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Statement by Ambassador Gert Rosenthal
Permanent Representative of Guatemala to the United Nations
Debate of the United Nations Security Council: “The question concerning Haiti”
(New York, March 8, 2012)

Mr. President:

Thank you for organizing this meeting. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2012/128). In addition, we welcome the Secretary-General’s Special Representative, Mr. Mariano Fernández to New York and commend him for his endeavors.

We have followed the evolving situation in Haiti for many years, and have been a formal stakeholder, given our participation in MINUSTAH as a troop contributor. However this is our first statement on the matter as a member of the Security Council.

Haiti, of course, faces many challenges, only compounded by the legacy of the horrific earthquake of January, 2010. Addressing those challenges requires an integral approach, but today I would like to focus on three areas of special concern.

First, there is the matter of political stability. The year 2012 started with promise. On January 9 we were encouraged by President Martelly’s pledge before Parliament to seek a close coordination with all branches of Government as he announced his priorities for the year. Of special importance was an agreement with the Legislative Branch regarding, among other aspects, the process of designating a Prime Minister. Unfortunately, our optimism of some months ago has been mitigated by the recent resignation of the Prime Minister, and mounting evidence that the tensions between the Legislative and the Executive Branch continue. We thus meet today as events continue to unfold in a context of greater political uncertainty, as outlined in paragraph 55 of the Secretary-General’s report. This is disturbing, since it adversely impacts decision-making on key issues.

Also, based on historical experience in Haiti, elections and democratic rule, in accordance with the Constitution, are the only way of achieving long-term stability. Municipal elections and the renewal of a third of the Senate are now overdue, although we note the President’s recent remarks that these elections are of high priority to his Administration. We trust that these will take place as soon as possible, especially since the Secretary-General’s report reminds us that the out-going Senators’ terms expire in May.

I would also like to take a moment to comment on the status of the Provisional Electoral Council in the sense that its temporary nature should not impede preserving know-how and technical capacity for future elections. It would be worth considering the establishment of a Permanent Secretary Office

to this effect. On the other hand, if the idea of a Permanent Electoral Council evolves it is of utmost importance to secure its independence. We also invite the Government to start engaging with MINUSTAH to take the logistical, operational and concrete measures in preparation for the holding of these elections.

The second area of concern refers to recovery and reconstruction efforts. I would like to single out the importance of renewing the mandate of the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC) that expired last October. We believe that the value added of this mechanism is unique, not only for the donor community but in particular for Haiti. The Government is an essential player when trying to rebuild a country. The IHRC facilitates taking the Haitian view as the basis of its proposals. We further believe that the public sector must be strengthened, and that some of the international assistance should take this into account. The Commission offers a practical, transparent and inclusive solution to closing the gap between existing capacities and the unmet needs of the Haitian people. Since this is intended to be an interim Commission its institutionalization in the long-term should be considered so that the country has a national focal point to channel international assistance.

This takes me to the matter of the remaining internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps. We appreciate the 19% reduction of the total persons and camp sites signaled in the report. We also support the enhanced efforts to protect vulnerable groups exposed to the cholera epidemic, food insecurity and gender-based violence to name a few. But we believe that more must be done to adopt comprehensive camp closure plans and find alternative housing and sites for long-term settlements. We would note that on average displaced persons in Africa spend well over a decade in temporary settlements. Unless this remains a priority we risk replicating this distressing situation in Haiti.

The third concern refers to security, which is also related to my previous remarks. It is now broadly acknowledged that gains in security could be undermined by weak socio-economic development and governance, and, consequently, that there is a need for a balanced approach to security and non-security considerations. The report before us reminds us of the important role that MINUSTAH fulfils in Haiti, particularly in the security front. It is understood that peacekeepers cannot be in Haiti in perpetuity but on the other hand it is equally important not to abandon Haiti prematurely. We look forward in the following months to receiving detailed information on the request made to the Secretary-General in paragraph 24 of resolution 2012 (2011) concerning a comprehensive assessment of threats to security in Haiti, including options, as appropriate to reconfigure the composition of MINUSTAH.

Finally, we take note of paragraph 56 of the report and the initial steps taken by the Government to contain this situation of uniformed militias organizing themselves without official approval.

Mr. President:

These observations are also marked by our recent visit to Haiti this past February. The international community, in particular the countries from Latin America and the Caribbean, have a clear stake in Haiti's success and we fully commit to continue accompanying the process of political, economic and social development. While the international community is willing to play a supporting role, the primary responsibility rests first and foremost with the Haitians themselves.

Thank you, Mr. President