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March 11, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary of State  
U.S. State Department  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

As Chair of the Committee on International Justice and Peace at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and President of Catholic Relief Services, we write to appeal for immediate and sustained U.S. Government assistance to ensure that the Central African Republic (CAR) does not fall further into crisis as the rainy season approaches. CAR continues to face great insecurity, as widespread and deadly attacks continue, and tens of thousands of Muslims have fled the country to escape the violence. As the UNHCR's High Commissioner said on his recent visit, CAR is in a "humanitarian catastrophe of unspeakable proportions."

Catholic Relief Services remains active in CAR, working with the Catholic Church and Caritas/CAR to assist all those in need. CRS currently has field operations in Bangui, Bossangoa, Mbomou, Haut-Mbomou and Lobaye. From our vantage point, we believe this crisis will deepen if people cannot return to their homes and fields for the next planting season, and urge the U.S. to do the following:

- 1. Immediately increase funding for Africa Union MISCA peacekeeping troops to augment their numbers and get necessary supplies and training.** This force must be given a mandate and equipment they need to deter further violence and protect civilians. Despite ex-Seleka forces' withdrawal from some areas, anti-balaka forces have now expanded their attacks on Muslim communities forcing thousands to leave the country, and at times using more deadly weapons like grenades. The current number of peacekeepers is insufficient to quell the violence, enforce security, and allow people to return to their homes. This will spell catastrophe for a country that relies on agriculture and livestock for much of their food.
- 2. Provide urgent humanitarian assistance.** Currently CRS is responding to humanitarian needs, while also looking at recovering food security and livelihoods to support the upcoming growing season. Humanitarian assistance must be increased to meet the 1.3 million in need of food assistance. Support for the displaced and refugees must also be given, while also keeping conflict sensitivity in mind.
- 3. Fund livelihood activities and programs giving priority to reconstruction and agricultural inputs for the upcoming planting season.** The rainy season will begin in April, and most people have lost everything. Markets are sparse, and wild foods are being sold, which means that food is not widely available. CAR is 75% agrarian, and

without livelihood assets replenished, such as seeds and tools for agriculture, and other livelihood activities, people will not be able to feed themselves, and a hunger crisis looms. Engaging disarmed youth will also be essential to ensuring that violence does not continue, and there are viable alternatives for their energy.

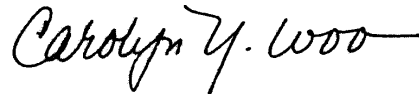
- 4. Promote intensive and sustained reconciliation programs to rebuild the social fabric torn apart by the recent violence.** The attacks between Muslims and Christians have unleashed a new and tragic conflict in Central African society that will leave a horrible legacy if the social wounds are not healed. The United States can support efforts by Central African faith-based groups and civil society to prevent this violence from continuing and repeating itself in the future. American faith-based groups working with U.S. Government support can help build the capacity of these initiatives on the ground.

Thus, although there are some positive political developments, the Central African Republic remains in crisis and could sink deeper without immediate action. The Committee on International Justice and Peace and Catholic Relief Services are grateful for all the United States has done so far to respond to the crisis in CAR. We urge you to redouble these efforts to help end this ongoing crisis. We commit our own agencies to work with our government to promote sustainable peace and development for all Central African people.

Sincerely yours,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates  
Bishop of Des Moines  
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace



Dr. Carolyn Woo  
President  
Catholic Relief Services

Cc: The Honorable Susan Rice, National Security Adviser