UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk

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Oral update on the human rights situation in Haiti

Geneva, 2 October 2026

Muchas gracias, señor vicepresidente.

Distinguished delegates,

My heart goes out to the people of Haiti – often trapped between gang violence and heavy-handed responses.

Despite some success in containing their activity in parts of the capital, Port-au-Prince, gangs continue to adapt and expand, re-emerging in new areas and constantly rearming.

Recent attacks in Kenscoff and Gressier, and the growing gang presence in the Sud-Est department, point to a strategy of seizing new territory and key transport routes, threatening stability across and beyond Haiti – and leaving destruction in its wake.

The first operations by the Gang Suppression Force, mandated by the UN Security Council, marked a long-awaited step towards greater security. But the Force remains far below the strength needed. This week's renewal of its mandate needs to be followed by full, accelerated deployment – with firm human rights safeguards embedded.

During the reporting period, from 1 January to 11 September this year, my Office documented at least 5,700 people killed or injured by gangs or during operations against them. Gangs have also kidnapped more than 230 people and raped over 1,000 women and girls. And the real figures are likely much higher.

Law-enforcement operations continue to raise serious concerns about the unnecessary and disproportionate use of force.

Since the beginning of the year, more than half of all casualties occurred in the context of security operations, with hundreds of people struck by stray bullets and explosive drones.

The number of summary executions carried out by specialized police units has fallen significantly – by almost half compared with 2025. However, people allegedly associated with gangs continue to be summarily executed.

In some areas, so-called self-defence groups killed or injured some 280 people so far this year.

Monsieur le Vice-Président,

La violence incessante a détourné l'attention et les ressources destinées à la protection des droits fondamentaux.

L'extorsion, le pillage et la destruction de biens paralysent l'activité économique. Le danger permanent empêche les populations d'accéder aux écoles, aux hôpitaux et aux services essentiels.

Plus de la moitié des Haïtiens sont confrontés à une insécurité alimentaire aiguë, et 40 pour cent n'ont pas accès aux soins de santé de base. Près de 1,5 million de personnes ont été déplacées de force, et bien d'autres encore vivent avec leurs valises toujours prêtes.

Entre 30 et 50 pour cent des membres de gangs sont des enfants. L'année passée, le recrutement et l'utilisation d'enfants par les gangs ont presque triplé.

Pour de nombreux enfants en Haïti, rejoindre un gang peut être le seul moyen de survivre. Mais aucun enfant ne devrait être contraint de choisir entre sa propre vie et la sécurité de ses voisins.

Les enfants sont exploités, victimes de traite et maltraités – alors que les mécanismes visant à prévenir ces pratiques et à réinsérer les enfants dans la société restent insuffisants.

Les prisons sont surpeuplées à l'extrême, dans des conditions inhumaines et dégradantes. Dans tout Haïti, les prisons fonctionnent, en moyenne, à plus de trois fois leur capacité officielle. Au moins 125 personnes sont mortes en détention rien que cette année.

Des élections libres et équitables constituent le seul moyen légitime de rétablir l'ordre constitutionnel. Cependant, compte tenu de tout ce que je viens de décrire, il est difficile d'imaginer que les conditions nécessaires à la tenue d'élections crédibles dans le courant de l'année soient réunies. Les responsables de violations graves et d'abus des droits humains ne doivent pas être autorisés à se présenter aux élections.

Mr. Vice-President,

This chaos has deep, intertwined roots, fed by greed and impunity – both within Haiti and beyond. The only way to cut those roots is through a comprehensive approach that looks beyond security.

First, on sanctions.

A handful of powerful individuals are exploiting and perpetuating people's grievances and the weakness of State institutions to pursue their own interests.

These forces are strategic and well resourced.

Many gang leaders are subject to international sanctions. Those sanctions also need to cover all those pulling the strings behind criminal networks and benefiting from them.

And they need to be matched by accountability on the ground to strengthen their practical impact.

Second, on the arms embargo.

To save lives and restore order, the continuous illicit flow of weapons and ammunition into Haiti must end.

It is essential that the arms embargo imposed by the Security Council be fully respected and effectively implemented. States need to act urgently and decisively to crack down on arms trafficking and choke off these flows at their source.

Third, on the diaspora.

Nearly five billion US dollars in remittances flowed into Haiti last year – around one sixth of its GDP. These transfers are a lifeline for the country's economy and its people.

Yet we are seeing a crackdown on Haitians who have fled abroad.

In 2026, more than 220,000 people, including nearly 20,000 children, have been forcibly returned to Haiti from several countries in the region.

Many of these people fled for their lives or those of their families. Sending them back puts those lives at risk once again, in violation of the principle of non-refoulement.

Fourth, on protection.

I urge all States to support the rapid, full deployment of the Gang Suppression Force, with the equipment it needs and in full compliance with human rights.

The Government needs to ensure that all security operations – by State or private actors – are firmly grounded in international human rights law.

My Office has provided human rights training to members of specialized police units and the Gang Suppression Force, and we are ready to do more.

The authorities also need to prioritize strengthening the rule of law and the justice system – to end impunity and to decongest prisons.

Ensuring humane conditions of detention is paramount – particularly as the Gang Suppression Force scales up its operations.

Fifth, on accountability.

Two specialized judicial units, supported by my Office and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, are intended to help investigate mass atrocities, sexual violence, and complex

financial crimes. I urge the authorities to make them fully operational, and all States – to extend their support.

There is also a need for broader efforts to fight corruption, poverty, and inequality. This is key to lasting stability and essential to prevent gangs from preying on children.

There is much work to be done, and across all these areas, the Haitian Government needs real, sustained international support.

Mr. Vice-President,

Those who profit from the current state of disorder are determined to see Haiti fail. They seek to fray its social fabric and destroy the prospects of a stronger State.

We cannot allow that to happen.

We need all eyes on Haiti.

And we must never lose sight of the fact that, across the country, communities and individuals are showing extraordinary courage, resilience, and dignity – every day. Every morning, children leave homes without running water, dressed in immaculate, carefully ironed uniforms, and set out for school.

We must help bring closer the day when hope – not fear – walks with them on the road.

Thank you very much.