

**Oral Testimony**

**Cecilia V. Calvo**

**On behalf of**

**Archbishop Thomas Wenski and Bishop Richard Pates, Chairmen of the Domestic and International Committees of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**

**EPA Public Hearing**

**Carbon Pollution Standards for Existing Power Plants**

**William Jefferson Clinton East Building, Room 1153, Washington, DC**

**July 30, 2014**

Good morning. My name is Cecilia Calvo. I oversee the Environmental Justice Program at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

On behalf of Archbishop Thomas Wenski and Bishop Richard Pates, Chairmen of the Domestic and International Committees of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I thank you for this important and timely hearing on an issue that clearly affects God's creation and the entire human family.

My testimony draws from a letter sent today by Archbishop Wenski and Bishop Pates to the EPA Administrator welcoming the setting of standards to reduce carbon pollution from existing power plants. The Chairmen support a national standard to reduce carbon pollution and recognize the important flexibility given to states in determining how best to meet these goals. Above all, these standards should protect the health and welfare of all people, especially children, the elderly, as well as poor and vulnerable communities, from harmful pollution emitted from power plants and from the impacts of climate change.

The bishops speak as people of faith, not as technical experts. They are pastors in a faith tradition that teaches, as Pope Francis recently stated, "Creation is a gift, it is a wonderful gift that God has given us, so that we care for it and we use it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude."

Power plants are the largest stationary source of carbon emissions in the United States, and a major contributor to climate change. And, we know the effects of climate change are borne by the most vulnerable people, whether at home or around the world.

In the United States, power plants have often been located near low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. Air pollution from these plants contributes to health problems, especially in the young and the elderly. These standards would significantly reduce carbon pollution from power plants; they would also reduce particle pollution, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen oxides, which have been linked to important human and environmental health problems.

Around the world, these effects are even more severe. Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the development and relief agency of the Catholic Church, is helping the most vulnerable people respond to increasing floods, droughts, food and water insecurity, and conflict over declining resources. All these are making the lives of the world's poorest people even more precarious. These standards are a vital first step to protecting the world's most vulnerable people and allow the United States to exercise critical leadership necessary for achieving a global agreement.

As the U.S. bishops wrote in their statement, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*: "Action to mitigate global climate change must be built upon a foundation of social and economic justice."

The following principles can and should guide the EPA and states as they take steps to reduce carbon pollution and address climate change:

- **Respect for Human Life and Dignity.** All efforts to reduce the impact of climate change should recognize human life and dignity as the foundation of a healthy society.
- **Prudence on Behalf of the Common Good.** Wise action to address climate change is required *now* to protect the common good for present and future generations.

- **A Priority for the Poor and Vulnerable.** The consequences of climate change will be borne by the world's most vulnerable people and inaction will worsen their suffering. We all have an obligation to help make sure their needs are addressed and their burdens eased.
- **Social and Economic Justice.** Any additional costs that such standards may generate must be distributed fairly. Workers should be protected from negative effects that might arise and should receive assistance to mitigate impacts on their livelihoods and families.
- **Care for creation.** We are all called to be responsible stewards of the earth and to use the gifts we have been given to protect human life and dignity, now and in the future.
- **Participation.** Communities should have a voice in shaping these standards based on their local impact, especially low-income communities whose voice is often not heard.

Archbishop Wenski and Bishop Pates appreciate the Agency's commitment to address this urgent global challenge confronting the human family, and call upon leaders in government and industry to act responsibly, justly and rapidly.

The moral measure of debate and decisions on climate change will be whether our nation acts with prudence to safeguard God's creation, advance the common good, and protect humanity.

Thank you.