

Good morning,

I would like to share Haitian Foreign Minister Claude Joseph's recent [Miami Herald op-ed](#), "Haiti's President Moïse is working to leave the country stronger, more stable."

Please find the article attached and included below.

Thank you.

Best,

Chris

[Haiti's President Moïse is working to leave the country stronger, more stable](#)

BY CLAUDE JOSEPH

MARCH 02, 2021 03:34 PM

In Haiti last month, a group attempted to carry out a coup against democratically elected President Jovenel Moïse. It capped off a period of small but sometimes violent rallies that allege that the president's term in office ended on Feb. 7.

A few months ago, a handful of politicians in Haiti began to argue that Moïse's term in office should end not after five years, as set out in our constitution, but after four years. They cited the nation's troubled election cycle in 2015, marred by violence, then a re-run in 2016. These politicians, however, ignored the fact that Moïse was inaugurated in February 2017, which means legally and constitutionally, that his term ends in February 2022. Just like in America, Haiti's president takes office — and the term begins — on inauguration day.

Months later, the U.S. State Department, United Nations and Organization of American States all confirmed that Moïse's term indeed ends in February 2022. All agree the Haitian people need to choose our next president on schedule.

Meanwhile, some politicians in opposing parties try to depict Moïse as a figure so universally disdained as to be on the verge of being toppled by people power. This is false. Like many countries, including the United States, Haiti is deeply polarized by tense partisan politics. In a recent poll, 57 percent of respondents reported unfavorable views of Moïse's party. But standards need to be applied evenly. Moïse's polling, despite being conducted amid high tension, still puts him in similar territory as several American presidents: Harry Truman and Jimmy Carter's average approval rating were both 45 percent. Barack Obama's average was just under 48 percent and at times as low as 38 percent.

Polling, no matter where, has its flaws, but even at their lowest points in popularity, none of those U.S. presidents would be characterized the way the media do Moïse: a would-be despot scarcely clinging to power.

Protests in the streets are highlighted as proof that the bulk of the population is calling for Moïse to go but, demonstrably, protests have been habitually small in scale and limited to just one city: Port au

Prince. No U.S. news outlet would conclude — based on sporadic, partisan protests in Washington — that the whole country wants President Biden gone.

Our legislature has been missing in action since January 2020. Under the 1987 constitution, Haiti's branches of power are woefully imbalanced, marked by dysfunctional decision-making processes. Just a few legislators can block essential proceedings, including movement for elections. Last year, the legislature failed to hold a vote on the budget needed to conduct legislative elections when the process was obstructed by a few fringe members.

In Haiti, the president has no ability to interfere, so legislative elections were postponed, and the body's term expired without newly elected members, leaving the president to govern by executive order without parliamentary oversight. This has happened to five successive presidents since 1987 for the same reason. Clearly, there are fundamental flaws to our governing system.

These problems are the very reasons Moïse moved to reform the constitution, an effort supported by nearly 90 percent of Haitians, alongside the U.N., OAS and other international partners.

The new constitution was drafted by an independent commission with wide-ranging consultation and will be put to a national referendum for the voters' approval in April. It strengthens our weak, unstable democratic structure and creates considerably more accountability, laying the groundwork for Haiti to have a functioning representative democracy — finally.

The referendum will be followed by local, state and national elections in which Moïse will not be a candidate, and for each of these we have actively sought and recruited international support and on-ground observation to help ensure transparency, security and credibility of results.

To make it possible for the next administration, and those thereafter, to govern effectively and deliver the positive change for which the people of our country have waited and suffered for far too long, we have to fix our faulty foundation. We have to prevent the same cycle from occurring again: political deadlock, chaos, instability, repeat.

Before leaving office next February, President Moïse is working to deliver constitutional change, and it will mean something. It will give our country a chance.

Claude Joseph is foreign minister of Haiti.

DISSEMINATED BY MERCURY PUBLIC AFFAIRS, LLC, A REGISTERED FOREIGN AGENT, ON BEHALF OF THE PRESIDENCY OF THE REP. OF HAITI. MORE INFORMATION IS ON FILE WITH THE DEPT. OF JUSTICE, WASHINGTON, DC.