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## **DOMINICAN-HAITIAN RELATIONS: A meeting with H.E. Faruk Miguel Castillo**

### **Understanding current Dominican- Haitian relations: A meeting with H.E. Mr. Faruk Miguel Castillo**

**Diplomat Magazine (01.05.2022) – <https://bit.ly/38qzCg9> –** In an interesting conversation at his residence in Port-au-Prince, H.E. Mr. Faruk Miguel Castillo, the Dominican Ambassador to Haiti, exchanged with Diplomat Magazine some insights about his mandate, the relationship between the two

countries and the current situation in Haiti.

To understand Dominican-Haitian relations, we have to look at them from a geographical, historical and evolutionary perspective. These bordering countries have experienced political crises, natural disasters, an armed conflict in 1844 that resulted in the independence of the Dominican Republic, but also successful border and labor agreements, commercial exchanges and a relationship of cooperation and permanent exchange on topics that concern both countries. Between the two countries, there is always an open communication.

“We are obliged, as a diplomatic mission and as a country, to have as interlocutor the authorities in office in Haiti. Currently, the authority in office in Haiti is Prime Minister Ariel Henri and his ministerial cabinet, with whom we maintain excellent relations and constant exchanges. We also relate and communicate constantly with different political, socio-professional, cultural and business organizations, as well as with the different diplomatic missions accredited in this country. We have a very important economic and migratory relationship with this country, which is our second commercial partner. We are committed to maintain a harmonious relationship, based on agreements and on fundamental aspects of environmental preservation. It is a process that does not end, it is constant, it is lifelong” – the Ambassador said.

One of the main responsibilities of the Dominican diplomatic mission in Haiti is to give the necessary follow-up to the agreements that have been signed between the two countries. “There is an important number of Haitian workers working in the Dominican Republic in agriculture, construction, tourism, the sugar industry and many other areas of national

production. This represents an important contribution for Haiti because these workers send money to their country and support their families in Haiti, but also Haiti buys many products from the Dominican Republic”, Mr. Faruk Miguel Castillo continued.

Last year, the presidents of both countries – Jovenel Moise for Haiti and Luis Abinader Corona for the Dominican Republic – met in a mountainous area of the border called Calimet and signed a nine-point agreement. Their discussions included issues related to migration, the environment, trade, border security, health, and energy issues. In this context, the Dominican Republic offered assistance to Haiti for the construction of three maternal and child hospitals. This is a sensitive issue, in light of the large number of Haitians who go to give birth in the Dominican Republic, as well as of the problems tied to human trafficking that have arisen in this context.

“With the death of the president, all these agreements were put on hold, but they must continue because they are agreements signed by both sides. We understand that the situation of insecurity that the country is living has not given them the tranquility nor the time to take care of following up on these things. But I have the certainty and the hope that this year the Haitian society will follow these agreements that will help the stability of the country” – the Ambassador said.

Another important task of the Dominican mission is to provide consular services. Currently, the mission maintains five active consulates in different points of Haiti, since the demand for visas is very large. There is a great demand for

business visas, tourism visas and visas for workers who work in the Dominican Republic. There are between 10 and 12 thousand regular students going to universities and higher education centers in the Dominican Republic. In the border zone the populations are very confused: people cross from one side to the other, the border is very permeable and there are communities that live in a harmonious relationship.

During the conversation, Ambassador Miguel also explained the delicate conditions of his mandate in this country "The first thing is the state of the situation in Haiti, to know in what environment we are operating. This is a mission that I have been given in very difficult conditions, because I arrived precisely at a time when there was a lot of political instability in the country, during the government of Jovenel Moise. During his term as president, the chamber of deputies ran out of time and was not renewed; 2/3 of the senate also ran out of time and was not renewed either, so that today only 1/3 of the senate remains. On the other hand, it is the opinion of many that they should have handed over in January. At the moment, there is no president, because as we all know, the president was assassinated in his residence on July 6 last year. Even before that, there were already problems with the Chamber of Accounts in crisis and also in the Ministry of Justice with a situation of dismissed judges".

"The country is very divided and faces a situation of deep insecurity. The armed groups of the parties control many parts of the national territory. Even in the capital of the country, where political decisions are made, these groups show more strength than the Haitian police forces. They are heavily armed. These groups are often in conflict with each other and attack each other, they attack the population and the police headquarters, which increases the violence. Kidnappings are

the order of the day, not only of nationals but also of foreigners” – the Ambassador explained.

“From our point of view, the main problem in Haiti is insecurity. Haiti must be pacified to be able to hold its elections and to be able to develop citizen life with tranquility; to make life flow normally, so that children can go to school, and common people and businesses can carry out their activities without fear of attacks by armed gangs, kidnappings or assassinations. In that sense, there have been many important advances, including meetings of traditional opposition groups seeking agreements. PM Ariel Henri has provided a space in his ministerial cabinet to the opposition and that is a big step forward, it is a unitary effort. I believe that Haiti is on track in the coming days to continue these dialogues, in order to agree on the solution to the most important challenge, which is to pacify the country and organize free democratic and participatory elections”.

The Ambassador also explained the role that his country foresees for the international community vis-à-vis the situation in Haiti. “The international community has to lend all its support so that the Haitians can reach the necessary agreements for their political stability. The Dominican Republic is and will always be in an attitude of collaboration, of cooperation, respecting Haiti’s independence and its self-determination, cooperating to the extent that Haiti requires it and requests it. In all international fora, the Dominican Republic advocates for the support that Haiti needs. We want the situation to improve in Haiti, that Haitians manage their problems and that the international community gives them the necessary means and assistance so that Haitians can manage their own problems”.

The security situation, according to the Ambassador, has strong repercussions for all other aspects of society, including in the economic sector. “At the moment, many Haitian businessmen, due to the insecurity situation in their country, are requesting to move their companies to the Dominican Republic. This is not good, neither for Haiti nor for the Dominican Republic, because Haiti needs more companies to maintain the labor market active, so that more people can find work. If the companies migrate to the Dominican Republic, there will be less job offers in Haiti, so Haitians will have to go to work in the Dominican Republic. It is better if the companies are established in Haiti, and that generates jobs, wealth and development for the country. When Haiti does well, the Dominican Republic does well too” – the Ambassador concluded.

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