



March 29, 2006

Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator:

As you take up consideration of H.R. 4939, **the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Hurricane Recovery, 2006**, we write on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to urge your active support for essential funding for urgent humanitarian and development activities. This support is based on our extensive experience among some of the most vulnerable people around the world. In solidarity with our brothers and sisters in need, we urge you to ensure that the following critical funding requirements are included in the FY 2006 supplemental legislation currently before you:

Sudan: The USCCB and CRS support the House-approved funding for the emergency situation in the Darfur region of the Sudan, including the addition of \$50 million for peacekeeping in the Capuano amendment. This funding for refugee and humanitarian assistance as well as support for peacekeeping—including the projected transition from the African Union to a United Nations operation—is crucial. It will help alleviate the conflict and instability that continue to claim too many innocent victims in the Sudan. CRS staff in Darfur report both increased violence and insufficient humanitarian resources to respond to what Congress has called genocide. We must do more to preserve a fragile peace and to prevent the further endangerment of the lives and well-being of so many vulnerable people.

Title II Food Aid: We support the House-passed amount of \$360 million in Title II resources and we further urge that an additional \$50 million be included for Title II or to replenish the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust (BEHT). Current food aid shortages have forced USAID/Food for Peace to take resources intended for long-term agriculture, public health, and education programs and use them instead for emergency needs. CRS staff sees greatly expanding food insecurity in the Horn of Africa, Kenya, the Sahel, and Southern Africa. While much more food aid will eventually be needed this year, the President's request is a good start. Congress has not replenished the BEHT since FY 2003. Unless Congress replenishes the BEHT now, it will be even more difficult for CRS and others to meet emergency needs later in the year.

Liberia and Haiti: We support no less than the House-passed amount for Liberia and urge \$50 million for the urgent needs of Haiti. Recent elections in Liberia and Haiti were decisive steps for the people of these two countries on the path towards more stable and peaceful democracies.

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By the time the FY07 Appropriations passes in its final form and the Administration sets its country levels, it will likely have been over a year since the Liberian and Haitian leaders were elected. US assistance is vital in demonstrating our support for democracy and stability.

Migration and Refugee Assistance: We appreciate the House-passed funding for the Department of State's Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account. However, we believe that the need for additional assistance to refugees is far greater than the \$51.2 million approved by the House. At a minimum, we urge you to appropriate \$117.2 million in fiscal year 2006 funds for the MRA account, which would be an increase of \$66 million above the House-approved amount. This would enable the United States to provide a greater level of protection to refugees in Africa, and elsewhere, to meet their urgent unfilled assistance and admissions needs.

Palestinian Aid: It is not in the best interests of either Israelis or Palestinians for the human situation in Palestinian areas to deteriorate. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including CRS, play a crucial role in delivering Palestinian aid. CRS and other NGOs are deeply concerned that their assistance programs, which provide support for schools, clinics, food, water, job creation, and the promotion of civil society, will be curtailed or rendered unworkable by Congressional action. The House-passed bill appropriately requires the Palestinian Authority to recognize Israel and renounce terrorism and it provides a means for aid to be delivered through NGOs. The addition of Presidential waiver authority for reasons of national security, however, could give the President flexibility to engage both parties at this volatile time and to exercise robust U.S. leadership.

Iraqi Reconstruction: A recent statement on behalf of the Bishops' Conference called for a "responsible transition" in Iraq that will require "a major commitment of human and financial resources." It is essential that the necessary financial support be made available for genuine reconstruction in ways that will help create decent levels of employment and economic opportunity for Iraqis.

Funding these vital priorities will save lives and will contribute to a more secure and peaceful world.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



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



Ken Hackett
President, Catholic Relief Services