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## FEATURED Q&A

# Will a Transition Council for Haiti Be Seen as Legitimate?



A transitional council to select Haiti's new leadership is nearing completion, a month after gang violence exploded in the country. Displaced families are pictured at a school in Port-au-Prince. // File Photo: International Organization for Migration.

**Q Caribbean leaders and the U.S. State Department are backing the formation of a transitional council to select Haiti's new leadership, and a majority of Haitian political parties and coalitions have submitted nominations for the council. However, there are notable holdouts, such as Jean-Charles Moïse's Pitit Desalin party—and powerful forces inside Haiti that are opposed to the plan, like Jimmy "Barbecue" Chérizier and his G9 gang alliance. Will a transitional council backed by the United States and Caribbean leaders be seen as legitimate inside Haiti? How likely is it that a new government chosen by the transitional council will be able to govern Haiti and exercise power amid the ongoing crisis of gang violence? Will the transitional council or a subsequent interim government be able to organize elections soon, and if not, for how long will Haitians accept another unelected government?**

**A Jacky Lumarque, rector at Quisqueya University in Haiti:** "After eight months of exchanges led by Caricom with a group of around 40 participants from the Haitian political scene (political parties, civil society, private sector, religious community and the diaspora), the actors managed to agree on the resignation of the Prime Minister Henry and the creation of a transitional presidential council of seven members plus two observers. This choice of governance, which excludes the simpler, more usual option of using a high court judge as provisional president, perhaps corresponds to a desire to include everyone. But it can have several undesirable consequences later. To begin with, the comings and goings in the designation of the mem-

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## TODAY'S NEWS

### ECONOMIC

## Brazil Eyes Gas Imports Through Bolivia Pipeline

Energy firms have entered talks about possibly reversing the flow of a pipeline in Bolivia to transport natural gas from Argentina to Brazil.

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## Chilean Start-up WOM Files for Bankruptcy

Chilean telecommunications start-up WOM filed for bankruptcy protection in documents dated today. The filing allows the company to continue operating.

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### POLITICAL

## Peru Authorities Raid President's Home, Palace in Rolex Probe

Peruvian police over the weekend raided President Dina Boluarte's home and the presidential palace in connection with an investigation into allegations of "unlawful enrichment" sparked by the president's use of luxury watches.

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Boluarte // File Photo: TV Perú.

## POLITICAL NEWS

## Peruvian Authorities Raid President's Home, Palace

Peruvian police and prosecutors used a battering ram to force their way into President Dina Boluarte's home late Friday in order to search it in connection with an investigation into allegations of "unlawful enrichment" after Boluarte was seen with luxury Rolex watches since taking office, *The New York Times* reported. After the raid late in the evening on Good Friday, prosecutors and police then searched Boluarte's office and residence in the presidential palace after midnight. Boluarte failed to appear earlier in the week for a meeting with prosecutors to show them three Rolex watches she has worn in public and to explain how she acquired them, the newspaper reported. According to Attorney General Juan Villena, Boluarte had also refused to allow authorities into her home to execute a search warrant, an action that Villena called "a clear indicator of rebellion," *The New York Times* reported. In a televised address on Saturday, Boluarte blasted what she called the "unconstitutional and discriminatory way" that the investigation was being carried out after authorities broke down her front door and burst into her home, the *Associated Press* reported. During her televised remarks, Boluarte did not explain the origin of the watches and her lawyer had advised her not to make any statements until she meets with prosecutors to "clarify the facts," the AP reported. In the remarks, Boluarte denied wrongdoing. "I have always said that I'm an honest woman," she said, the AP reported. "I ask myself a question: since when does a sector of the press care about what a president wears or does not wear? I hope and I want to believe that this is not a sexist or discriminatory issue," she said. Mateo Castañeda, Boluarte's lawyer, told local radio station RPP on Saturday that police found 10 "nice" watches at the presidential palace and even searched under carpets at the palace, the AP reported. Castañeda did not say how many of the watches were Rolexes.

## ECONOMIC NEWS

## Russian Oil Arrives in Cuba in Effort to Relieve Shortages

A shipment of 90,000 metric tons of oil from Russia has arrived in Cuba as the Caribbean nation struggles with power outages and seeks to alleviate shortages of gasoline, Reuters reported Sunday. Russia resumed some shipments of oil to Cuba in 2022, several years after the shipments ended when the Soviet Union collapsed. However, shipping data showed that no oil left Russia for Cuba last year. The shipment came as Cuba is facing a dire power blackouts. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in last week's *Energy Advisor*.]

## Brazil Eyes Gas Imports Through Bolivian Pipeline

Argentine and Brazilian energy firms have begun talks to explore the possibility of reversing the flow of a gas pipeline in Bolivia to bring gas from Argentina to Brazil, where supplies are dwindling, Reuters reported. Brazil is increasingly struggling against the volatile prices of alternative liquefied natural gas supplies, and Argentina's shale gas reserves, which are the second largest in the world, stands to balance Brazil's supplies. The pipeline's current configuration helps export gas from Bolivia, but while the Andean country was once a top producer in the region, production has fallen off, and experts say it may cease entirely by 2029, Reuters reported. For Brazil and for the region as a whole, demand for gas could potentially be satisfied by exports from Argentina's massive Vaca Muerta shale formation, transporting that gas north along the same pipeline that previously carried it south from Bolivia. "It's a commercial problem," said Mauricio Tolmasquim, chief energy transition officer for Petrobras, the Brazilian state-owned oil firm, Reuters reported. "If Bolivia can increase (supply) for Brazil,

## NEWS BRIEFS

## Powerful Haitian Gang Leader Seeks Involvement in Talks to Form New Gov't

Jimmy "Barbecue" Chérizier, the leader of one of Haiti's most powerful gangs, the G9 alliance, told Sky News his group would consider laying down its arms if it is allowed to participate in talks over forming a new government, the news service reported Friday. The United Nations estimates that roughly 80 percent of the capital, Port-au-Prince, is controlled by gangs, and Chérizier's G9 is in control of a large part of that territory.

## Mexican Authorities Investigating Deaths of Chinese Migrants

Authorities in Mexico are investigating the deaths of eight Chinese migrants whose boat capsized off Oaxaca state, Reuters reported Sunday. The incident happened Friday, and the lone survivor said the group had left the previous day from Tapachula in Chiapas state. Seven women and one man, all from China, died, the wire service reported. The bodies were found on a beach in the town of Playa Vicente, BBC News reported. It was unclear what happened to the boat's Mexican captain.

## Measure to Regulate Brazil's Wind Industry Stalls in Congress

A bill to regulate Brazil's wind industry has stalled in Congress after amendments were added that would ensure coal-fired thermal plants keep burning through 2050, Bloomberg News reported today. Environmentally focused lawmakers oppose the amendments, which have impeded progress on constructing Brazil's wind parks. "We are waiting on the starting pistol," said Jonathan Cole, CEO of Corio Generation, an offshore wind developer hoping to pursue projects in Brazil.

that would be perfect because then we can find another way to bring the gas from Argentina, (such as) building another pipeline to the south of Brazil or we can resort to LNG," he added.

## BUSINESS NEWS

# Chilean Start-up WOM Files for Bankruptcy

Chilean telecommunications start-up WOM has filed for bankruptcy following the failure of its plan to refinance \$348 million in debt, Bloomberg News reported today. The company, which filed for bankruptcy protection in Delaware in documents dated today, listed debts of between \$1 billion and \$10 billion and assets in the same range, the news service reported. The bankruptcy filing allows the company to continue operating as it works on a plan to pay its creditors. WOM has offered inexpensive mobile phone plans and used a bold marketing campaign in an effort to win customers in a competitive telecom market, Bloomberg News reported. While it expanded its user base quickly, it also drained cash, the news service reported. "Since arriving in the country in 2015, WOM has achieved rapid growth, positioning itself as the fastest growing mobile telecommunications provider in Chile in terms of subscribers, total and network revenues, exceeding 7 million customers and more than 20 percent market share," the company says on its website. Only Telefónica's Movistar and Entel have more mobile lines in Chile than WOM, according to regulatory data collected through last September, Bloomberg News reported. Claro, controlled by Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim, has the fourth-largest share of mobile lines in the country. This year, WOM's bonds had fallen to less than 30 cents on the dollar as the company has faced concerns about liquidity, Bloomberg News reported. WOM, which stands for "word of mouth," was established after Novator Partners acquired Nextel Chile's assets in 2015 and rebranded the operation.

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bers show the difficulties that this council could have in functioning as a coherent and harmonious body. Furthermore, who do the sectors invited to participate in the council represent? What is the merit that justifies the power attributed to them in the formation of the transitional government? In the absence of their representation in a parliament, how can we measure their political importance and their connection with the population? By their incessant presence in the media? By their power to disturb public order? The most important challenge in this transition, apart from restoring security (by accepting the principle of a multinational security force, according to Security Council Resolution 2699), is the conduct of good elections to get us out of this anomaly of a republic functioning with zero elected officials. Elections are not just technical, they are also a political process. Leadership is needed to create trust and prepare the participants and the population to accept the results in order to avoid greater instability afterward. With the current formula, the executive branch, in the absence of any balance of power and any control mechanism, risks becoming a fierce battleground for the choice of members of the government at all levels. Are we not, once again, missing the transition to the restoration of an elected government?"

**A Renata Segura, deputy director for Latin America and the Caribbean at International Crisis Group:** "Advances toward the creation of the presidential transitional council offer cause for hope. However, for this new arrangement to work, the council needs to balance care in the building of consensus with rapid and resolute action. It is urgent that the council choose a new interim prime minister, a first step in rebuilding a government able to respond to Haiti's huge security and humanitarian challenges. However, council members should be afforded the time they need to decide how the transitional government will operate after almost three

years of failed political negotiations. While the promise by interim Prime Minister Henry that he will resign resolves opposition forces' main demands, Haiti's political spectrum remains extremely fragmented. The accord establishing the council, hammered out in Jamaica on March 11, only came about due to foreign pressure, although it echoes the governance model that opposition groups have proposed in recent months. It is now up to council members to address their differences and present a united front to Haiti and the world. The stakes could not be higher. The transitional council should act quickly to assert its authority over the gangs by renewing the national police's leadership, boosting police morale by arranging for new equipment to be delivered soon and actively engaging with Kenya to restart plans to deploy a multinational security mission. Meanwhile, the council should start building consensus on when to convene elections, a process that will take at least 18 months. This requires choosing new electoral authorities and guaranteeing that Haitians can safely reach their polling stations. History has shown rushing this process can be harmful, so the council should proceed with caution."

**A Phillip Leon Euell, of counsel at Diaz, Reus & Targ:** "The legitimacy of a transitional council in Haiti, backed by U.S. and Caribbean leaders, currently faces significant challenges within the country. The proposal for new leadership through a presidential council has faced rejection from some political parties, showing a lack of support among Haitian political actors. This division is further complicated by the resistance within Pitit Desalin, despite party leader Jean Charles Moïse's recent reversal on his prior rejection of the council. With regard to the council's ability to govern amid the ongoing crisis of gang violence, the security situation in Haiti presents a substantial challenge. There has been a departure of a significant number of police officers, in

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addition to the killing and wounding of officers, and a general sentiment among the remaining force that they are outmatched and unprotected against gang violence. These developments demonstrate the enormity of the challenge any new government will face in attempting to restore order and govern effectively. Organizing free and fair elections in the immediate future will be a daunting task given the ongoing violence and the lack of consensus on the transition process. The enduring crisis may force Haitians to tolerate an unelected government longer than desired, especially if such a government struggles to make tangible progress in restoring security and democratic order. While the establishment of a transitional council is a step toward addressing Haiti's governance vacuum, its legitimacy within Haiti, its ability to govern amid severe challenges, and the timeline for transitioning to an elected government are all fraught with significant uncertainties."

**A** **Cécile Accilien, professor of French and Francophone studies at the University of Maryland, College Park:** "Before we can even have a conversation about whether or not a transitional council or subsequent interim government will be able to organize elections soon, we must first address the gang violence. The Haitian national police and the Haitian state are unable to handle the federation of gangs in Haiti. This has been the case for years. The structured role of the gangs and their power must be taken into account. A Haitian historian recently said that some of the gangs are terrorists because they are terrorizing the population. How can a terrorized population think about elections when its basic needs (such as security, food and shelter) are not being met? A transitional council will probably not be seen as legitimate by Haitians, but given the situation and the direct or indirect role that outside forces such as the United States, France, Canada and other Core Group

members play, they have a moral responsibility to help with the situation of the gangs. After all, Haiti does not produce arms, and the majority of the arms that support the gangs come from the United States."

**A** **Georges Fauriol, senior advisor at the U.S. Institute of Peace and co-chair of the Caribbean Policy Consortium:** "Some political and civil society actors' questioning of the council's credibility is once again an indicator of the international community dictating outcomes in Haiti. Some of this is disingenuous and certainly politically motivated, and does not match up with the desperate calls from many Haitians calling for assistance from the international community. But it is a useful reminder to key international actors, notably the United States, to remain sensitive to Haitian voices in connection with any multinational remedy to the crisis. This reality comes into play in connection with the difficult odds the council faces in exercising authority in Haiti. This very much depends on the perceived political credibility of the council, let alone its physical security. How this emerges will become quickly apparent as the council attempts to fulfill its core mission: identifying a president of the council, naming a prime minister, drawing up and executing a security strategy, and enabling free and fair elections. Despite the heroics of the Haitian National Police against the mayhem generated by gangs, few of the council's aspirations are possible without putting in place a security apparatus enhanced by multinational capabilities—this will require creativity from the United States and others. As far as moving toward an election, while the need to do so represents one of the few areas of consensus among Haitians, it faces realities not easily surmountable. These include insecurity, a need to credibly reconstitute the electoral council and acquiring budgetary support to make it all possible."

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