



Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
República Dominicana

Position of the Dominican government regarding the construction of a canal on the Haitian side of the Dajabón or Masacre River.

1. Timeline of events

On April 27, 2021, when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs learned about the construction of a canal on the Dajabón or Masacre River, it sent diplomatic note No. DM-11284 to the Haitian government, demanding the "immediate cessation of any work or construction that could affect the natural flow of the Masacre River," in accordance with Article 10 of the 1929 Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Arbitration, which states: "Due to the fact that rivers and other watercourses originate in the territory of one State, both High Contracting Parties undertake not to carry out or allow any work capable of changing the course of such rivers or altering the sources' output." As a result of this note, a technical meeting of the Bilateral Joint Dominican-Haitian Commission was convened and held on May 27, 2021.

In his opening remarks at that meeting, Minister Roberto Álvarez stated, "...the Dominican government's expectation is that work on the irrigation channels will not resume." At the end of the meeting, the technicians of the Commission agreed to "continue sharing information regarding all hydraulic projects carried out and to be carried out in the border area" and to establish a technical working group to enhance understanding of the work conducted in the border region.

On May 31, 2021, upon receiving information that the Haitian side had not halted the canal construction and had not been transparent about the true intentions of the project, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Roberto Álvarez, made a statement from the National Palace, announcing that the Dominican government would not return to dialogue with Haiti regarding the construction of the canal on the Dajabón/Masacre River until Haiti publicly declared that it had halted the project.

On June 18, 2021, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Haiti, Claude Joseph, sent a note to his Dominican counterpart in which he asked to resume dialogue and defended the Haitian position. On July 6, 2021, the Dominican Foreign Minister responded to his Haitian



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counterpart, reiterating emphatically and with legal and technical arguments, that the Haitian Government should immediately stop the construction of the canal and urged him to open a dialogue in order to explore the use of alternative water resources. This communication further included the following:

1. The Dominican Government was never officially notified of the construction of a canal whose intention was to connect it to the Dajabón/Masacre River.
2. A document that was informally delivered by a Haitian official during the meeting of the technical commission on May 27, 2021, containing some technical aspects of the work, showed that there was a lack of transparency on the Haitian side about the intention and characteristics of the work started unilaterally in 2018.
3. It was not an irrigation canal as had been reported to the Joint Bilateral Commission, but rather a diversion canal, which violates international law and the Treaty of Peace and Perpetual Friendship and Arbitration of 1929, which prohibits works that change the current of the river without prior agreement.
4. Despite the meager documentation, it was concluded that the height of the canal was at least 2.5 meters higher than the river level, which would require the construction of a diversion dike that would increase the risk of flooding on the border between both countries.
5. The construction of the canal could affect the flow of the river in the lower area, harming about 14 thousand field tasks of arable land in Dominican territory and about 10 thousand field tasks in Haitian territory that benefit 266 Dominican farmers and 125 Haitian farmers on one side and another from the border.
6. It could also cause ecological damage to the vital freshwater lake ecosystem of Saladilla Lagoon, one of the most important wetlands in the Dominican Republic.
7. It was unknown who the primary beneficiaries of the project were and who was financing it.
8. The project also violates the principle of equitable use of transboundary waters, the principle of environmental precaution, and the balance of interests due to its unilateral nature.
9. The position of the Dominican government has always been that the Haitian government must immediately halt the construction of the canal and initiate a dialogue with the objective of exploring alternatives for the management of water



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resources that benefit both nations.

On **August 30, 2023**, a group of Haitian nationals were seen carrying out work to continue the construction of the canal in the course of the Masacre River in the vicinity of pyramids 13 and 14 of the border line, which, according to a study carried out, would have a pernicious impact for the Dominican Republic once the project is completed.

On **September 11, 2023**, the National Security Council convened on instructions from His Excellency President of the Republic, Luis Abinader, whose only topic of discussion at the meeting was the situation that has arisen on the Dominican-Haitian border.

2. Links that detail the measures adopted by the Dominican Government

- **President Abinader decides in the National Security Council to begin the construction of the Don Miguel dam on the Dajabón river to protect the water:**
<https://presidencia.gob.do/noticias/presidente-abinader-decide-en-el-consejo-de-seguridad-nacional-iniciar-la-construccion-de>

President Abinader announces total closure of the border with Haiti starting this Friday at 6:00 in the morning:
<https://www.presidencia.gob.do/noticias/presidente-abinader-anuncia-cierre-total-de-la-frontera-con-haiti-desde-este-viernes-las>

- **President Abinader prohibits nine Haitian citizens from entering the country:**
<https://presidencia.gob.do/noticias/presidente-abinader-prohibe-entrada-al-pais-de-nueve-ciudadanos-haitianos#:~:text=Santo%20Domingo.%2D%20El%20presidente%20Luis,el%20ingreso%20de%20nueve%20ciudadanos>