

# Dominican President Loosens Border Closure to Help Resolve Impasse with Haiti

*Dominican President Luis Abinader loosens border closure by opening a controlled commercial corridor, but Haiti's borders remain firmly shut.*

SANTO DOMINGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, October 23, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Dominican President Luis Abinader has loosened the border closure implemented Sept. 15 by establishing Provisional Commercial Corridors (PCCs) to alleviate the urgent need for certain products among the Haitian population, despite Haiti's refusal to halt the illegal canal it unilaterally decided to build on the Dajabon/Masacre River or reopen a space for diplomatic dialogue to find an equitable, fair, and safe use for this body of water.

The president opened the PCCs to facilitate progress toward the minimum conditions that would allow for diplomatic dialogue. These conditions must also include a cessation of work on the canal due to the social, environmental, and economic risks associated with it, as well as the establishment of all facilities necessary for the Organization of American States (OAS) to mediate the dispute, as requested by Abinader. This mediation process began with an OAS delegation's arrival to Santo Domingo on Monday, Oct. 16.

Just one week before their arrival, the Dominican National Security Council, headed by Abinader, met to approve several measures on Oct. 9. The most important of these was the authorization



of PCCs in the provinces of Dajabon, Elias Pina, Independencia, and Pedernales. Operated under strict military control and requiring biometric registration, the PCCs were established with the goal of enabling essential products, such as food and medicine, to reach Haiti.

These corridors opened Wednesday, Oct. 11, but no trade has taken place because the Haitian government has refused to open its border gates. Abinader appeared Monday, Oct. 16, to say that the Haitian government has the right to close its border and refuse to purchase products from the Dominican Republic. "The decision belongs to them," he stated.

The OAS delegation in Santo Domingo

That same day, an OAS delegation headed by OAS Secretary for Legal Affairs Jean Michel Arrighi arrived in Santo Domingo to begin gathering information on the conflict. This is the first step of the crisis mediation, which was requested by President Abinader, offered to Haiti by OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro, and then accepted by the Haitian government during an extraordinary meeting on the dispute that took place at the OAS headquarters in Washington, D.C., at the end of last week.

"The delegation coming to us today will play a crucial role in this dispute," stated Dominican Foreign Minister Roberto Alvarez during a meeting held at the Foreign Ministry headquarters on Monday, Oct. 16. "Their experience and expertise offer an invaluable platform for addressing these issues equitably and objectively, guided by their commitment to strengthening peace and cooperation in our region. We hope this process can lead us to a solution that takes both our nations' concerns into account and strengthens the legal and institutional architecture that governs our bilateral relations."

The delegation's work continued Tuesday, Oct. 17, with their arrival to the Dajabon/Masacre River basin, where they surveyed the area to collect information. They will submit a report to Secretary General Almagro upon their return to Washington, D.C.

Origin of the conflict

The reason behind this conflict is the construction of a canal, which the Dominican government maintains is in violation of article 10 of the Tratado de paz, amistad y arbitraje (Treaty of peace, friendship, and arbitration), signed between the Dominican Republic and Haiti Feb. 20, 1929. This article establishes that "in cases where rivers or other watercourses begin in one state's territory before entering the territory of the other or serve as boundaries between the two states, both High Contracting Parties agree neither to do nor to consent to any work likely to change the flow of such watercourses or alter the products of the sources thereof."

Abinader has reiterated the danger of the canal, stating that the most worrying aspect is not the canal itself, but the dam or retaining wall planned for the second phase of the project. "That would have much worse consequences than simply building a canal," he stated. "It could be very serious, and not solely for the flow of the river."

According to Dominican authorities, the analyses they have been able to carry out indicate that the construction threatens the water supplies of hundreds of Dominican and Haitian farming families living downstream from the canal site. "This project could cause flooding in the CODEVI (manufacturing) industrial park, located 300 meters downstream from the canal site, endangering its 19,000 Haitian workers," Abinader has explained. "It could also flood parts of the border cities of Dajabon and Juana Mendez (located about 300 km northwest of Santo Domingo, the Dominican capital), threatening their inhabitants. As if that weren't enough, it would also have harmful ecological effects on the Saladillo Lagoon, one of the Dominican Republic's main wetlands."

Foreign Minister Roberto Alvarez shared this data and more in his Oct. 12 appearance before the OAS. Following the Haitian diplomatic representative's intervention in the session, which he described as irrational and unacceptable due to its content, Alvarez ruminated on the threats posed by the dam Haiti will have to build for the canal. "I cannot understand how a responsible state could possibly refuse to sit down and figure something like that out," he expressed. "It is an absolutely irresponsible course of action that could result in an internationally wrongful act, with all the associated consequences."

"At this time, we not only want to emphasize the Dominican government's interest in finding a fair and equitable solution, but also make the Haitian government's responsibility in this situation very clear should the construction result in a tragedy that no one wants to see," warned the Dominican diplomat.

About the Comisión Multisectorial Marca País (Multisector Country Brand Committee)  
The Abinader administration created the Comisión Multisectorial Marca País (Multisector Country Brand Committee) to promote the Dominican Republic's potential and protect its image, interests, and rights abroad.

The Committee is led by the Dominican president, the highest authority in the nation, and is made up of representatives from the public and private sectors to position the country as one of the most attractive destinations for investment, trade, and development.

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