



Department of Social Development and World Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • FAX 202-541-3339

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/SDWP

May 18, 2007

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Ambassador Susan Schwab
U.S. Trade Representative
600 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20508

The Honorable Henry M. Paulson, Jr.
Secretary of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington DC 20220

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Secretary Paulson and Ambassador Schwab:

I am writing on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) regarding the agreement you recently announced on a “bipartisan trade policy.” While I do have some concerns that I will share with you, I want to welcome this agreement as a significant step forward in creating a more just and equitable U.S. trade policy.

At a time of deep polarization in our country, your announcement also marks a refreshing example of consensus and cooperation among political leaders, one that should be expanded to other areas of our national debate. In addition, you have put forward the elements of a creditable response to one of the major questions facing our country: How can we shape trade policy so that it lifts up workers and their families here and abroad, ensures access to life-saving medicines for those who need them and protects God’s creation?

As pastors and teachers in a global Church, our experience of the impacts of economic integration, its perils and possibilities, is both broad and deep. We share the concerns of so many families in our own country who are often at the mercy of economic forces beyond the control of our national policies. We support policies and programs that promote the welfare of workers in our own nation, but at the same time sharing economic opportunities with people in weaker economies is critically important. As the U.S. Bishops have said, “a society and an economy such as ours can better adjust to trade dislocations than can poverty-ridden developing countries.” (*Economic Justice for All*, # 270.) The U.S. economy is a strong economy. But its moral measure will depend on its ability to meet the needs of those who struggle, the working poor, the sick and those who go without both here and abroad.

Drawing on the Church’s social teaching, the Bishops’ Conference has worked to educate on and advocate for just trade policies, insisting that the human person and the human community be placed at the center of economic activity. Our framework urges strong and enforceable protections for workers and the environment. Initial indications show major progress in this regard. We also urge that trade agreements protect and defend public health, especially in developing countries. We are cautiously optimistic about the measures and look forward to evaluating the precise language of the agreement when it is available. However, we hope that there will be a strong commitment to ensure that poor people in developing countries have effective access to life-saving medicines. We believe this can be achieved in ways that safeguard intellectual property rights, encourage innovation and guarantee just remuneration.

Letter to Speaker Pelosi, Secretary Paulson, Ambassador Schwab
May 18, 2007
Page 2

Despite these positive policy commitments, we remain deeply concerned that our call for just agricultural trade policies within trade agreements remains unanswered. The plight of small farmers and farm workers in developing countries is well documented. Their ability to adapt to market-forces and develop their operations in ways that maintain their livelihoods and the stability of their communities should be enhanced, not undermined, through increased trade opportunities. Together with my fellow bishops from several other countries, I remain deeply concerned that your bipartisan trade policy may weaken protections for poor farmers and their families.

Destructive dislocation in rural communities can be mitigated by allowing countries to invoke meaningful safeguard mechanisms to protect against sudden surges in imports, particularly of sensitive products. Also, countries should assist those within their borders adversely impacted by trade agreements, similar to commitments you have made concerning U.S. workers. Without compensatory mechanisms, trade policies can serve to “push” farmers off their lands and can contribute to “illegal” migratory flows. I urge you to present a comprehensive trade *and* development package that offers ways of helping our partners in developing countries protect vulnerable workers and rural communities.

Concern for the rural poor takes on an added dimension in situations of violence and political unrest. For example, the Colombian people face such significant internal challenges. The Church has extensive experience in seeking ways to further the cause of national unity and reconciliation in that country. I hope that USCCB can serve as a dialogue partner with all those seeking prudent ways of building peace and security in Colombia.

Pope John Paul II taught us that, “If globalization is ruled merely by the laws of the market applied to suit the powerful, the consequences cannot but be negative.” (*Ecclesia in America* #20.) Globalizing the economy will fall short in its duty to uphold human life and dignity unless it is accompanied by a “globalization of solidarity.” As you translate the best elements of the “bipartisan trade policy” into the texts of the actual agreements with Colombia, Peru, Panama and Korea, you will have the opportunity to strengthen solidarity with our trading partners at the same time that you promote the welfare of vulnerable workers here at home.

With hope that the good work done so far will lead to economic justice for all, I remain

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Wenski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International Policy

CC: Rep. John Boehner, Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader McConnell, U.S. Senate
Chairman Baucus and Ranking Member Grassley, Finance Committee, U.S. Senate
Chairman Rangel and Ranking Member McCrery, Committee on Ways and Means, U.S.
House of Representatives