is expected to be the start of a hopefully more stable period for the island, after a lame period of interim rule under the leadership of former lending agency official Gérard Latortue. The controversial election period has left Préval in a somewhat tenuous position, and he will now need to juggle between the competing domestic political groups, while at the same time making improvements to Haiti's shattered security, infrastructure and judicial systems. Perhaps Préval's most daunting challenge will be managing the contentious situation surrounding Aristide's exile.

#### Préval's victory

Préval won the Haitian presidency after a controversial election, which saw him obtain 51% of the vote only after a consensus arrangement was reached on how to tally spoiled ballots. The second round of parliamentary elections on April 21 attracted only 30 percent of the 3.5 million registered voters, to cast ballots for the 127 available parliamentary seats. While Préval's Lespwa party won the most Senate seats (eleven), it fell five short of the number needed to appoint the country's prime minister, which will force Préval to form a coalition government in order to pass legislation. The new Prime Minister will need to carefully be chosen by the Préval government, in order to ensure Haiti's future political stability.

Many of the island's political weaknesses were exacerbated by the notorious interim government that preceded Préval. The departure of the hapless Latortue regime marks the end of a government that fundamentally disregarded human rights and the rule of law. Ironically, this government was set up

and appointed by a band of self-serving international powers - primarily the U.S., Canada, France, and the UN's Kofi Annan - in early 2004, just as the anti-Aristide forces were reaching Port-au-Prince. Human rights organizations such as the Haiti Support Group, several Latin American governments, as well as CARICOM (the Caribbean Community), accused the Latortue government of further darkening the country's already shaky human rights record by arresting, torturing and imprisoning pro-Aristide government officials and supporters, including former Interior Minister Jocelerme Privert and former Prime Minister Yvonne Neptune, who still remain behind bars but most likely will be released the moment that Préval assumes office.

#### Aristide's Return

Another domestic issue Préval will have to manage amidst divisive political groups in the country is former president Aristide's possible early return to Haiti. The February 2004 coup, orchestrated by the U.S. State Department and backed by its confederates, ousted Aristide and sent him into exile in South Africa. They then installed former Boca Raton talk show host Gérard Latortue as interim Prime Minister. At the onset of Préval's presidency, Aristide's shadow lurks large amidst Haiti's many uncertainties. Many Aristide supporters, as well as pro-democracy advocates, supported Aristide and are now inquiring whether Préval will allow his mentor to return to Haiti once he assumes the presidency. His many critics do not want to see Aristide come back to Haiti, at least for now, and the country's elite adamantly argue on scant evidence that Aristide was becoming "dictatorial" and corrupt. The Latortue government accused the ex-president of stealing millions of dollars of state funds, which may be as much an auto-biographical statement as it is a serious charge against the former president. But Aristide has a tremendous influence among the country's poor, where his popularity is immeasurable. Many of Préval's supporters consider his Leswpa ("Hope" in Creole) and Aristide's Lavalas parties to have almost identical agendas, and support the former president's return. While a March Knight Ridder News report noted that "Préval has made it increasingly clear to foreign diplomats that he does not want the fiery former priest to return home any time soon," in an interview with Dominion, Préval "reiterated his intention to uphold the Haitian Constitution's ban of political exile," which leaves the door open for Aristide's possible return. Préval has simultaneously warned of possible corruption charges against the former president. While Préval and Aristide were close allies in the past, their relationship became increasingly distant during Préval's first presidency from 1996 to 2001, and many fear that Aristide's return would cause a resurgence of domestic violence between pro and anti-Aristide groups.

During the Chilean presidential inauguration in March, Préval, South African President Thabo Mbeki, Brazil and several other international players - such as Argentina, France, and Chile - discussed Aristide's possible return and its likely implications. Préval will thus have to find a middle ground between Aristide's domestic supporters and opponents, while taking into consideration the potential reactions of key international actors, among them the U.S., Canada, France, Brazil, Chile and Argentina, who fear that Aristide's return to Haiti would cause unnecessary political turmoil and unrest, and could use the return to justify sanctions.

Préval in the global arena: A call for continued international aid and responsible behavior  
While not only initiating efforts domestically, Préval has started to actively engage with the international community, particularly regarding the flow of international aid which is crucial to building up Haiti's economy. His efforts in this area must be stellar, since the island nation has historically been impoverished and dependent on - and thus controlled by - foreign donors.

During his predictable visit to the United States in late March, Préval met with President Bush in Washington to discuss financial assistance, and visit institutions such as the United Nations - where he requested the continuing presence of MINUSTAH (the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti); the World Bank; the Organization of American States; the Inter-American Development Bank; and the IMF, all venues where he requested long-term development aid.

Préval also paid a visit to Ottawa for a series of meetings with Canadian officials, including Prime Minister Stephen Harper, to remind the officials of the importance of their country's goods and assistance to Haiti. In his conversations, Préval emphasized the recognition of dual citizenship for the Haitian Diaspora in Canada, and the need for foreign investment and tourism in Haiti's future, which would undoubtedly lead to increased economic development and more stable conditions in the country. Prime Minister Harper promised continued support of the Caribbean nation, indicating that the relatively new Conservative Canadian administration views Canadian financial assistance to Haiti as a priority in the two countries' relationship. Ironically, during Préval's visit to Ontario and Quebec, Interim Prime Minister Gérard Latortue who is to leave office on May 14, asked the Canadian government to lift the travel ban on several former Haitian officials (accused but not charged of human rights abuses), stating "Help us, forget about that... give a chance to all Haitians now to be able to reconcile once again and be able to work together," according to the Canada-based newsletter Embassy.

#### Beating the Brush for Aid

Préval has also moved his diplomacy into new international arenas, somewhat to the dismay of Washington, which already warily associates him with Aristide—who the State Department abominated. In April, Préval visited Cuba and Venezuela, where he discussed aid in health care, education, and electricity. The Préval-Castro meetings were particularly significant since the country is in dire need of the doctors Cuba could provide, as well as medical training for Haitian students in Cuba's universities. Following the Havana visit, Préval had a 24-hour stay in Venezuela on April 24, where he discussed with Chávez possible Venezuelan aid in health and education, as well as Haiti's entry into Venezuela's Petrocaribe program, which provides poor Central American and Caribbean nations with discounted or bartered oil. Assistance from Cuba and Venezuela could play a key role in Préval's attempt to rebuild Haiti.

Importantly, Préval made his first visit to the Dominican Republic in March, where he dialogued with President Fernandez on the vitally important immigration issues that dominate the relationship between the neighboring countries. Préval then continued to Brazil, where he met with Brazilian president Luis Inacio "Lula" da Silva, to discuss infrastructure projects, as well as thank Brazil for its troop support in Haiti under the Brazilian led UN mission MINUSTAH, later traveling to Argentina and Chile.

#### Washington's Worries

Washington will, as always, be scrutinizing what is happening on the island. Policymakers are undoubtedly troubled by Préval's ties to Aristide and his decision to build relationships with such "pink tide" countries as Venezuela. What the U.S. mainly wants from Preval is to get Haiti off its agenda as soon as possible and at the lowest cost. It also will insist that Preval clamp down on any revival of the "boat people" trying to illegally enter this country.

This is, of course, Washington's primary concern, as a renewed instability would lead to a higher number of illegal Haitian immigrant boats floating towards Florida's shores, a problem Washington is eager to avoid. This may give Préval some much needed autonomy to formulate policies and build alliances that, while untraditional, may ultimately benefit Haiti. Thus, Préval's attempts towards domestic, as well as international cooperation, including Cuban and Venezuelan aid to Haiti may not produce an immediate backlash. For decades, until the present, the State Department has been content to allow lower policy standards, based on the working philosophy that since it is only Haiti, the best need not be required.

As Florida Governor Jeb Bush prepares to lead a U.S. delegation to Haiti for Préval's official inauguration on Sunday, unfortunately very few will be watching the situation closely and carefully.

This analysis was prepared by COHA Research Associate Mara van den Bold

## **Haiti's first census in 24 years uncovers pressing problems, UN agency says**

**May 11, 2006**

**UN News Centre**

10 May 2006 – Haiti's first census in 24 years shows that half of the Caribbean country's population is younger than 20, unemployment is a staggering 33 per cent and less than half of the school-age children are attending primary school, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which helped finance the effort, said today.

“The census offers a map of where the direst needs are in Haiti,” UNFPA's representative in the country, Hernando Clavijo, said. “The population structure in itself, with an overwhelming majority of young people, means that more resources should be put into education and reproductive health services.”

Related studies of the data collected show that Haiti's maternal mortality ratio is the highest in the Western Hemisphere, with 523 deaths per 100,000 live births, UNFPA said.

Last year Haiti placed 153rd out of the 177 countries studied for the UN Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report 2005 on maternal mortality. Regionally this ranking compared with Barbados at number 30 and Cuba at number 52.

Haiti's HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of between 4 and 5 per cent is also the highest in the Western Hemisphere, UNFPA said.

Haiti's Ministry of Finance and the Statistics and Informatics Institute conducted the \$8 million census, the fourth in the country's history. It employed 25,000 people and was funded by the Government of Haiti, UNFPA, the Inter-American Development Bank, the European Union (EU), the Government of Japan and the Government of the Walloon Region of Belgium.



**About 20 Centenarians Haitians in Cuba**  
**Prensa Latina**  
**May 11, 2006**

Havana, Over 20 Haitians of a hundred-year old and more are living in Cuba among them one of 125 years the eldest of all of the 11,3 millions of inhabitants of the greatest Antilles.

Benito Martinez Abogan was born in June 19, 1880 in Cavaellon, Haiti arrived in his adopted homeland when he was already adult (1925) and settled himself in Ciego de Avila province at 260.97 miles of east Havana with other three centenarians fellow countrymen.

One of them Guillaume Sanon (109) along with hundreds of thousands of Haitians emigrated to Cuba last century working as temporary farm workers in the sugar harvest.

According to a recent survey in the island there are other provinces with nonagenarian Haitians like Camaguey (7), Guantanamo (6), Havana City (2), Santiago de Cuba and Las Tunas (one in each).

In the First International Centenarian Meeting held in Havana February 9 and 10, 2005 was stated the life expectancy in Cuba goes over 77 years old and over 14 percent of the population is over 60 years old.

In Haiti life expectancy hardly reach half a century.

## **Haiti Legislators Sworn In, Hold Session**

**By Stevenson Jacobs**

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**The Associated Press**

**ABC News**

**Tuesday, May 9, 2006**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti -- Haiti's first parliament in two years was formally installed Tuesday as President-elect Rene Preval prepared to take office and steer this impoverished nation toward stability.

Amid boisterous cheers from supporters, legislators in the Senate took the oath of office, following deputies in the lower house by a day.

Preval, who served as Haiti's president from 1996 to 2001, takes power Sunday in front of the parliament, which hasn't convened since former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in a February 2004 uprising.

Stephen Benoit, a deputy from Preval's Lespwa party, said the body's biggest challenge will be finishing its four-year term \_ something that's never occurred in Haiti's chaotic 202-year history.

"That's the first challenge, to last the four years without a coup d'etat, without the president saying you're not going to finish your term," Benoit said after deputies held their first legislative session. "The population is counting on us. We need to deliver and we need to deliver quickly."

But getting work done won't be easy.

Preval has had to reach out to rival parties for legislative support since Lespwa, which means "hope" in Creole, lacks a majority in parliament.

Preval told reporters Tuesday that he would work to form "cohesion" among Haiti's fractured society, including the former ruling Lavalas party of Aristide.

Rudy Heriveaux, a Lavalas senator, said the party was ready to work for "national reconciliation" but will call on Preval to release dozens of Aristide allies jailed without charge under the U.S.-backed interim government. Among those jailed is Aristide's former prime minister, Yvon Neptune, who is accused of orchestrating killings of political opponents but has yet to be tried.

He added that Lavalas would also seek Aristide's return from exile in South Africa.

Preval, a former Aristide ally, has said that Haitian law allows Aristide to return, but hasn't said if he would welcome back his one-time political mentor.

**Haiti new parliament begins work**  
**China View News**  
**May 10, 2006**

HAVANA, -- Haiti's new parliament started to work on Tuesday after its first sitting was delayed due to technical problems for one day, said reports from the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince.

A total of 27 new lawmakers of the 30-member Senate were sworn in amid thundering cheers from supporters. The ceremony was held one day after more than 80 of 99 deputies took the oath of office in the lower house of parliament.

The remaining lawmakers will be picked in makeup elections due later this year.

Haitian President-elect Rene Preval will be sworn in on Sunday by the new parliament. He won the elections in February.

**Rene Preval vows to unite Haiti**  
**Radio Jamaica**  
**May 11, 2006**

Haiti's newly elected leader, Rene Preval, has vowed to unite the country as he prepares to be sworn into office on Sunday and face the tough challenges of his five-year mandate.

According to Mr. Preval the chances for Haiti to take steps toward economic and social progress are almost non-existent without a national dialogue.

Rene Preval, once a protege of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide, won the election on February 7 and has shown a constant will to reach out and work closely with his opponents to address crucial issues facing the population.

He was declared the winner on February 16 in the first election since former president Aristide was forced from power on February 29, 2004.

Haiti's newly elected legislators will receive their oath on Sunday.

Haiti's parliament has not convened since the overthrow of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

**Gov. Bush to attend swearing-in**  
**Associated Press**  
**Miami Herald**  
**May 11, 2006**

President Bush has tapped his brother, Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, to lead the U.S. delegation to the inauguration Sunday of René Préval as Haiti's first elected president in two years.

"Haiti's a very important country as it relates to Florida and the United States, and I'm honored to be able to go," Jeb Bush said Wednesday before departing for an annual hurricane conference in Fort Lauderdale.

Préval's predecessor and political mentor, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was ousted during a rebellion in 2004. Aristide is living in exile in South Africa.

Préval, an agronomist who served as Haiti's president from 1996 through 2001, was elected in February but his inaugural was delayed until after a new parliament was elected in April.

"Haiti's had significant issues in developing a mature democracy and the elections are an important step in that regard," Jeb Bush said. ``I hope it brings enough stability so that the economy can improve there and the level of poverty and the level of despair will begin to subside."

The U.S. delegation will include Florida Secretary of Health M. Rony Francois, a Haitian American.

## **Governor sets 2nd trip to Haiti for presidential inauguration**

**By Alva James-Johnson**

**South Florida Sun-Sentinel**

**May 10 2006**

Gov. Jeb Bush will lead the U.S. delegation to Haiti for the inauguration of President-elect Rene Preval on Sunday.

It will be the governor's second trip to the impoverished nation. His first visit in 2004 led to state proposals to help rebuild Haiti.

"Because of the governor's great interest and commitment to Haiti, President Bush tapped his brother to officially represent him," said Scott Openshaw, the governor's spokesman for tourism, trade and economic development.

Other members of the delegation will include the U.S. ambassador to Haiti, Janet Ann Sanderson, and M. Rony Francois, secretary of the Florida Department of Health.

The Haitian Electoral Council declared Preval, a former Jean-Bertrand Aristide protégé, president in February following a controversial election.

Some Haitian-Americans welcomed Bush's planned visit as a sign that the United States supports the new government.

"I think it shows commitment, dedication, and that the U.S. government wants to continue good relations with Haiti, especially South Florida, which has so many Haitians," said Daniella Henry, a community activist in Delray Beach.

Lucy Orlando, a Weston Republican activist, said she hopes the trip will be more than a photo opportunity.

Orlando, a staunch supporter of the Bush brothers, went to Haiti to register U.S. citizens living there to vote in the 2004 U.S. presidential election. She said the president and governor told her they would do more to help Haiti and Haitian immigrants, but she's been disappointed.

Orlando and other Haitians want President Bush to grant temporary protected status to Haitian refugees, which would allow them to stay in the United States during political upheaval.

"I hope the governor could talk to his brother, the president, to ask that they not send the Haitian immigrants back to their country," she said. Orlando said she would talk to the president about the issue when she, Henry and other community leaders attend a Haitian Flag Day gathering at the White House on Thursday.

Jeb Bush made his first trip to Haiti in June 2004, four months after Aristide left during a bloody rebellion. Aristide, now exiled in South Africa, has said that the U.S. government kidnapped him. After returning to South Florida, Bush created a Haiti Advisory Group, which last year released 25

recommendations to help rebuild Haiti. Since then, some state officials and volunteers have made technical training and fact-finding trips to Haiti. Last week, the governor's office announced a Florida-Haiti scholarship program that would allow students from Haiti to study at community colleges in Jacksonville and Tampa. But most of the advisory group's proposal remains a wish list.

Orlando said she wants to see more progress.

"I don't want the talk, talk, talk," she said Tuesday. "I want reality. That's why I'm just watching."

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**Haiti after the Elections: Préval's 100-Day Challenges**  
**International Crisis Group**  
**May 11, 2006**

Port au-Prince/Brussels, 11 May 2006: Haiti may finally overcome its troubled past, but only if the incoming president tackles longstanding security, social and economic challenges during his first 100 days.

Haiti after the Elections: Challenges for Préval's First 100 Days,\* lays out an agenda for President René Préval, who is to be inaugurated on 14 May, which would allow Haiti to put years of instability, violence and economic decline behind it. The 7 February and 21 April elections yielded relatively high turnout and little violence and give Préval the chance to move the country beyond its traditional polarisation. To do so, he must reach out to the sectors that opposed him as well as his supporters and take advantage of a rare moment of optimism in the much suffering country.

“Deep structural challenges still threaten what may be Haiti's last chance to extricate itself from chaos and despair, and action in the first 100 days is vital”, says Mark L. Schneider, Crisis Group Sr. Vice President, “but then the UN and donors must make at least a ten-year commitment to help Haiti deal with security, justice, and economic growth, prioritising rural development and poverty reduction”.

For decades, large sections of society have been left out of the decision-making process. If the new government is to address its challenges effectively, civil society, peasant organisations and groups representing the rural and urban poor must be given a stake in the country's future.

Préval's first order of business should be to capitalise on the improved security situation by addressing the underlying causes of violence and crime, including mending political divisions. This has to include disarming and demobilising gangs in the city and ex-military in the countryside. The Haitian National Police (HNP) must be professionalised, strengthened and purged of corrupt officers. The judicial system must be overhauled, beginning with establishing a joint international and national judicial panel to review the cases of political prisoners detained without trial.

The most cost-effective investment now for the UN, OAS and its member states is to help ensure stabilisation and security in the country.

Alain Deletraz, Crisis Group's Latin America Program Director, says, “Haitians have high expectations that the new government will quickly improve their standard of living, and they must see from Préval that a new chapter has indeed opened in their history. Otherwise, Haiti could become the hemisphere's first permanent failed state”.



## **Haiti Census Reveals Troubling Statistics**

**By VOA News**

**11 May 2006**

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) says results of Haiti's first census in more than two decades reveals troubling statistics about the country.

The survey found that half of Haiti's population is younger than age 20. It also found that less than half of the school-aged children are attending school and that unemployment stands at 33 percent.

The census, the first in 24 years, also found that Haiti has the highest maternal mortality ratio and the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the Western Hemisphere.

UNFPA representative Hernando Clavijo says the findings show a need to allocate more resources to education and reproductive health services in Haiti.

The census results come as Haitian President-elect Rene Preval prepares to be sworn into office on Sunday. Members of parliament were sworn in on Monday and Tuesday. The body's first session opened on Tuesday.

Mr. Preval was elected in February. Before his election, Haiti had been without a president or parliament since a popular uprising ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004.

**Rabbits Big Business in Haiti**  
**AgNews**  
**Texas A & M, University System Agriculture Program**  
**May 10, 2006**

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COLLEGE STATION – While most Americans probably associate rabbits with Easter bunnies and batteries, they can mean a better life in Haiti.

Backyard domesticated rabbit production in that country – where the average monthly income is only about \$50 per month – can double or triple a household's wealth, said Dr. Jeff Tomberlin, Texas Cooperative Extension entomologist.

A single adult rabbit can be sold for \$3.50 U.S., Tomberlin said.

"A good rabbit farmer can sell about six rabbits per week, which translates into a substantial increase in their monthly income," he said.

Tomberlin and Dr. Jim Muir, forage researcher with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, recently traveled to Cap-Haitian, Haiti, to help farmers develop rabbits as a commodity. The two experts went on a grant from the Farmer to Farmer program funded by USAID program. That program was authorized by the U.S. Congress in 1985.

While there, Tomberlin and Muir, both of Stephenville, visited rabbitries and discussed animal nutrition and integrated pest management with producers. They also gave an introductory course on rabbit production, and presented lectures to students at the Centre D'Agriculture St. Benabas.

Rabbit production in Haiti is largely a backyard proposition. Families raise what they can eat and sell the rest, Tomberlin said.

According to the World Factbook, Haiti – which occupies an area slightly smaller than the state of Maryland – is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. About two-thirds of the people there depend on small-scale subsistence farming.

The most important accomplishment of the trip was getting producers excited about good nutrition for their rabbits using local forbs species, he said.

"Good nutrition is the best way to avoid all sorts of problems, for us (humans) as well as rabbits," Muir said.

Producers in Haiti raise animals in wood-framed cages with wire mesh floors and sides of mesh and bamboo. They provide plenty of shade and water for the animals, Muir said.

The greatest need was in the area of nutrition for the rabbits, Producers needed to depend less on grasses, which have excessively high fiber, and more on forbs, which have greater digestibility, he said. Forbs in the area included cultivated (sweet potatoes) and weedy (beggar's tick) varieties/types.

He also recommended that forages be kept off of cage floors where they come into contact with excrement and endanger rabbit health.

Tomberlin focused on educating producers on the importance of integrated pest management.

The primary arthropod pests of rabbits are ear mites, mange, ticks and flies that colonize animal wastes, he said.

The integrated pest management approach for rabbit production is similar to that for any other confined animal operation, he said. Facilities should be kept clean, animals kept healthy to reduce mortality and illness, and insecticides should be used sparingly.

"The same problems with confined animal facilities are encountered world wide," Tomberlin said. "Individuals in Haiti demonstrated that managing arthropod pests can truly be done without a reliance on insecticides. They have to due to the fact that they have little money or access to the insecticides."

On a personal level, the experience for both A&M scientists was rewarding, they said. Traveling from high-tech Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport to the rutted dirt tracks of Cap-Haitien in a matter of hours made them realize how great the differences are between Texas and Hatian producers.

Despite the difficulties they face, however, Hatian farmers were as friendly, hospitable and friendly as any in the U.S., Muir said.

**France examines scars left by slavery  
Commemoration falls shy, some say  
By Angela Doland, Associated Press  
The Boston Globe  
May 11, 2006**

PARIS -- France honored victims of the slave trade yesterday with a national day of concerts, school lessons, Louvre exhibits, and ceremonies in a trading port that grew rich from New World slave plantations.

President Jacques Chirac, marking the first annual commemoration day, urged France to confront the dark chapters of its history, 158 years after it abolished the practice of traders seizing Africans to toil in Caribbean colonies.

"Looking directly at our entire past is one of the keys to our national cohesion," said Chirac, who announced the national day in January, soon after riots swept through the country's heavily immigrant suburbs, raising debate about France's model of integrating minorities and the lingering scars of its colonial past.

The commemoration day did not bring a day off in workplaces or schools, and the idea of reparations for slavery is not an issue in France.

Patrick Lozes, president of a federation representing France's black community, said the government's effort fell short. The federation had hoped to plan cultural events on a larger, more festive scale, but the premier's office turned it down, he said.

"The government did not take into account the size and importance of the warning sounded by the riots," Lozes said.

Chirac inaugurated an art exhibit in Paris's Luxembourg Gardens. In the port city of Nantes, where many of France's slave ships originated, there were poetry readings and traditional dances, and children tossed flowers into the water.

The Louvre Museum and National Library in Paris offered special tours showcasing artwork and manuscripts dealing with the slave trade.

Development Minister Brigitte Girardin flew to Senegal's Goree Island, the point of no return for many Africans. As many as 20 million slaves are believed to have transited through the island, where they were held in crowded, diseased cells, then crammed onto ships for the dangerous journey across the Atlantic.

Some 20 million people worldwide are still subject to some form of slavery today, Girardin said.

"The task remains immense, and France wants to be in the front line in this combat for human rights," she said.

France was Europe's fourth-largest slave trader after Portugal, England, and Spain. It first abolished slavery in 1794, after a successful revolt by slaves in the island colony of Saint Domingue, which later became Haiti. But that initial abolition -- Europe's first -- was short-lived: Napoleon reestablished slavery in 1802. It wasn't until 1848 that France put a definitive end to slavery.

The Netherlands already marks a day for slavery on July 1. France's commemoration was timed to coincide with the May 10, 2001, passage of a law recognizing slavery as a crime against humanity.

That law, which requires schools to include lessons about slavery as part of classroom curriculum, passed unanimously. Yet it has recently come under fire from some in the ruling conservative party, a sign of how sensitive France's colonial history remains today.

Forty lawmakers from Chirac's Union for a Popular Movement party last week urged the French leader to do away with the scholastic measures in the law. Their move was retaliation for France's decision to scrap part of another law that sparked a furor in former colonies: It required school textbooks to highlight the "positive role" of French colonialism.

The term was later stripped from the legislation.

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**The price of Haiti's suffering**  
**By Harsha Walia**  
**The Georgia Straight, Vancouver, Canada**  
**11-May-2006**

Michaëlle Jean's Haitian visit draws attention from our poor record there.

In her first speech as Governor General, Michaëlle Jean stated that "My own story begins as a young child in another country, one 'draped in barbed wire from head to toe', in the powerful words of the Haitian poet in exile, René Depestre, who is also my uncle. The story of that little girl, who watched her parents, her family, and her friends grappling with the horrors of a ruthless dictatorship, who became the woman standing before you today, is a lesson in learning to be free."

The ruthless dictator who drove Jean's family into exile was François "Papa Doc" Duvalier. The reigns of Duvalier and his son Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier were fostered by strategic relationships with the United States. According to a 1986 New York Times article by Mark Danner, "The United States justified its long support for Mr. Duvalier on the grounds that he provided 'economic stability.'?" In the 1994 book *The Uses of Haiti*, Paul Farmer reported that in his first four years, Papa Doc Duvalier personally received US\$40 million from Washington.

Beginning in 1958, U.S. Marines stayed in the country for five years to train Duvalier's army. Over the almost three decades of Duvalier rule, according to the *Historical Atlas of the 20th Century*, more than 60,000 Haitians were killed and countless more tortured by the "Tonton Macoutes" death squads.

The Duvalier regime ended in 1986, when Baby Doc fled a populist movement of Haitians desiring freedom.

Jean was 11 years old when her family fled Haiti. This month, on Sunday (May 14), Jean will return to witness the inauguration of Haiti's new president, René Préval. Anthony Fenton, local coauthor of the book *Canada in Haiti: Waging War on the Poor Majority* (Fenwood Publishing/RED Publishing, 2005) told the *Georgia Straight* in a phone interview that "the significance of the Governor General's visit to Haiti is that the Canadian government wants us to forget the past two years of what has happened."

On May 1, the Canadian government announced that it was handing over \$48 million to "promote good governance and democracy in Haiti". According to a news release issued on the same day by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), over the past two years Canada has spent more than \$190 million in Haiti. Few Canadians have questioned the details of these projects.

Since 2004, Canada has been involved in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). A 2005 Harvard Law School report harshly condemns these forces, stating that "MINUSTAH has effectively provided cover for the police to wage a campaign of terror in Port-au-Prince's slums." Canadian police lead the UN police mission responsible for training and overseeing the new Haitian National Police (HNP). Under their watch, hundreds of former Haitian army officers, death-squad members, and individuals who "have been involved in drug rackets, kidnappings, extrajudicial killings, or other illegal activities" have been integrated into the HNP, according to a 2005 report by the London, England-based Catholic Institute for International Relations.

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Despite assurances by the former Canadian special advisor on Haiti, Denis Coderre, that “Canada would not get involved in Haiti’s justice system,” Haitian deputy justice minister Philippe Vixamar is a direct employee of CIDA. According to Haiti’s Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, the justice system has locked up at least 700 political prisoners.

The Canadian government may decide to pull its forces out after the recent Haitian election, just as the U.S. is promising to withdraw its occupying troops from Iraq. Yet the economic groundwork has already been laid. Canada has donated \$156 million toward the “Interim Cooperation Framework”, an international blueprint for reforms in Haiti that includes slashing of subsidies for Haiti’s impoverished farmers, the reduction of the minimum wage, a three-year tax holiday for corporations, and privatization of Haiti’s state enterprises, such as electricity, education, and health care. Most significantly, the plan is outrageously antidemocratic, “implementing economic governance reforms...that may be hard for a future government to undo,” the World Bank said in a 2004 statement.

In her inaugural speech, Michaëlle Jean stated that her story “is a lesson in learning to be free”. Just as her father aspired to freedom, the Haitian population today struggles against Canadian economic and political interference. The question is: will our Governor General heed their voices for freedom?

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**Officials Process Hundreds Of Work Permits In GB**  
**By Daphne McIntosh**  
**The Bahama Journal**  
**May 10, 2006**

Immigration officials process approximately 250 work permit applications on Grand Bahama every two weeks, Immigration Minister Shane Gibson confirmed this week.

Minister Gibson explained that in recent times, the vast majority of them have been approved because they were renewals, mainly for domestic workers and Grand Bahama Shipyard employees.

He also indicated that nationally, approximately 25,000 work permit applications – mostly for Haitians – are considered annually.

"We can see the significant contribution that citizens of Haiti make to the development of The Bahamas," Minister Gibson said.

The minister again came out strongly against employers hiring illegal immigrants.

"I think what is extremely important is that we are now pursuing even more vigorously those persons who employ illegal immigrants because if illegal immigrants don't have anywhere to work, then more than likely they wouldn't be here," Mr. Gibson said.

"Where we used to be lenient in the past and turn a blind eye, and just repatriate and deport illegal immigrants, we will now be dealing more forcefully with those persons who hire illegal immigrants."

Minister Gibson further cautioned persons wanting to secure work permits that they too must follow proper procedures.

"If there are persons you want to hire, the process is simple. You send in the application while the individual is outside of the Bahamas," he explained.

Otherwise, the minister said, the department will not be "entertaining any applications" of persons in the country illegally. If the persons choose to leave the country voluntarily, an application could then be processed as swiftly as possible.

Speaking during a visit to Grand Bahama on Monday, Minister Gibson said his ministry will persist in its hard line approach to stamping out the vexing problem in The Bahamas using existing policies on the books.

"[We hope that] through all the existing policies, we will be able to reduce the level down to a bare minimum," Minister Gibson said.

"We don't want to introduce any new policies, but we believe the policies that exist on the books today, if we enforce those, we can reduce [illegal immigration] to a bare minimum."

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Minister Gibson said if the government is unable to effectively minimize the number of illegal immigrants through existing policies, then it would implement new policies.

He added, "I will not be distracted and I will not lose focus on what it is we have to do. We have a job to do; we have a Bahamas to protect for all Bahamians, for everybody who comes here legally."

The minister also commented on recent concerns raised by Haiti's Ambassador to the Bahamas Louis Harold Joseph, who said he was concerned over the wrongful detention last month of nearly 200 Haitians who reside in Eleuthera.

When asked about Mr. Joseph's concerns, Minister Gibson said those concerns have been noted.

The ambassador said in a statement last week, "While the embassy recognizes the right of the Bahamas as a sovereign nation to take appropriate measures to fight illegal immigration, in this process, it is important that the rights of Haitian nationals be respected and they be treated with human dignity."

Minister Gibson said dialogue is underway with the ambassador and representatives in the Haitian community.

"The idea is really to dialogue with them to make sure they understand fully what we are trying to accomplish, and if they have any suggestions as to how we can go about doing it, to reduce the inconvenience to people as much as possible, [we'd like to hear that]," he said.

"The idea is to treat [illegal immigrants] as humanely as possible, and to keep their dignity in tact and while we are exercising the rule of law we also exercise it with the greatest degree of compassion as possible."

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## **Préval Visits Venezuela and Canada: One Warm Reception, One Cool**

**By Haiti Progres**

**Reprinted in Political Affairs Magazine**

**May 11, 2006**

With his May 14 inauguration drawing near, Haitian president-elect René Préval concluded just over a month of international travels with visits to Venezuela and Canada this past week. The contrasting receptions he received in Caracas and Ottawa – respectively friendly and frosty – suggest that Préval may face difficulties in trying to draw support for Haiti’s battered economy from politically opposed quarters in a rapidly polarizing hemisphere.

In one corner of the political ring sit the United States and Canada, whose governments supported the Feb. 29, 2004 coup d’état against former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Both governments also lavished millions of dollars in aid and training – usually via terribly misnomered “non-governmental organizations” – on the parties of Préval’s political rivals in the months leading up to the national elections held in February and April.

In the other corner sit Cuba and Venezuela, whose socialist governments are mounting a growing political challenge to North American hegemony in the hemisphere, inspiring anti-neoliberal uprisings throughout the hemisphere where elections are bringing new progressive leaders to power in countries like Bolivia and Peru.

First, Préval visited the U.S. at the end of March for talks with officials of the U.S. government and international financial institutions (IFIs) in Washington, and United Nations officials in New York (see *Haiti Progrès*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 3/29/2006). During that visit, Préval and his advisors declared that his government would be willing to follow the strict and unpopular guidelines laid down by Washington and its IFIs for the neo-liberal adjustments demanded to obtain always coveted but always elusive North American aid and investment.

Then Préval visited Cuba for a week in mid-April, after which many concrete projects and exchanges in the domains of health and technical assistance were announced (see *Haiti Progrès*, Vol. 24, No. 6, 4/19/2006).

Less than a week after his return to Haiti, Préval made a two-day trip on April 24 and 25 to Venezuela, where he met with President Hugo Chavez and agreed to Venezuela’s Caribbean regional oil pact, Petrocaribe. The Venezuelans showered him with honors and promises of aid in health, education and energy.

“I received a fantastic reception in Venezuela,” Préval declared on his return to Haiti.

In contrast, a week later, Préval traveled to Canada on April 30 for a visit that the Canadian Press agency called “almost invisible, with few of the normal trappings associated with a foreign dignitary.”

“There were no news releases or briefings on his meetings with Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay or Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean,” the CP reported. “There was no joint news conference. The prime minister's office made no announcement of the visit beforehand.”

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A far more lavish reception was given to lame-duck de facto Prime Minister Gérard Latortue when he visited Canada on Mar. 10 for no apparent reason (see *Haiti Progrès*, Vol. 24 No. 1, 3/15/2006).

Michel Sanon, a Montreal-based Haitian activist and poet, said that members of the Haitian community in Canada “are left to wonder why Canadian leaders of the 21st century show so much interest in unelected and illegitimate leaders imposed on the Haitian people by foreign powers, while they do their best to keep democratically elected leaders in the shadows, or even to contribute to their removal from office by force.” (The Venezuelan government never recognized the de facto government.)

Members of Préval’s entourage were even prohibited from accompanying the president-elect to Canada because their names appeared on a Canadian government “blacklist” of people it accuses of crimes against humanity, Reuters’ correspondent Guy Delva reported May 1. Among those cited on the list were former prime minister Jacques Edouard Alexis, who served during Préval’s first term as President from 1996 to 2001 and who now heads the president-elect’s transition team. Also on the list are Préval’s former Health Minister Rudolph Mallebranche and

former Préval advisor Philippe Rouzier, now a senior official of the United Nations Development Program in Haiti.

Several other former ministers and other officials of the Préval and Aristide administrations were on the list, Delva reported.

“This is outrageous,” Alexis told Reuters. “It is an insult to all honest Haitians and we

demand a public apology from the Canadian government.” Although Ottawa subsequently granted Alexis a visa, he refused to accompany Préval, feeling the matter was still unclear. Préval was outraged by the list and visa denials, Reuters reported, citing members of his entourage.

The only concrete aid to be announced from the visit was a \$48 million grant “to promote good governance and democracy in Haiti,” which is usually code for a project that will do just the opposite.

In contrast, Haiti came away with a lot more from Venezuela.. The Petrocaribe deal requires Caribbean countries to pay 60% of the cost for fuel up front but allows them to finance the remainder through loans – with 1% interest – over 25 years.

“For 2004-2005, for example, Haiti’s petroleum usage came to \$254.5 million,” Préval explained in the press conference on his return. “Now 60% of \$254.5 million comes to about \$150 million, which we would have to pay. But the remaining 40%, which amounts to about \$100 million, can be used to create a development fund.”

Préval will sign the Petrocaribe accord on May 15, the day after his inauguration, which Venezuelan Vice President José Vicente Rangel will attend. Venezuela will also help the Haitian state build a petroleum storage facility. Presently Haiti only has privately owned tank farms.

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One journalist asked Préval when he returned from Caracas if there would be “consequences” for Haiti building links with Venezuela, which Washington increasingly sees as a regional threat. “The problems between the United States and Venezuela are problems that those two countries have to resolve themselves,” Préval responded. “It does not affect Haiti in any way.”

But there may indeed be “consequences” if Préval is too friendly with Cuba and Venezuela, Washington’s principal nemeses in the Americas. One must wonder whether Préval’s subdued reception in Ottawa, now in the hands of the Conservative Party, was a message from the U.S./Canada axis. Canada’s role as Washington’s proxy and enforcer in Haiti is not new. In 2003, Canada hosted a high-level meeting of hemisphere diplomats called the “Ottawa Initiative on Haiti,” where Aristide’s overthrow was mapped out. Predictably, no Haitian government officials were invited (see *Haiti Progrès*, Vol. 20, No. 51, 3/5/03).

Likewise, today, Canada’s rude treatment of Préval this week may be a warning, transmitted primarily from Washington, that he had better choose his friends carefully.

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