EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GLOBAL INITIATIVE
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

PEACE OPERATIONS IN HAITI

LESSONS FROM TWO DECADES OF UN ENGAGEMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2025, the public appeals became urgent: Port-au-Prince is on the verge of falling to the gangs.[1] Over the previous weeks, the gangs of the Viv Ansanm alliance had seized community after community, infiltrating areas that had previously been considered safe and raising the question: exactly how hard would it be for the gangs to march up the hills from their seaside strongholds and take control of the prime minister's offices, the last major bastion of the Haitian government?

Gangs and organized crime are not new dynamics in Haiti. Armed groups have long been employed by elites to influence political and economic decision-making or even to control the population, while illegal arms and drug trafficking have been a part of the Haitian context for decades.

But Viv Ansanm is something different.[2] The gangs that make up this coalition have put aside turf wars and coalesced around common objectives, including political change. More significantly, they have developed a level of independence and control that puts them on a more equal standing with their former backers among the political and economic elite. In addition to engaging in a robust trade in illicit weapons and ammunition, gangs have developed strong and diversified streams of revenue, including from extortion, illegal checkpoints, kidnapping and various forms of trafficking, using Haiti as a transit point for drugs. Haiti's evolving illicit economy now has immediate and profound impacts on all aspects of daily life in the country, not to mention a significant effect on the security and economies of neighbours in the Caribbean and Latin America, as well as the US and Canada.

The increasing impact of organized crime, trafficking and illicit financial flows in Haiti mirrors concerns about the worldwide spread of transnational organized crime. According to a former head of INTERPOL, the recent 'growth in the breadth, scale and professionalism of organized crime is unprecedented'.[3] This raises concerns that the years to come will see a significant expansion in organized crime, especially given the weakening of long-standing multilateral structures and norms.

As a small island state in the Caribbean, Haiti has the potential to serve as a powerful test of the ability of international actors to support local actors in addressing organized crime. The Security Council's decision to establish a new Gang Suppression Force (GSF)[4] presents an opportunity to rethink past approaches in order to develop and deploy more effective methods of addressing transnational organized crime in the country. Given the increasing scale of organized crime, these methods could be of value in many different settings internationally in the coming years.

Reflecting on the successes and failures of past efforts in Haiti is critical to creating a clearer understanding of what is needed to confront organized crime in the country as well as in other contexts. In Haiti, the United Nations (UN) has been the primary actor on organized crime issues for decades; UN involvement goes back to the early 1990s, in the wake of the country's emergence from dictatorship. From the beginning of the new millennium, with the deployment of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the UN became increasingly aware of the role of organized criminal dynamics in the larger security situation. The peacekeeping mission, deployed from 2004 to 2017, produced crucial innovations, including the use of intelligence-led operations and the creation of the concept of community violence reduction. Its actions, coupled with efforts by its successor mission, the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), led to improvements in security and governance that were ultimately not sustained. After the October 2019 establishment of a small political mission,

the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), violence spiralled, leading to the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021 and culminating in the ascendancy of Viv Ansanm.

This report takes stock of the changes that took place during this pivotal time. Based on these lessons, as well as lessons from other contexts, it proposes a set of actionable recommendations for the way forward in Haiti, as well as options for implementing these recommendations. Further detail is available in the full version of this report.[5]

The way forward

Given the degradation in security in Haiti, the focus must be on improving the situation in Haiti in immediate ways while laying the groundwork for further improvement, particularly by addressing root causes. Efforts to improve security are critical, but not sufficient, and a strategy is needed to address the economic context as well as political dynamics. This multi-pronged approach is critical to re-establishing security while undermining and dismantling gang trafficking networks and financial flows, severing ties between gangs and their backers, countering impunity and building Haitian security capacity, while helping communities recover economically, socially and politically.

An appropriate solution would consist of a robust force to re-establish security across most of Port-au-Prince, appropriately sized to conduct operations as well as to provide a near-continuous security presence across Port-au-Prince and in neighbouring areas. This force would need to be well supported by an air component and, ideally, a maritime unit to patrol the coast, increasing pressure on traffickers and helping reduce the illicit flows that fund the gangs' operations.

However, the re-establishment of security constitutes only the first step. Unless it is complemented by additional lines of effort at the local, national and international level, including political, economic and social approaches, the use of force will be but a temporary fix, with organized criminal groups likely to re-emerge at a later date. These efforts would be delivered most effectively through a shared platform or, at a minimum, through a coordinated effort to avoid overlap and align sequencing.

First and foremost, attention should continue to be focused on increasing the size – and improving the leadership, training, coordination and resourcing – of the Haitian National Police (HNP), as well as the Haitian armed forces. These efforts will probably require expanded, long-term Haitian, bilateral and regional support, as well as multilateral advising and mentoring.

On the political side, a UN or regional special representative or special envoy should engage deeply with Haitian political, economic and civil society actors about severing the links between gangs and their backers. A political strategy should be coordinated with efforts to levy and enforce targeted sanctions.

An economic strategy should equally seek to address the roots of Haiti's illicit economy in coordination with the political strategy. Technical assistance should be provided to Haitian government efforts to tackle the economic aspects of organized crime, for example tackling money laundering. Another necessary intervention would be to engage with the Haitian banking sector to improve monitoring and flagging of suspicious transactions.

Additional efforts should include economic development initiatives, assistance with re-establishing the rule of law, cracking down on corruption, and supporting communities to improve their resilience and reduce community violence. Effective information-gathering capacities would be needed to monitor gang dynamics, understand illicit flows and tailor political strategies.

Background and methodology

This report focuses on UN and international responses to evolving transnational organized criminal dynamics in Haiti over the past two decades, dynamics that have resulted in significant shifts in the context in Haiti and have helped contribute to the current breakdown. The report builds on the Haiti case study discussed in 'The Elephant in the Room', published by the International Peace Institute in June 2013, which covers the early history of UN peace operations in Haiti, including the activities of MINUSTAH from its establishment in 2004 through 2012.[6] Further detail is available in the full version of this report.[7]

The analysis is based on interviews with over 40 Haitians, Haiti experts, UN practitioners and other experts. Interviewees included experts on transnational organized crime and on security and governance dynamics in Haiti; former staff members of MINUSTAH and MINUJUSTH, and current and former staff members of BINUH; current and former staff members of UN agencies working in Haiti and of panels of experts; local analysts, academics, civil servants and civil society; industry regulation specialists; and current and former staff members of other UN peace operations.

A note about terminology: While most international observers use the label 'gangs' for armed groups with criminal or other objectives in Haiti, most Haitians call them simply *bandi* or bandits. Many of these groups have their roots in neighbourhood-based organizations called *baz*, which historically acted as community-level organizations providing services including security.[8] Referring to them as 'gangs' arguably leads to people underestimating the seriousness of the problem, associating them with groups of miscreant youth rather than the well-armed, well-organized and well-resourced organizations that they currently represent.[9] Arguably, the term 'criminal armed groups' would more accurately reflect their use of violence to achieve their aims and the fact that a large proportion of their objectives are criminal in nature. However, for ease of reference, this report maintains the use of the term 'gang', given its familiarity.

In line with the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, this report defines an 'organized criminal group' as a 'structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences [...] in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit'.[10] As in the Convention, transnational organized criminal activities are seen as activities that have the primary purpose of obtaining profit illegally, using or threatening to use violence and corruption.[11] As such, this report focuses on conceptualizing the gangs as organized criminal structures, in recognition of their increasingly dominant role in the Haitian security, economic and political landscape.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout its history, Haiti has been an outlier. It was the first black republic and remains the world's only successful slave rebellion. This early success led to it being forced to the global periphery, made to pay a massive indemnity to France for its freedom and left out of the global diplomatic and trade order. The country has suffered significant amounts of external interference and intervention, and it has struggled to emerge from the decades-long dictatorship of the father-and-son Duvalier regime.

In the modern era, Haiti has also become a harbinger of things to come. The country is at the forefront of current international trends, including a regression from democratic norms, an increase in the application of violence as a means of governance, and an expansion of the presence, visibility and influence of non-state armed groups. Haiti also represents a vision of the potential future of many periphery areas of the world, as international engagement and aid decrease precipitously, international norms lose their potency and international institutions come under attack, leaving the weakest states to fend for themselves in the face of increasing political, economic and security challenges.

The Haitian state seems increasingly to be losing its battle against gangs, who have gained control of the country's licit and illicit marketplace, the landscape of Port-au-Prince and neighbouring *départements*, and even the political levers of power, like public opinion and control of physical state institutions, in an unprecedented way. Yet Haiti is not alone in confronting a rise in organized criminal groups; the world is seeing a boom in transnational organized crime, a trend that may be difficult to check in the face of shifting geopolitical dynamics.[12] The lessons learned from Haiti, as well as from UN involvement in Haiti, are therefore likely to have broader applicability in the years to come. The country's future as well the credibility of UN member states to deal with organized crime as a threat to peace and security are at stake if the situation in Haiti is not given the attention and resources that it merits.

A new vision for Haiti

Haiti is a test case for the international community's ability to deal with organized crime as a threat to peace and stability. Organized criminal dynamics have a significant impact on the Haitian economy and daily life, but they also affect the entire region, including the safety, security and economic activity of neighbouring countries in the Caribbean, as well as Latin American neighbours, the US and Canada, who must deal with the side effects of trafficking in drugs, arms and people.

Haiti currently stands in a precarious position, with a fractured, ineffectual transitional government facing increasing pressure from the gangs and seemingly unable – or unwilling – to regain gang-controlled territory, counter transnational and illicit economic dynamics, and carry out basic governance functions. There are real concerns that the situation will further deteriorate, especially given gangs' ability to influence and weaken the government by wielding social media propaganda and threats against public institutions and actors.[13] Gangs could continue developing, expanding their capacity and improving their management, organization and structure to transform into organizations more like cartels than the *baz* of the early 2000s, taking on an increasingly stronger de facto governance

function in the absence of the state. The situation in Port-au-Prince could continue to degrade until it resembles Mogadishu in the 1990s – a city without a functioning, unified government, divided along often deadly factional lines, and cut off in many respects from the international economy, banking and transit systems.

At the same time, the UN system is, at the very least, in a time of flux and retrenchment, posing a challenge to the organization's fundamental nature, ambition and utility. UN peace operations can no longer therefore be seen as a starting point for international engagement, much less a solution. New ways of providing support to countries in crisis must be considered, like regional or ad hoc coalitions of actors or private security contractors – yet these actors should not be considered a panacea and are likely to face similar or even greater challenges than those confronted by UN missions in Haiti. It is therefore critical to look at previous interventions by the UN and other actors to identify lessons to inform these new models. The future of Haiti depends on the ability of all stakeholders, including the international community and the UN, to seriously address organized crime as a threat to peace and security.

Baseline requirements

To restore order in Haiti, a number of elements are needed to address the symptoms and drivers of violence. To be effective in the long term, an approach must not only include initiatives to improve security, but also strategies to address the economic and political dynamics. Many of the below requirements are immensely challenging. Given the scale of these aims, they are unlikely to be achieved immediately, but they are nevertheless essential elements for improving the situation in the country, as well as the long-term effectiveness of the Haitian state. Steps should therefore be taken towards these goals in the short term, with the aim of moving along a pathway over time towards an improved end-state:

- **Understanding changing organized criminal group dynamics:** This should include an ability to gather and analyze intelligence on gang activities (including human, satellite, signals and open-source intelligence) in near-real time to map, track and prepare responses to gang actions.
- **Control over all borders:** Haitian border patrol and customs capacities must be expanded, better trained and better resourced to be able to respond to potential illicit movement of goods and people across the Haiti–Dominican Republic land border. In addition, the deployment of appropriate numbers of suitable maritime assets and personnel sufficient for monitoring, interdicting and deterring illicit trafficking is essential for reducing organized criminal activity. Given the weakness of the Haitian coastguard, this is likely to require the deployment of external maritime assets.
- **Control over airspace:** Airspace control is critical for observation and information gathering, protecting assets from air attack, and pursuing offensive operations, in addition to deterring and interdicting illegal trafficking by air. Although the recent deployment of drones by private security contractors on behalf of the HNP has given the police a slight increase in control over Haitian airspace, this is limited and has triggered criticism over issues of legality and human rights. The deployment of fixed-wing and rotary air assets, particularly attack helicopters, would help temporarily extend control in this important domain.
- **Protection of critical infrastructure:** A sufficient security presence is required to reduce the threat posed by organized criminal groups to critical infrastructure including roads, ports and airports. Although mainly static in nature, there should be some capacity for kinetic engagement.

- **More effective security institutions:** Efforts should be continued and bolstered to strengthen the HNP and the fledgling Haitian armed forces. Police trainee classes should be increased from one to two or three per year using HNP trainers supplemented by external police trainers and employing training facilities in parts of Haiti outside of Port-au-Prince.
- **More effective and accountable governing institutions:** This should include more effective customs operations and better fiscal transparency.
- **Improvement in the rule of law:** It is critical to have the ability to prosecute some emblematic cases of mass crimes and financial crimes, including by prosecuting gangs' backers.
- **Addressing gang funding:** Efforts should be made to cut the links between politicians, business elites and criminal groups, including through sanctions. Haiti's anti-money laundering infrastructure should also be bettered, including by improving the way the Haitian banking system implements sanctions, and monitors and addresses potential illicit financial flows.
- **Agreement among key groups, including elites, on a political way forward:** Without this vital component, there will always be spoilers willing to fund gangs to disrupt efforts. Political and economic elites must be convinced that they will benefit more from opening up Haiti's economy and political system than they might lose. Intensive dialogue efforts with actors from the political, economic and civil society sectors should focus on developing a shared vision of the future for Haiti. The focus should be on the medium and long term, not on quick fixes, which no longer exist.
- **Measures to promote economic growth and strengthen community resilience:** Concessions by political and economic elites should be tied to and incentivized by a package of economic investment, business development and infrastructure improvement programmes meant to improve the competitiveness of and scale up Haitian businesses, large and small, in a range of sectors of the economy, including agriculture. In addition, to address the pipeline of potential gang recruits and improve communities' ability to stand up to gangs, communities should receive humanitarian and livelihoods support, as well as violence-reduction programming. This should include efforts to provide viable employment, educational and recreational options for youth.

Potential pathways

There are a number of options to improve the situation in Haiti, considering the above requirements. While the Security Council recently authorized the establishment of a new, larger GSF and a UN Support Office to operate alongside BINUH, many questions remain about these new entities, among them whether the GSF will be able to obtain sufficient personnel and funding, whether UN budgetary difficulties will permit the full operation of the UNSOH, and whether the GSF and UNSOH, alongside BINUH and many other actors, will be able to effectively contribute to medium- and long-term measures to improve the situation in Haiti.

As a result, this section overviews the full, broad range of options for supporting Haitian efforts to respond. Moreover, given the challenging situation for UN peace operations, it considers a number of options for promoting peace without peacekeeping, including hybrid, ad hoc and regional arrangements. Complex, hybrid operations involving multiple actors carrying out different roles have been successfully conducted before. A case in point is the international response to Somali piracy, which was authorized under UN Security Council Resolution 1851, supported by the Somali federal government, and involved naval deployments by NATO, the EU and national governments.[14] It also involved responses by shipping companies, including the hiring of private security contractors, and support from regional governments and the UN for judicial mechanisms and development assistance.

The below options variously address the symptoms and/or the root causes of violence, and range from eminently feasible possibilities to more ambitious proposals.

- **Special envoy:** A UN or regional political representative focused on good offices and political engagement to address the political root causes of the security situation. Based outside of Haiti to allow greater frankness, this individual could coordinate engagement at the Security Council, as well as with parties behind the scenes, seeking a grand political compromise while encouraging backers to cut ties with gangs. However, if an envoy's efforts are not accompanied by a robust security capacity and technical support, their impact will likely be limited.
- **International monitors:** This capacity could focus on monitoring the implementation of security and political arrangements, for example agreed ceasefire zones established for the return of displaced individuals or the implementation of a revised transitional agreement, using the observers deployed to the UNVMC as an example. With additional defensive capacity, monitors could also take on a protective role for key infrastructure like roads and ports. This option is more flexible and less expensive than a full peace operation or multidimensional mission, but it relies on permissive security conditions that do not currently exist, as well as agreement among diverse actors on parameters for monitoring.
- **Expanded, tailored sanctions and a more effective arms embargo:** An expansion – or the threat of an expansion – of targeted sanctions to encompass more political and economic elite backers of gangs could help increase pressure on elites, encouraging them to engage in political dialogue in better faith. In addition, an increase in international prosecutions for trafficking and financial crimes would also help increase pressure on key backers, despite the difficulties involved in extraditing and bringing them to trial. A strengthened arms embargo is critical to reducing the flows of arms and ammunition to Haiti, but many factors impede a crackdown by key actors in the US – the source for nearly all arms going to Haiti – on arms sales and transport. Given the difficulties recently confronting UN sanctions regimes and Panels of Experts, a regional panel of experts supported by the Organization of American States (OAS) or by the Caribbean Community could help circumvent Security Council stalemate while leveraging peer pressure from neighbouring countries to push for improvement.
- **A major push to strengthen Haitian security forces:** Significantly expanded Haitian, UN and bilateral funding could facilitate an increase and acceleration in recruitment, vetting and training of police and armed forces officers. Additional resources could increase the speed at which candidates are screened and selected, while the establishment of alternative basic and advanced training sites outside of Port-au-Prince could make training new officer promotions less subject to security-related interruptions. However, even with a significant increase in resourcing and successful identification of alternative training locations, this option still results in a lag time of at least a couple of years before the force receives significant expansions.
- **Expanded regional support:** One of the reasons for MINUSTAH's relative success against gangs was the significant support provided by countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region. Regional countries made up the majority of MINUSTAH T/PCCs for most of the mission's lifespan, providing robust military and police capabilities, technical support, development cooperation assistance, and political will. However, since the end of MINUSTAH, countries in the region have played a much less prominent role in the situation in Haiti, with the recent exception of mediation efforts by the Caribbean Community.[15] The involvement of regional countries and regional organizations in developing an OAS Roadmap to support Haiti is promising, given the potential of

sustained support to police capacity building, economic investment, the humanitarian response and other areas of critical need.[16]

- **Adequate support for non-UN security forces:** The MSS mission was never resourced to allow its full deployment. To ensure the minimal effectiveness of the newly established GSF, a UN Support Office is intended to support the deployment of expanded and enhanced capacities, including an increased number of personnel, enhanced equipment and additional resourcing to allow the establishment of forward and temporary operating bases. However, given the current financial situation of the UN, assessed funding no longer offers the level of security it used to. Moreover, the MSS mission also faced coordination challenges with Haitian, UN and international capacities that may not be resolved by an increase in resourcing for the GSF.
- **A larger, more robust force:** The MSS mission focused on supporting the HNP with policing operations, with limited success. In contrast, the Security Council-authorized GSF is intended to be able to undertake operations directly and independently against gangs, driving them out of gang-affected neighbourhoods and possibly attacking gang strongholds directly, or at least containing their activities within certain areas, reducing gangs' control of the capital and impact on its security. Contributing countries should strongly consider providing the GSF with airspace and maritime capacities like helicopters and patrol boats. But these options are costly, adding to concerns about the resourcing sustainability of assessed funding. Moreover, while the MSS mission theoretically worked to strengthen HNP capacities, its activities have not been connected to a wider set of efforts to address the political and socio-economic drivers of the situation. The GSF will risk its impact being short-lived unless it is complemented by efforts to address root causes, as well as to protect against risks of human rights violations and civilian casualties.
- **Private security forces:** Haitian private security companies are contracted for specific security tasks and often have limited capacity in terms of personnel, training and equipment. International private security contractors (PSCs), often known as private military contractors, have been and could in the future be called upon to supplement the capacity of Haitian security forces.[17] PSCs could undertake robust action, but mustering, paying and sustaining the substantial number of personnel required to establish a secure environment would be both difficult and expensive. Challenges with this option also include a lack of accountability and transparency around PSCs' actions, as well as a long history of human rights violations by private contractors.[18] Increased scrutiny of private security in recent years has led to the development of voluntary agreements like the Montreux Document and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers,[19] but these tools are non-binding, meaning that Haiti's government would have to adopt and implement a decree setting out a legal framework to result in implementation.[20] Given the likely increase in the use of PSCs in the years to come, the international community should consider developing and applying more robust enforcement mechanisms, for example by aggressively pursuing the adoption of an International Convention on Private Military and Security Companies.[21]
- **Enhanced UN special political mission:** A political mission with a revised mandate focused on coordination and additional technical expertise in areas including political economy and sanctions, coupled with increased security capacity or a UN guard unit to ensure the continuity of service provision. A country-wide presence could increase the mission's resilience and impact. An enhanced political mission could also oversee the delivery of a UN support package to the GSF or other parallel security force without the need to establish a UN Support Office, avoiding the fragmentation of international support. However, this option faces challenges relating to current difficulties in the UN with authorizing and resourcing peace operations.

- **Hybrid or joint mission:** A form of multidimensional peace operation co-led by the UNODC or a regional organization with a specific focus on addressing the root causes of the current situation, including addressing corruption, tackling illicit financial flows, supporting enhanced transparency and accountability, and strengthening Haitian rule of law institutions. This form of peace operation could focus specifically on root causes, bringing assessed funding to expand political and technical work on corruption, impunity and illicit financing. It would also need to be mandated to look beyond the borders of Haiti to consider regional illicit flows, a key comparative advantage given the limitations of Haitian law enforcement actors.[22] However, it would not be able to directly address security issues. Moreover, it would also depend on the continuing support of the Haitian state, which could limit its ability to push for controversial or challenging reforms, and might confine it to focusing on technical solutions rather than significant political change.
- **UN peacekeeping operation:** The option of a full, multidimensional UN peacekeeping operation would combine various areas of technical expertise, security capacity and political engagement under a single leadership structure, reducing the coordination challenges that affected the MSS mission. However, given current tensions in the Security Council and budgetary pressures on the UN, this option seems unlikely for the moment.

Three vital ingredients

All of these options, in whatever combination they are deployed, are likely to fail without dedicated capacity and well-resourced efforts in three key areas: data gathering and analysis, technical expertise in illicit economies, and support for the judicial system.

Nuanced and locally rooted understanding of organized crime dynamics

Haiti's lack of capacity to gather data on illicit activities is a serious challenge for efforts to assess and respond to criminal dynamics. Haiti has been referred to as 'a blind spot for international law enforcement when it comes to transnational criminal organizations',[23] and an objective for the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime is to address the lack of data and understanding around these dynamics.

As discussed above, it is essential for any peace operation deployed in Haiti to have the capacity to carry out an integrated analysis of the complex elements forming the country's political-criminal dynamics. For a peacekeeping operation, this would likely take the form of a JMAC, but for an SPM, it could consist of a small, integrated analysis cell, like those in UNAMA, UNSOM or UNSMIL. Even if the capacity is authorized, recent budgetary challenges mean that this might not translate into actual capacity within the mission. Staff members working in an analytical capacity should be trained to conduct political economy analysis as well as stakeholder mapping and analysis exercises for armed groups. It would also be useful for them to understand illicit financial flows and illicit economies to help them identify ways to disrupt these and undermine criminal groups. Moreover, protocols should be developed to ensure smooth and effective information sharing within the mission and with key partners including members of the UN country team, as well as parallel operations like the MSS mission, in certain circumstances.

Tailored technical capacity and expertise in illicit economies

Key technical expertise should be embedded within any operation to ensure its ability to mount a coordinated, effective response, including political economy analysis and expertise on illicit financial flows and trafficking. The mission should also have a macro-level view of financial flows within Haiti

as well as between Haiti and other countries in the region, in particular by finding ways to work with the Haitian domestic banking system, perhaps through some type of financial intelligence capacity.[24]

The peace operation should integrate the various technical responses under a strategic vision in support of a political strategy that seeks to address the dynamics underlying an illicit economy. The UN could consider novel or hybrid modalities for embedding this capacity, such as a peace operation led jointly by the UNODC and either the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs or the Department of Peace Operations.[25]

A primary focus of this technical capacity should be supporting national actors with capacity building and advice. In Haiti, the ULCC, which has carried out important investigations of cases of fraud and abuse, should be supported further. Other key national institutions include the HNP's anti-narcotic brigade and UCREF. Efforts should be made to better connect these institutions with the judicial apparatus, including bringing investigative judges into inquiries at an early stage to facilitate and speed up prosecutions. The Law on Prevention and Repression of Corruption, adopted in 2014, criminalizes a broad range of offences, including nepotism, embezzlement, bribery, insider trading, harassment and conflicts of interest, and, assuming sufficient political will, should serve as a strong basis for prosecution.

Technical support should also include assistance to the Haitian state in implementing sanctions. This support does not need to be substantial and could be as minimal as a couple of individuals. Most of the capacities needed to support the implementation of sanctions already exist, including support to the police, customs and border management. As a result, a coordinated approach is needed to assist the Haitian authorities.[26]

At a minimum, the establishment of a transnational organized crime focal point within a more conventional peacekeeping or special political mission could help ensure dedicated capacity and a coordinating capability to maintain visibility of anti-organized crime efforts.[27]

Emphasis on the rule of law

The Haitian judicial system has ground to a halt in recent years. To counter impunity, a number of measures could be considered.

First, the UN peace operation should ramp up support for recent efforts to vet and certify judges. In addition, with courts in downtown Port-au-Prince inaccessible, courts should be provided premises that they can use for proceedings in the short term until the areas around their premises can be freed from gang control.

However, given the system's deep-seated weaknesses, including corruption, vulnerability to political pressure, and a lack of resources and expertise, broader efforts should be undertaken in order to advance prosecutions against, in particular, organized criminal group leaders, their political backers, financiers and money launderers, and those implicated in recent mass atrocity crimes. Several options could be considered. For example, the UN could establish a hybrid court, pairing Haitian and international judges. To deal with the risks posed by the continuing insecurity in Haiti, a temporary tribunal could be established extra-territorially in another country in the region. While this might reduce the impact of the judicial process on the continuing activities of the gangs, it could provide the safety and protection needed to permit an effective investigation and fair judicial process, although it could still face political pressure around sending suspects abroad.

As a more locally rooted alternative, international capacity should be embedded throughout the judicial system, supplementing Haitian institutions rather than replacing them. Although the heads of the prosecutorial service and judiciary should be nationals, internationals should collaborate from within the prosecutorial and judicial structures.[28]

As a final alternative, a small cadre of national judicial professionals, supported by the peace operation, could be established to focus on fast-tracking key cases to counter impunity. Training and technical support with investigative procedures would also be useful. These judges, lawyers and clerks should receive some level of physical protection so they can carry out their work without fear. Joint investigations could be conducted with different rule of law apparatuses in the region, including the US, and INTERPOL.

These efforts require continuity. Haiti has had 47 ministers of justice since 1986, with each lasting on average only nine months.[29] Constant changes in policies, programmes and personnel prevent the effective implementation of programmes. In addition, many cases may take years to try; for example, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was active for a decade, between 1993 and 2004, while the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia was active for 24 years, between 1993 and 2017. Any alternative judicial approach would probably adjudicate according to Haitian law, in particular Haiti's 2014 Law on Prevention and Repression of Corruption, which offers an adequate basis for prosecution, assuming sufficient political will.[30] The Haitian state and the international community should commit at the outset to maintaining these initiatives for a minimum duration of three to five years, focusing on the most emblematic and impactful cases.

A proposed approach

Given the degradation in security in Haiti, the focus must be on improving the situation in crucial, immediate ways while laying the groundwork for further improvement, particularly by addressing root causes. Efforts to improve security are critical, but not sufficient. They must be accompanied by a political and an economic strategy. This multi-pronged approach is needed to re-establish security while taking urgent steps to undermine and dismantle gang trafficking networks and financial flows, sever ties between gangs and their backers, counter impunity and build Haitian security capacity, and at the same time help communities recover. A growing number of actors have expressed interest in supporting efforts in Haiti; given the scale of the need, the central question is how best to use all available capacities as effectively as possible, while avoiding duplication, ensuring alignment of efforts and coordinating in the most efficient manner possible. This section attempts to outline an approach intended to come as close as possible to responding to Haiti's need for assistance from external partners, noting where possible which entities might be particularly well suited to the various tasks.

A reasonable solution would start with a robust force to re-establish security across most of Port-au-Prince. The force would need to be sized appropriately to not only conduct operations in coordination with or separately from the HNP, but also to provide a near-continuous security presence in key areas of the city, including critical infrastructure like roads and important intersections, the airport, ports and markets. The force should also be large enough to establish forward operating bases in key neighbouring areas in the Artibonite and Center *départements*, as well as in outlying parts of the metropolitan Port-au-Prince area. By way of comparison, in August 2007, at the tail end of robust operations in Port-au-Prince, MINUSTAH had close to 5 000 uniformed military and police personnel in the metropolitan region. This included around 3 300 personnel in infantry, military police and

formed police units, including more than 1 000 highly trained, robust Brazilian troops, plus around 750 infantry in the neighbouring areas of Croix-des-Bouquets and Carrefour, along with a handful of air units and engineer companies.[31]

A force of around 5 000 could therefore potentially be enough to provide coverage for metropolitan Port-au-Prince as well as for the neighbouring Centre and Artibonite *départements* and border crossings with the Dominican Republic. However, in addition to being well-resourced, equipped, trained and willing to engage in robust kinetic operations, it would also need proper support from an appropriate air component, including a range of fixed-wing and rotary capacities, such as attack helicopters as well as transportation, medevac and casevac units. The force should also be supported by a maritime component to patrol the coast. The MINUSTAH maritime unit included 16 boats, but even a unit of half that size could, if properly deployed and managed, increase pressure on traffickers, helping reduce illicit flows and therefore restrict gang funding.

The difficulties of securing sufficient troop and police contributions may make the option of hiring private security contractors appealing. However, without proper precautions, this quick fix runs the risk of exacerbating underlying conditions. As seen in the earliest robust MINUSTAH operations, use of indiscriminate force may increase popular dissatisfaction and could actually increase support for the gangs as an alternative to official state leadership. Any PSCs hired to conduct operations in Haiti should commit to abiding by voluntary industry standards laid out in the International Code of Conduct and the Montreux Declaration. Furthermore, the Haitian government should consider adopting by decree (in the continuing absence of elections) enhanced national frameworks to regulate PSCs and hold them accountable.

The re-establishment of security is only the first step. Unless complemented by additional lines of effort at the local, national and international level, including political and economic approaches, the use of force will only serve as a temporary fix, with organized criminal groups likely to resurge at a later date. These efforts would be delivered most effectively through a shared platform or a coordinated effort to align sequencing and avoid overlap. The seeming proliferation of international leadership structures in Haiti is likely to facilitate the ability of Haitian spoilers of all types to derail the political process, while also increasing the risk that robust engagement is not appropriately backed by security and socio-economic follow-on measures, as well as longer-term institution-building programming. Close, intense and consistent engagement among partners is therefore essential for the efforts being considered for Haiti; without effective coordination, they run a real risk of failure.

First and foremost, attention should continue to be focused on increasing the size of the HNP and armed forces, and improving their leadership, training, coordination and resourcing. It is likely that these efforts will require expanded, long-term Haitian, bilateral and regional support, as well as multilateral advising and mentoring.

On the political side, a UN or regional special representative or special envoy should engage deeply with Haitian political, economic and civil society actors about severing the links between gangs and their backers. A political strategy to that end should be coordinated with efforts to levy and enforce targeted sanctions.

In addition to the political strategy – or, better yet, integrated with it – a strategy to address the economic aspects of the situation should be developed and deployed. This strategy should incorporate an approach to engaging with political, economic and local leaders to recognize and respond to the economic roots of the current situation. Technical assistance should be provided to Haitian

government efforts to tackle the economic aspects of organized crime: for example, implementing the necessary measures to remove Haiti from the Financial Action Task Force's grey list for failures in stemming money laundering. Another area of intervention could involve engaging with the Haitian banking sector to improve monitoring and flagging of suspicious transactions. In this area, the OAS may be better placed to lead, given its ability to leverage pressure from countries in the region to address these sensitive issues, or perhaps the UNODC, given its technical expertise. A regional panel of illicit economy and sanctions experts could complement these efforts.

A focus on combating illicit economic activities should be coupled with economic investment and development initiatives intended to jumpstart Haiti's licit economy. This should be approached in a broad manner, focusing across economic investment, business development and infrastructure improvement, and combining technical support and assistance in a range of sectors of the Haitian economy, especially agriculture. The OAS Roadmap could help kickstart momentum in this area, but would need to be complemented by bilateral and multilateral efforts, including by UN agencies.

Efforts to establish the rule of law should include initiating prosecutions in key cases, in particular by prosecuting corruption through the 2014 anti-corruption law, in addition to some financial crimes and mass atrocity crimes. The establishment of an extraterritorial court or a hybrid national-international tribunal could help to advance some cases swiftly, setting a precedent for future prosecutions.

Effective information-gathering capacities would be needed to monitor gang dynamics, understand illicit flows and tailor political strategies, including to induce improved behaviour and reduce violence by criminal armed groups. Partnerships between regional and international organizations and national intelligence agencies could help improve the quality and quantity of information available.

These efforts should be complemented by the provision of humanitarian assistance to communities as well as programmes to support youth, women and other disadvantaged groups with livelihoods and other opportunities. These should include labour-intensive cash and food for work programmes, investment in local infrastructure, vocational training opportunities and youth recreation programming.

Finally, all actors engaging in Haiti need to implement appropriate oversight and risk management mechanisms, not least to ensure that they do not support criminal economies. This includes establishing firewalling to prevent staff members from being tempted by involvement in criminal ecosystems, in addition to ensuring that robust accountability measures prevent logistics, construction and other procurement contracts from benefiting criminal enterprises.

Although this solution may not be possible for political, budgetary or other reasons, any efforts to support a Haitian response to the situation should aim to come as close to this proposal as possible. For example, the impact of a smaller deployed force could be maximized by an increase in the number and capacity of available air and maritime assets. If a hybrid or special court is not an option, then perhaps the embedding of international judicial advisers, prosecutors and investigators in the courts would help advance key judicial cases. Similarly, a UN peacekeeping operation could be a useful platform for delivering a combination of political good offices, technical engagement and security assistance. However, given recent dynamics, a special political mission led by the UN, whether jointly with the UNODC or a regional organization, could also help serve as a platform for coordination and delivery, assuming effective alignment with non-UN security forces.

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