Mr. Alermy PIERVILUS, Social Worker and Executive Secretary of the Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organizations-POHDH-

Audience Foreign Affairs Commission, USA Congress

Written testimony, September 29, 2022

- 1. Haiti has been in a chaotic climate since 2018. The political, social, and economic crisis that is devouring the country has worsened. It is common ground that institutions are now non-existent, and the reins are in the hands of the de facto Prime Minister, Dr. Ariel HENRY that the Core Group had imposed on the country after the assassination of former president Jovenel MOISE on the night of July 7, 2021, in his private residence. The state has collapsed. The democratic order has been interrupted.
- 2. The last elections in Haiti were held in 2017. Under President Jovenel MOISE, the constitutional deadlines for renewing democratic institutions through the organization of elections were not respected. In 2019, legislative elections to renew the Senat were not held. As a result, the Haitian Legislative Power is dysfunctional since January 13, 2020.
- 3. At the level of local authorities, former President Jovenel MOISE had appointed, by the decree of July 8, 2020, Temporary Executive Agents to replace local elected officials. Whereas the democratic principle is that elected officials replace elected officials.
- 4. Justice, the regulator of all refractory behavior, is also dysfunctional. The Supreme Court considered the country's high court dysfunctional since it contains only three (3) judges out of twelve (12). The legal and constitutional conditions for filling vacancies at the Supreme Court are currently non-existent. The Haitian Constitution in force in its article 175 states: «The judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President of the Republic on a list of three (3) seats submitted by the Senate. » However, currently, there is no elected president in Haiti and the Senat is dysfunctional.
- 5. In addition, the Superior Council of the Judiciary (CSPJ), an independent body of the Haitian judicial system, is currently unable to hold a legal and validation session since it is incomplete and has neither a President nor Vice-President. And the courts in the capital of Port-au-Prince are almost closed because of the worsening climate of insecurity with the proliferation of armed gangs. So, there is institutional chaos in the country right now.

- 6.Democracy implies the proper functioning of political and administrative institutions. The constitutional control of the government is ensured/assumed by the Parliament and the Superior Court of Auditors and Administrative Disputes. These institutions assume control of both a priori and a posteriori. Currently, public funding is not under the control of constitutional institutions. The government has public funding as it sees fit.
- 7. The Superior Court of Auditors and Administrative Disputes is muzzled by the Executive Power which in 2020, in the absence of the Parliament, issued a decree to reduce the power of the said Court in matters of Control, especially financial control. The Superior Court of Auditors and Administrative Disputes is the technical arm of the Parliament when it comes to financial control.
- 8. The failure of democratic institutions to function is an obstacle to the enjoyment of citizens' rights. For example, the non-functioning of Parliament, Municipal Councils, and others is a violation of citizens' right to participate in public affairs, and the right to vote.
- 9. In this context of institutional crisis and widespread insecurity, the social and economic conditions of the population have considerably deteriorated. Social rights such as the rights to food, health, work, education, and housing are systematically violated. Today, more than 4. 5 million Haitians live in severe food and nutritional insecurity. Commodity prices have risen dramatically. People are living in poverty and extreme poverty. Note that in July 2022, according to data from the Bank of the Republic of Haiti (BRH), the inflation rate was thirty and five (30.5%) percent.
- 10. It is in this context of misery that the de facto government, led by Dr. Ariel HENRY, decided to increase the price of fuel significantly in September 2022. It is already announced that the rate will reach more than fifty (50%) percent in November if this increase in product prices is maintained. This will undoubtedly worsen the suffering and miseries of the population. This decision taken against the interests of the people aroused their anger and led to a movement of mobilizations both in Portau-Prince and in the cities of provinces against insecurity, misery, and rising fuel prices. The demonstrators demanded the resignation of the de facto prime minister, Ariel HENRY.
- 11. On the other hand, public freedoms are reduced and violated. Public gatherings and peaceful protest movements are systematically suppressed by the police, who, each time, misuse tear gas, rubber projectiles, and real ones, which cause many victims. POHDH condemns acts of violence, theft, and rape recorded in popular demonstrations.
- 12. The current de facto government despises and discredits the demands of the population to please its bosses. However, it should adopt a strategy to define real

policies to improve the living conditions of the population through the implementation of human rights.

- 13. The bad socio-political and economic situations in which the country grows deprive the Haitian people of the effective enjoyment of their fundamental rights and encourage our compatriots to flee the country in search of a better life. The waves of deportations and repatriations of Haitians have increased considerably in recent years. At the same time, citizens are being left in the grip of growing insecurity, which makes social life virtually impossible. It should also be emphasized that in this context of crisis and widespread insecurity, acts of violence and collective rape against women and girls have increased.
- 14. During the last ten years of the PHTK regime in power, the overall human rights situation in Haiti has been severely degraded. In fact, governance focused on corruption, impunity and banditry have been strengthened. While the \$4.2 billion Petro Caribe Fund is wasted and stolen. Domestic production is stalled. Agriculture is despised. The policy of grabbing farmland for the installation of industrial free zones is accelerating despite the resistance of peasants to denounce the human rights violations that this policy has caused.
- 15. As a result, the country is now at an impasse where the main democratic institutions are dysfunctional and even non-existent. The government in power has no legitimacy and does not guarantee trust to social actors, political actors, and the general population.
- 16. In terms of recommendations, we indicate below some prospects for solutions to improve the human rights situation in Haiti.
- 17. The only possible outcome is the revival of the democratic process to respond to the devastation of the country. This means that the new political management of the country with a new team in charge of the transition is imperative. This new government must help establish the framework that promotes the restoration of the conditions for political change centered on justice, the end of impunity, and citizen participation through the organization of open and credible elections.
- 18. The new governing team must work towards the following key stabilization objectives:
- 19. Security stabilization: Need to dismantle gangs and rebuild the Haitian National Police (PNH) Despite its current failure, it is the only force capable of maintaining order and guaranteeing stability. But to do so, it must regain its autonomy and professionalism. The PNH must be cleaned at all levels, free of links or mafia connections. It must be strengthened in terms of numbers and adequately equipped, while at the same time improving the working conditions of police officers.

- 20. Political stabilization: The new team in power must undertake political reforms to reassure the population and achieve credible elections. Apart from honest elections, supported by strong popular participation in a climate of security, the results of the vote will be contested, and the current instability will remain in the long term. This political stability also requires the urgent establishment by the new team in the power of a Provisional Electoral Council that inspires confidence in the population, and social and political actors.
- 21. Economic and social stabilization: In the current climate, economic recovery and successful development programs are not possible. There is a need for urgent and strong initiatives to improve public finances, support investment in the agricultural sector, infrastructure, and minimal response to the current humanitarian emergency. Exercising the right to vote goes hand in hand with the confidence of citizens. When we live in fear, when we are hungry and the future seems closed, voting becomes a useless luxury.