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The Coordination Europe-Haiti would like to thank the EEAS for the opportunity to contribute to the dialogue about the EU's review of its relations with Latin America and the Caribbean. As a platform representing a wide range of Haitian civil society organisations vis-à-vis the EU's institutions, we would like to raise a few issues that are relevant for the EU-Haiti relations in their regional context.

Notwithstanding some positive trends in the Latin American and Caribbean region over the past years, 'social gains over the past 15 years have become more vulnerable to short term political and economic fluctuations', as [a recent report](#) commissioned by the European Parliament rightly points out. Poverty and persistent, sometimes rising inequality are a matter of concern in countries like Nicaragua, El Salvador, Bolivia and Haiti. These broader issues should remain central in any future EU engagement with the region, in particular with Haiti.

Political relations

Already for decades the EU has diplomatic relations with the Republic of Haiti. In recent years it has sometimes been challenging to continue this dialogue. Under the Martelly government, the EU tried to maintain this dialogue at the highest level. After a prolonged and tense election period with finally a political vacuum and an interim government, Haiti again has a government with a constitutional mandate. This opens possibilities for deepening the political dialogue. In this respect we ask your attention for the following:

- The European Parliament recently voiced its concerns about the performance of the new Haitian government. The national budget for 2018 has sparked fierce indignation among Haitian citizens and shows that the government is not attentive for the huge poverty and inequality within Haitian society. Only a few months ago an investigative report was presented to the Senate about serious cases of corruption in relation to the management of the PetroCaribe fund (petrol from Venezuela). Esp. since the EU adheres to high standards of good governance, these concerns require that the political dialogue is not only open and constructive, but also critical and decisive if and where necessary.
- When addressing the issue of good governance and corruption, a vital and strong civil society which holds public duty bearers responsible, is an essential asset. We ask the EU to support endogenous civic initiatives that promote public and political accountability.
- Human rights are a vital element of the EU's political profile towards partner countries. In this regard we refer to [the work](#) of the UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Haiti. Important points of concern in relation to political rights are; the necessary reform of complicated electoral laws; the situation of human rights defenders; the dire situation in prisons, where the large majority of inmates resides without due legal process; the position of Haitians or people of Haitian descent forced to migrate from the Dominican Republic (46,000 in 2017 only). Issues related to social rights are: concerns about child abuse and increasing child trafficking, the Restavek phenomenon, and the alarming situation with regard to educational services (both access and quality) and health services.

Development Cooperation

Haiti is the EU partner country with the largest development cooperation envelope in Latin America and the Caribbean: €420 million for 2014-2020. Esp. after the earthquake in 2010 and hurricane Matthew in 2016, the EU has shown that it is committed to poverty reduction and sustainable development in Haiti.

- The EU should use the Sustainable Development Goals as starting point and leading framework for its development cooperation with Haiti, in line with the EU Consensus on Development. An important element of the SDGs is the principle of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development: ensure that also through other policy areas than development cooperation the EU contributes to sustainable development, e.g. through EU trade and investment policies. Do international commercial relations really stimulate local economic development? Who benefits from Foreign Direct Investment in Haiti?
- A big issue is the role of local civil society, which plays a vital role in the process of sustainable development. The problem is that EU funding for civil society is hardly accessible for local NGOs and other civil movements. Minimum amounts for applications are too high. Requirements are too complicated. Bold steps should be taken to ease local NGOs' access to funding. The Coordination Europe-Haiti remains at your disposal to jointly elaborate feasible modalities for this.
- Climate resilience: Hurricane Matthew end 2016 has made painfully clear that Haiti needs to make progress in disaster risk reduction. Long-term climate resilience should be an integral part of the EU's interventions in areas like infrastructure, agriculture and food security. In addition, we ask special attention for the importance of short-term disaster preparedness, civil protection services and well-developed communication networks, which have proven their usefulness during the latest disasters in Haiti. We refer to a [recent ODI study](#) on the need for an integrated resilience policies in the Caribbean region, following hurricanes like Matthew and Irma.


Trade and investment

While the EU is committed to make sure that trade contributes to sustainable development, in the case of Haiti this is a complicated one. The [trade imbalance](#) between the EU and Haiti is soaring. Today, the EU exports five times as much to Haiti as it imports from Haiti. This means that deliberate policy efforts are needed to make sure that Haiti does not lose out completely, but gets a fair chance to strengthen its local economy in the first place. A stronger local economy and more focus on rural production would also enhance local economic opportunities for so many Haitians, who now desperately seek for a career abroad in countries like Brazil and Chile.

- The EU maintains a free trade agreement with CARIFORUM area; Haiti has not ratified the EPA. Currently there is stagnation in the negotiations between the EU and Haiti. A 2013 [first review](#) of CARIFORUM EPA shows that the glass is half full, half empty from the perspective of poverty reduction and sustainable development. As long as Haiti is not well-prepared for far-reaching liberalization, continuing the current Everything But Arms Regime seems the preferable option for the nearby future.

- In its trade relations with the CARIFORUM region, the EU should give due attention to respect for human rights in the countries it partners with, as stipulated in the trade agreement with CARIFORUM (article 2-3) and the Cotonou Agreement (article 9).
- Make sure that a substantial part of the EU's ODA budget available for Haiti is used for proper Aid for Trade measures, focusing first and foremost on strengthening internal markets in Haiti. The country is too dependent on imports from abroad. From a sustainable development perspective, not free trade (or even freer trade) but a strong focus on strengthening local markets and economic and financial institutions is needed.
- Special attention should be given to the agri-food sector, where Haiti's dependence on imports is biggest. Our partner organizations in Haiti recently developed a [perspective](#) for a sustainable agricultural sector in Haiti, which is more self-reliant. In order to contribute to the perspective of a stronger Haitian agricultural economy, our platform asks the EU to promote that kind of foreign direct investments that clearly contributes to enhanced local productive capacity.

Yours sincerely,



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