

15 July 2014

Secretary-General's remarks at press conference [Q&A below]

Bonjour, mesdames et messieurs.

Bonswa.

Thank you for this opportunity. I have had a very moving and inspiring visit to Haiti.

This is my fifth time as Secretary-General to visit this country. I visited on two occasions early in my tenure as a sign of my commitment to the country. I returned thereafter twice in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. Now I have come again at another important moment.

Over the past two days, I met with a wide array of Haitians, including the President, the Prime Minister, parliamentarians, judges, police and representatives of civil society.

Yesterday, I travelled into the countryside, Los Palmas, to meet with families affected by the cholera epidemic.

These encounters have given me a strong sense of the significant progress that Haiti has achieved in the last ten years, with the support of the MINUSTAH [United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti] peacekeeping operation, and in overcoming one of history's most devastating earthquakes.

The security situation has improved markedly. Key institutions have been strengthened. More displaced people have been able to leave the camps that were established to shelter thousands of homeless earthquake victims.

But serious challenges remain.

I am especially concerned that Haiti's political transition could suffer a regression. The holding of inclusive elections in October is essential for the continuity of parliament in 2015, and for the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law.

Shortly after my return to New York, I will report to the Security Council on the situation. Sadly, for now, I have little concrete news on progress towards these long-

overdue elections. My report will inform the decision the Council will take on MINUSTAH's future.

The Security Council has already endorsed a gradual reduction of MINUSTAH's footprint, and a further reconfiguration is being contemplated. I am confident that Haitians will rise to the occasion and take on greater responsibilities, particularly in the field of security, the rule of law and election management.

At this moment of transition for the United Nations presence in Haiti, I wish to assure the people of Haiti that the entire United Nations family remains fully committed to working to promote their human rights, health and well-being.

Yesterday, in Los Palmas, Prime Minister [Laurent] Lamothe and I launched the "Total Sanitation campaign," which is designed to reach 3 million people over the next five years in rural areas across the country.

The United Nations is working with the Government of Haiti through a new joint high-level committee to implement a common strategy for the elimination of cholera. That strategy is working. The number of cholera cases is the lowest it has been since the outbreak of the epidemic.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to President [Michel] Martelly and Prime Minister Lamothe for their effective intervention, and also express my immense gratitude to all the Member States, NGOs and other partners that have contributed to this effort.

Despite progress, cholera is still an emergency. The second phase of a vaccination campaign targeting 200,000 people in high-risk areas will begin next week.

After this [press] conference, I am going to vaccinate myself as a way to demonstrate our commitment.

I call on donors to provide the funding that is so urgently needed for investments in early warning, rapid response, water and sanitation.

I have been very saddened by the suffering caused by the cholera epidemic. Yesterday in Los Palmas, I was able to express my deep regret directly to families that lost loved ones to the disease.

We will work with the Government of Haiti to scale up assistance to affected families and communities.

Today, we are on a trajectory for success in the struggle against the epidemic. The elimination of cholera has been achieved in other difficult environments around the world, and it can be done here in Haiti, too.

Haiti and the United Nations have been partners for a long time, reflecting the deep challenges facing the country. I want that partnership to grow even stronger.

I want us to look ahead and seize the opportunities that will give Haitian people the peaceful, prosperous and stable future they yearn for and deserve.

Merci beaucoup.

Mesi anpil.

Q: [Question in French on compensation for Haitians affected by cholera]

SG: I and the United Nations feel very sad for the tragic death of more than 8,000 people and more than 700,000 people who have been affected by cholera. One of the main purposes of my coming to Haiti this time is to demonstrate our strong solidarity with the Government and people, particularly those affected people, the United Nations' continuing commitment to eliminate this cholera.

I will do my best as the Secretary-General to work with the partners and donors and with the World Bank to mobilize all the necessary resources to provide assistance to those affected people and to improve water and sanitation systems. This is exactly what I did yesterday with Prime Minister Lamothe in Los Palmas. Thank you.

Q: I'd like to ask you about the situation in the Middle East. We know that the ceasefire between Hamas and Israel lasted for just six hours, and innocent civilians are once again getting killed, so I'd like to get your take on the situation in Gaza. Thank you.

SG: I am deeply concerned about the situation which is taking place in Gaza between Israelis and Palestinian military jihadists and Hamas. I have been very deeply engaged with regional and global leaders during the last few days since the outbreak of this crisis. Even while visiting Haiti, I have been speaking with world leaders.

I appreciate key actors, like Egyptian President [Abdel Fattah Al] Sisi and the Qatari Amir and other many leaders, including the United States, who have been really trying hard to facilitate a ceasefire. And I was encouraged when the Israeli Government has agreed to this ceasefire proposal brokered by the Egyptian President.

At the same time, I am deeply worried and disappointed that Hamas has not agreed to this and this violence has resumed again between the two parties. My message is that this violence must stop. And two parties – the Palestinian Authority and the Israelis – they must resume the peace talks as soon as possible.

We have experienced this tragic violence, which happened at the end of 2008 and early 2009, first Gazan crisis, the second one in 2012, [with a] ceasefire [agreed to] in November 2012. This is already the third time. It is unacceptable that this violence takes [place] periodically, like this way.

As the Secretary-General of the United Nations, I will exert all possible efforts to facilitate a ceasefire and encourage them strongly to return to dialogue table. That is the only viable option at this time. I am deeply concerned about the loss of lives and many displaced people because of this crisis.

I urge again in the strongest possible terms: Stop violence and return to dialogue and resolve all these pending issues through peaceful means.

Thank you.

Mesi anpil.