

Haiti Consultative Group Thematic Points of Meeting Number One

On March 1, 1991, the initial meeting of the Haiti Consultative Group hosted by Creative Associates International, Inc. was convened. Themes that were raised at the meeting were as follows:

- A new and welcome element in the Haitian equation is the populace based legitimacy currently enjoyed by President Jean Bertrand Aristide, elected in the freest electoral process in Haiti's troubled political history.
- President Aristide's overwhelming victory is owed to the perception of him as the most anti-Macoute candidate and his projected populist and redistributive profile with respect to economic and social issues.
- The hope engendered by the election of December 16th and the inauguration of President Aristide was evidenced in the effort by the populace to clean up the streets and to paint of murals on walls.
- While President Aristide enjoys populace-based legitimacy, other public officials in the Cabinet and the national legislature and locally-based officials do not enjoy the same degree of populace-based legitimacy. There was a worrisome discrepancy between the high turnout for the December 16th election, in which the Presidency was contested, and the much lower turnout for the January 20th run off involving the greater part of the legislature and the municipal and communal councils.
- Concern was expressed that this wealth of populace-based legitimacy focused almost exclusively on the President could lead to an "arrogance of legitimacy," allowing for a continuation of "strong man politics," and possibly even dictatorship as opposed to the Constitutional requirement that imposes checks and balances and allows room for political pluralism.
- It was expressed that in analyzing the current situation one should note the cultural and historical context of Haitian politics, "the African as opposed to Latin context of Haitian political culture," and the role of the Catholic Church in President Aristide's political development.
- Attention was given to the need for reform of Haitian civil/military relations with reference to the Constitutional requirement to separate the military and police functions. However, it was pointed out that the formal

separation would account for little if real reform did not take place within separate police and military institutions. Even though formal separation might occur an unprofessional, corrupt, and abusive police and military could remain. There is a need for a competent and honest security force. Civic education for the security forces is a continuing need. Defining and implementing appropriate functions for the security forces will be a major challenge in the transformation of Haiti. Fear was expressed that the disintegration of the Haitian military could lead to the re-appearance of privatized "security forces" serving fragmented interests working against democratic transformation.

- A framework was suggested for evaluating Haiti's transformation into a more democratic, just, and productive nation. This framework, as presented, is the result of research on a number of countries undergoing transformation towards democracy. This research isolated key dimensions of success and failure in the maintenance or achievement of national stability. While all countries present differing historical and cultural situations, there are powerful elements that pervade most transitory environments. It was asserted that if these important factors were ignored, transformation would not succeed. The most powerful of the factors to be considered was **populace-based legitimacy**. Other key elements are **congruence or unity of effort, competence, effectiveness of transformation actions, and adequacy of support**.
- During the ensuing discussion, many participants offered their comments against the background of the analytical framework presented above.
- There was a clear consensus that, whatever shortcomings Haiti may have regarding democratic transition, **populace-based legitimacy** was not in short supply. President Aristide enjoys an abundance of legitimacy at the present time.
- With reference to **congruency or unity of effort**, participants expressed unease. While President Aristide's desire for the betterment of the Haitian people was not questioned, divisive and divergent tendencies exist within the Aristide camp. Aristide will face great difficulty in shaping a coherent plan for economic recovery given the plethora of agendas found among his supporters.
- While there was no clear consensus on the ultimate ideological orientation of the Aristide/Preval Cabinet (some characterized it as centrist and realist, others see it as narrowly to the left, and others view it as comprised of close associates and friends of Aristide) there appeared to be

a clear consensus that the issue of **competency** will be central to transformation. Ideology will not solve Haiti's problems. Competency and effective transformation actions will be the key elements of success or failure.

- As stated above, a necessary ingredient of a successful transformation is **support**. While there is general good will and support for Haiti in the international community, the level of support could be reduced by a perception that the newly elected government is anti-American and or anti-donor, or narrowly ideological. The view was expressed that in politics perception is reality. A continuation of earlier incidents perceived as intimidation of the press, a lack of tolerance for political opposition, and anti-American tirades by those projected as close to the government could compromise support for Haiti. Members of Congress, outside of the key Members of the Congressional Task Force on Haiti, do not know much about Haiti and may react negatively to press reports detailing threats to political freedom and projecting an anti-American profile.
- Currently there are significant resources being allocated and planned for Haiti.
- In this Fiscal Year 1991, the U.S. is providing \$80.6 million (\$38.3 million in Development Assistance; \$12.5 million in Economic Support Funds; \$27.6 million in P.L. 480 Food Assistance; \$1.2 million in non-lethal military aid; and \$1 million for Peace Corps activities.)
- The U.S. Administration's request for Fiscal Year 1992 is at \$92.9 million (\$38.75 million in Development Assistance; \$24 million in Economic Support Funds; \$25.81 million in P.L. 480 Food Assistance; \$2.9 million in military aid, and \$1.4 million for Peace Corps activities.)
- The Inter-American Development Bank has \$400 million to spend over the next few years and is anxious to get underway in assisting Haiti. It is co-financing an Economic Social Fund with the World Bank in Haiti. This \$20 million program which will work at the grass roots level through NGO's and local government has been approved by the World Bank Board and will come up for approval at the Inter-American Development Bank Board meeting this month. The Economic Social Fund will focus upon the social sectors, the rehabilitation and construction of social infrastructure, environmental recovery and protection.
- However, the Inter-American Development Bank funds are not quickly dispersed. It is here that bilateral donors such as the U.S. become crucial. The immediate task is to assist Haiti in ways which can quickly provide

support for democratic transformation and economic recovery.

- The World Bank has \$82 million available this calendar year for its core program in education, the environment and re-forestation, road maintenance, and the co-financing of the Economic Social Fund with the Inter-American Development Bank.
- The problem with reference to support was defined as strategic and one of quality as opposed to quantity. The utilization of assistance to maximize impact in areas where there can be a multiplier effect was stated as pivotal. Activities with multiplier impact should be stressed. Suggestions focused upon reform of the judicial system and literacy training. Programs that work towards empowerment of the poor and that reduce extortion, extraction and exploitation would have a multiplier affect by increasing the incomes of the poor. Programs that assist in fulfilling the Constitution's emphasis on a government defined by checks and balances would also enhance accountability and reduce waste and corruption. Programs to enhance local governance could also yield significant benefits. U.S.I.A. has exchange programs which could be of help in improving the administrative capacity of Haiti's managers.
- However, the effectiveness of transformation actions will be conditioned by the development of a coherent plan emanating from the Aristide/Preval government.
- Key to the success of any action plan will be the ability of the Aristide/Preval government to move beyond generalities and ideology to develop a clear cut plan of work to address Haiti's many problems and to maximize its strengths.
- Without a clear development plan into which donors can fit, Haiti will continue to choose from whatever is offered, choosing one from column A or column B, and donors will be pressed to respond to the crisis of the moment.
- U.S.A.I.D. is developing an action plan that will indicate its strategy for utilizing resources allocated for Haiti.
- We must clearly think through and analyze in specific terms what we should be doing. However, the shaping by the Aristide/Preval government of a Plan of Work providing goals, objectives, specific actions to be taken and their timetables is a necessary part of the transformation process.