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## Op-Ed by Haiti's Ambassador to the United States

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Good afternoon Andre,

I hope you'll consider publishing an op-ed by His Excellency Bocchit Edmond, Haiti's Ambassador to the United States. It's attached and pasted below. Thanks in advance for your consideration.

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On Wednesday, I attended the inauguration of the first Black woman of Caribbean descent sworn in as Vice-President of the United States, two weeks after angry mobs tried to divert the election results. As a Haitian, something was impossible to shake: our countries' connection, both the history and the now of it. Haitians fought in the American Revolution for the cause of a free, democratic United States – 25 years before we secured our own freedom. In 1779, 800 infantry volunteers from Haiti enlisted in the Battle of Savannah, in Georgia. A statue stands in central Savannah's Franklin Square commemorating their role. Among those volunteers was Henri Christophe, who later became one of Haiti's Revolutionary heroes and Founding Fathers.

We share joy in the triumph of America's ultimately peaceful transfer of power – the promises of the United States' Declaration of Independence, its Constitution, and Bill of Rights remain intact. By contrast, Haiti's own Revolution devolved into dictatorship and persistent political conflicts. Our latest manifestation of democracy, launched in 1987, proved to be a rushed and flawed construction. 216 years after our independence, it's high time Haiti forges a real democratic future.

We are embarking on rewriting our Constitution – redesigning our democratic system into one that will be fortified, functioning and befitting our nation's aspirations. President Jovenel Moïse has tasked an independent consultative committee with drafting a new constitution centered on promoting and protecting citizens' rights while strengthening the weak democratic structures created in 1987. The new constitution needs to fix imbalances among branches of government that have led to ineffective, unstable governance and to bolster the elections process, helping prevent election cycles from being derailed and delayed on political whims, as often experienced.

Popular support is across the board – a rarity in Haiti's hyper politicized, divided atmosphere. A public poll conducted in December 2020 shows 87 percent of Haitians support rewriting the Constitution. Our governance structures were designed for neither efficient delivery of services, nor accountability by government officials. The new constitution will be conceived to foster more accountability by stemming the tide of corruption and impunity. We are preparing to conduct a national referendum on the new constitution in April, followed by presidential, legislative and local elections. The only good option is to hold the referendum and elections on time, with transparency, as a way of