

# Statement on Haiti

## Reginald Dumas

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Page | 1

*At the invitation of the United Nations and the Stockholm-based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), Ambassador Reginald Dumas attended a Round Table in New York on March 1 and 2 on “Democracy, Peace and Security: the role of the UN”. He chaired a session on “Promoting Coordination, Comprehensive Planning and Integrated Approaches”, which used Haiti as a case study. In his capacity as Chairman, Ambassador Dumas gave an abridged version to the Round Table of the following statement.*

*Ambassador Dumas, who served in Haiti for six months in 2004 as Special Adviser to the UN Secretary General, is author of [An Encounter With Haiti](#).*

**STATEMENT by Ambassador Reginald Dumas, Chairman of the 6<sup>th</sup> Session, “Promoting Coordination, Comprehensive Planning and Integrated Approaches” of the ROUND TABLE on “DEMOCRACY, PEACE and SECURITY: The ROLE of the UN” Millennium Plaza Hotel, New York, March 1-2, 2010**

Since socio-economic development is the inescapable backdrop to all that we have been discussing these last two days, I thought I might devote some attention to the issue lest we be charged with insufficient regard for the crucial role it plays in the proper functioning of the themes of this Round Table and this session.

Today, March 2, 2010, is the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Two of the main commitments given by participants in the Paris meeting, the UN among them, were, firstly, “eliminating duplication of efforts and rationalising donor activities to make them as cost-effective as possible” and, secondly, “intensify(ing) efforts to provide and use development assistance...in ways that rationalise the often excessive fragmentation of donor activities at the country and sector levels.”

The participants stated they would “ensure” – that was the word they used: “ensure” – that the principles of harmonisation, alignment and managing for results are adapted to environments of weak governance and capacity.” They could have been speaking about today’s Haiti.

The Declaration (which was preceded two years earlier by the Rome Declaration on Harmonisation) also deplored what it called “insufficient integration of global programmes and initiatives into partner countries’ broader development agendas...” Donors and partner countries committed themselves to “integrate diagnostic reviews and performance assessment frameworks within country-led strategies for capacity development.”

But since coordination and integration cannot logically be matters only for donors or recipients, the latter committed *themselves* to “integrat(ing) specific capacity-strengthening objectives in national development strategies and pursu(ing) their im[plementation through country-led capacity development strategies where needed.” I’ really not sure what those words and phrases mean, and they might not win a Nobel Prize for literature, but to what extent have they been applied to Haiti?

Now, you cannot have coordination and integration unless you first plan *what* you are going to do. *How* you do it follows from that. So the Declaration speaks to planning as well. Donors are to base “their overall support...on partners’ national development strategies and periodic reviews of progress in implementing these strategies.” Also, donors and partner countries are to “work together to establish mutually agreed frameworks that provide reliable assessments of performance, transparency and accountability of country systems.” And the Declaration recognises that “the capacity to plan, manage, implement and account for results of policies and programmes is critical for achieving development objectives...” So you see that the 2005 Declaration dealt with all the basic themes of this session of 2010.

Our specific theme this afternoon speaks not merely of “planning” but of “comprehensive planning”. In my experience, there is no such thing as “comprehensive planning”. It is a phrase much beloved of politicians, who persuade themselves, and hope to persuade their publics, that in using it they are demonstrating their total grasp of all their countries’ issues. That of course is nonsense.

The words “coordinate”, “harmonise”, “integrate”, “plan” and their derivatives run like a leitmotif through the Declaration. But we must be careful about the language we use. “Coordinate” could be considered a synonym of “harmonise”; a number of groups can work together in harmony to achieve a certain end. These groups however retain their separate identities. By contrast, integration suggests that the groups have come together as one; they have merged. That is an entirely different matter.

The Paris Declaration set targets to be achieved by 2010, among them that “50% of technical cooperation flows (should be) implemented through coordinated programmes consistent with national development strategies...(that) 66% of aid flows are provided in the context of programme-based approaches...(that) 40% of donor missions to the field are joint (and that) 66% of country analytic work is joint.”

3½ years later, in September 2008, the Accra Agenda for Action reviewed the Declaration and admitted that “the pace of progress is too slow. Without further reform and faster action we will not meet our 2010 commitments and targets for improving the quality of aid.” Actions designed to accelerate progress were recommended. It would appear, if we are here today examining this matter again, that progress continues to be slow, and that the 2005 targets will not be achieved even by the end of this year.

I won’t go into that now. You will find a lot of the reasons on the OECD website, and indications in the excellent paper Dr Necla Tschirgi prepared for this Round Table.

The confused aftermath of the Haiti earthquake is clear testimony to the inadequacies that exist and persist. When the Head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) can chide his own colleagues on the failure of the Global Charter Lead Agencies to coordinate effectively, or even to meet satisfactorily what he called the “basic requirements for the efficient management of a large-scale emergency operation”, we know we are in deep trouble. President Clinton has accepted the UN invitation to be in charge of the coordination effort. The number of Haitians with whom he would normally have coordinated has been much reduced, but we must wish him well, and give him whatever support we can.

I believe a major reason why the international community does not do as well in troubled countries as it would like is an insufficient emphasis on the people of the countries and their cultural characteristics. Culture is not only song and dance and literature. The word is defined in

the 2005 Report of the Commission for Africa, which you may recall was chaired by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, as being “about shared patterns of identity, symbolic meaning, aspiration...the relationships between individuals and groups within that society (and) about the relationships between ideas and perspectives,...self-respect and a sense of security, about how individuals are socialised and values are formed and transmitted.”

“Development”, “democracy”, “peace and security”, “good governance” and so on are all high-minded international concepts to which nearly everyone subscribes, or at least pays lip service. But they are concepts that too often represent a top-down approach and, I regret to say, an attitude that not infrequently smacks of foreign imposition. It is as if the people of a country are being told that the concepts are essential characteristics of “civilised” societies which must be embraced wholesale, without consultation, and without adaptation to local conditions and sensibilities, if the country concerned wishes itself to be considered “civilised”. Is democracy, western-style, seen as such a universal panacea that it can simply be grafted on to the cultures and traditions of non-western societies which, even if geographically in the west, have evolved their own indigenous norms over the centuries?

Decisions are made by the “international community”, at so-called “donor conferences” and the like, for those seen as the less privileged who, despite the mantra that “country ownership is key”, are usually not invited to indicate what *they* would like for *their* societies. And by “they” and “their” I am speaking not so much of governments as I am of people, the man and woman in the street. The organisers of this Round Table know of my efforts and concerns in this regard.

The concept note for this Round Table says that “(t)he objective of the meeting will be to examine the role of democracy and state-building in ensuring sustainable peace and security, and the role of the UN in supporting those processes.” If the word “democracy” implies fairness and equity, and dialogue and consultation with *all* the people, and actions taken in the best interest of society *as a whole*, then certain questions arise with regard to Haiti, and no doubt to other countries as well.

To what extent, for instance, are Haitian customary law and practice and conflict management techniques incorporated in the “comprehensive planning” we say we want to achieve? We criticise what we see as an acute shortage of social equity in Haiti, and wring our hands over its degraded environment and damaged agriculture. But what focused action has been taken on these things? Do these things have anything to do with good governance and social peace?

What continuing efforts have been made in the areas of gender inequality and, especially these days, child protection? To what extent are the Haitian people consulted on the process of their development? To what extent do the Haitian people define and manage that process? Does sewing shirts in sweatshops raise significantly the quality of life? How indeed can one build a viable democratic state and a lasting peace without the constant input of, and supervision by, the people? Does the term “the people” include the Diaspora, which over the years has been the single largest source of assistance to Haiti?

Are internationally-observed elections and calls for institutional reforms, say of the judiciary, the essence of democracy? Does the first-past-the-post system engender electoral peace? Has the experience of countries like Botswana and Mauritius and South Africa been studied? What if the UN’s idea of democracy conflicts with the views of a powerful state which has its own political, anti-democratic agenda to pursue? What indeed is the image of the international community, including the UN, among the Haitian people? Have they ever been asked?

I thought I might put these thoughts to this session before calling on our panelists to make their presentations.

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