



## Department of Social Development and World Peace Office of International Justice and Peace

### Background on Nuclear Arms and Landmines February 2007

*What can be said, too, about those governments which count on nuclear arms as a means of ensuring the security of their countries? Along with countless persons of good will, one can state that this point of view is not only baneful but also completely fallacious. In a nuclear war there would be no victors, only victims.-- Pope Benedict XVI, January 1, 2006*

#### **NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

**Reductions.** Since the end of the Cold War, the threat of *global* nuclear war is more remote, but we live in a still dangerous time of nuclear proliferation and possible nuclear terrorism. Deployed strategic nuclear weapons have been cut by 40% and intermediate-range nuclear weapons have been eliminated. In 2001, the Bush administration announced unilateral cuts in *deployed* strategic nuclear weapons. In 2002, the U.S. and Russia agreed to a treaty that codifies these unilateral cuts by reducing deployed strategic warheads to 1,700-2,200 on each side by 2012. This is a reduction from the 6,000 warheads permitted under START I and the 3,000-3,500 permitted under START II. As with previous reductions, an undetermined number of the weapons “cut” from the U. S. arsenal would be stored, not dismantled. This is a “good faith” treaty that does not contain verification measures and expires on the date that its reductions become mandatory. There are no plans to further reduce these weapons. The treaty does not cover thousands of tactical (short-range) nuclear weapons.

**Nuclear Use.** Three U.S. documents issued in 2002 – Nuclear Posture Review, National Security Strategy and National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction – make clear that the United States continues to threaten the use of nuclear weapons in response to the use of chemical or biological weapons by non-nuclear states.

**New Nuclear Weapons.** In FY 2004, Congress repealed a ban on research and development of new nuclear weapons and appropriated \$7.5 million for research on the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (“bunker buster”) and \$6 million for research on low-yield nuclear weapons. Development of these weapons would require separate Congressional approval. In FY05 and FY06, the Administration requested funds for on-going research on the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNWP). In a major victory for advocates, Congress deleted these funds in both FY 05 and FY06. The Administration’s FY07 budget does not appropriate funds for research on the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator, but there are concerns that funding for the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) program may be used to develop new nuclear weapons. The RRW program itself may be unnecessary in light of the efficacy of the Stockpile Stewardship Program and recent studies reviewed by the National Nuclear Security Administration that indicate U.S. nuclear weapons have a much longer lifespan.

**Testing.** In October 1999, the U.S. Senate failed to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) that bans nuclear testing. The Bush administration opposes ratification of this treaty but has committed to maintaining the current U. S. moratorium on testing. At the same time, the Administration requested \$30 million in FY05 to ready the Nevada test site for possible testing.

**USCCB Position:** The end of the Cold War has led to some progress in reducing nuclear weapons, but these efforts have not been commensurate with the dramatic changes in world politics. The U.S. and other nuclear powers must move away from reliance on nuclear weapons for their security. A global ban is more than a moral

ideal; it should be a policy goal. The positive example of the U.S. will be important to international efforts to address nonproliferation and the successful control of nuclear materials in this age of terrorism.

**Arms Reductions.** The USCCB has urged the Administration and Congress to view arms control treaties not as ends in themselves but as steps along the way to achieving the goal of a mutual, verifiable global ban on nuclear weapons. Much deeper, more irreversible cuts, in both strategic and tactical weapons, are both possible and necessary. In June 2000, the USCCB joined 18 retired military leaders and 20 other religious leaders in calling for deeper cuts and ultimately a global ban.

**Development of New, Usable Weapons.** The readiness of the United States to use nuclear weapons, especially against non-nuclear threats, and the potential development of new weapons should be opposed. A minimal nuclear deterrent may be justified only to deter the use of nuclear weapons. It is past time for the U.S. to commit never to use nuclear weapons first and to reject use of nuclear weapons to deter non-nuclear threats. The bishops abhor any use of nuclear weapons.

**Testing.** The U.S. should ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The CTBT will thwart the development of new nuclear weapons, and will impede efforts of other nations to obtain them.

*Anti-personnel landmines kill and maim countless innocent victims and are a serious obstacle to the economy of the developing countries, since they deprive them of extensive areas of agricultural land that are not yet mine free*  
.....  
--Pope John Paul II, November 22, 2004

## LANDMINES

Some 150 nations have signed the 1997 Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty, which bans the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel (AP) landmines. President Clinton did not sign the treaty, citing the need for AP landmines in Korea. The Bush administration has no plans to sign the Treaty. The U. S. continues to be a leader in funding global humanitarian de-mining and landmine survivor assistance, but was not even represented at the First Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Landmine Convention in Nairobi in November 2004. In the fall of 2005, the Conference and others successfully supported appropriations language to ensure that “landmines alternatives” being developed by the Department of Defense are evaluated for “potential indiscriminate effects” before “any full rate production decision for these systems.” In the last Congress, Senators Leahy and Specter introduced the Victim-Activated Landmine Abolition Act of 2006 (S. 3768); it prohibits the U.S. from procuring such weapons. It does not affect the existing stockpile of these weapons.

**USCCB Position:** With the Holy See, the USCCB supports securing a U.S. commitment to sign the Mine Ban Treaty to eliminate the scourge of these morally unacceptable weapons that do not distinguish between soldiers and civilians or between times of war and times of peace. USCCB also supported S. 3768 as a modest first step.

### ACTION REQUESTED

1. Ask members of Congress to scrutinize the Reliable Replacement Warhead program to ensure that it is not used to develop new nuclear weapons.
2. Ask members of Congress to cosponsor the Victim-Activated Landmine Abolition Act when it is reintroduced in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.

**RESOURCES:** For more information see links for Arms Control and Disarmament, Arms Trade, Landmines, Nuclear Weapons and War and Peace at this website: <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/topicissues.htm>.

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## Department of Social Development and World Peace Office of International Justice and Peace

### Background on Global Climate Change February 2007

*At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God's creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both "the human environment" and the natural environment.*

--U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, June 2001

#### **THE CURRENT POLITICAL DEBATE IN THE UNITED STATES**

The politics of global climate change is fueled by divergent perceptions of the economic, social, and political costs. While fewer still question the basic science of climate change, there is a debate about proposed solutions and their associated costs. Some fear that moving too fast will cripple economic growth across the globe. Others fear that waiting too long will necessitate more drastic measures later. Poorer countries blame richer ones for creating the problem in the first place. Richer countries spar over goals and procedures and increasingly want the poorer countries to fully participate.

During the coming year, global climate change is likely to gain greater traction for several reasons: (1) the next International Panel on Climate Change—the official body established by the UN and the World Meteorological Association to review the science of climate change—will issue its next report in the spring of 2007; (2) the Supreme Court is expected to rule on whether the EPA has the authority and the obligation to regulate the emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> under the Clean Air Act; and (3) the new leadership of the Congress is talking about doing more on the issue.

Congress is likely to focus on several key issues: (1) *voluntary* versus *mandatory* limits on greenhouse gas emissions; (2) focusing on *mitigation* (preventive measures) or *adaptation* (better disaster planning); and (3) addressing *selected* sectors that are responsible for emitting higher levels of harmful emissions, like transportation and automobile fuel efficiency, or *all* sectors, including energy production and agriculture. Since the plight of the poor and the relationship between poverty and climate change are not likely to be principal concerns in the legislative process, USCCB will make this concern primary in reviewing and commenting upon legislation.

For the first time, the House is likely to take up the issue. The Speaker is establishing a special Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming and has instructed relevant Committee chairs to prepare legislation for floor consideration by June. In the Senate, where most of the action has previously taken place, there is a lot of activity. Senators Lieberman (I-CT), McCain (R-AZ), Boxer (D-CA), Feinstein (D-CA) and Bingaman (D-NM) have introduced legislative proposals or draft bills. In both chambers, no action or votes are expected until summer. Since there is not yet a consensus on any particular approach, it will not be easy to craft the compromises necessary to address the issues outlined above. There will most likely be a number of hearings this year, but analysts do not expect a comprehensive bill to emerge immediately. Some suggest that at this stage of debate various aspects of climate change will be dealt with in a series of separate bills, rather than a more sweeping or comprehensive bill.

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## **USCCB POLICY POSITION**

In their June 2001 statement, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*, the bishops note: “Although debate continues about the extent and impact of this warming, it could be quite serious ... Consequently, it seems prudent not only to continue to research and monitor this phenomenon, but to take steps now to mitigate possible negative effects in the future.” The statement also calls for a less polarized public debate and more focus on the global common good. The bishops call for thoughtful dialogue that relies on the political virtue of prudence. Prudence is not simply a cautious and safe approach, but rather a thoughtful, deliberate, and reasoned basis for taking or avoiding action to achieve a moral good.

Specifically, USCCB supports strong U.S. leadership and advocates for much greater assistance to the developing nations, particularly in providing economic development aid to enable poorer countries to adopt state-of-the-art technology. The centerpiece of USCCB’s efforts on climate change will be to focus attention on the needs of the poor as they will suffer disproportionately from the potential impacts of climate change. The bishops also call for greater emphasis on energy conservation, the development of renewable and clean energy resources, and assistance to industries and workers displaced during the transition to new and more benign energy production.

The bishops’ primary concern in the current public debate is that the needs of poor people and developing nations be addressed. These countries have a right to economic development that reduces poverty. Poorer countries cannot be made to bear an undue burden of the global adjustments needed to address climate change. USCCB supports legislative provisions to assist the poor and adversely affected communities in mitigating the effects of global warming in the U.S. and developing countries. These measures must include additional foreign aid for sustainable development as well as technological assistance in adopting more benign and efficient energy production. On March 13, 2006, Bishop Wenski wrote to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources expressing these concerns in preparation for the Committee’s Climate Conference held on April 4, 2006.

## **ACTION REQUESTED**

Contact your Senators and Congressional representatives to urge greater U.S. leadership to address climate change and especially its disproportionate impact on the poor and vulnerable people here and abroad. We also strongly urge you to assist your bishop in sending a cover letter and a copy of the bishops’ statement, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*, to your members in both the House and Senate.

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## Department of Social Development and World Peace Office of International Justice and Peace

### Background on Colombia February 2007

*My attention is focused in a special way on certain individual countries—notably Colombia, where the long internal conflict has provoked a humanitarian crisis, especially as far as displaced persons are concerned. Every effort must be made to bring peace to the country, to return to families their loved ones who have been kidnapped, to restore security and normal life for millions of people. Such signs will give confidence to everyone, including those who have been implicated in the armed struggle.*

--Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Diplomatic Corps, January 8, 2007

**The Issue:** Colombia continues to experience one of the worst human rights crises in the world. The current conflict is rooted in a long history of extreme inequality and political exclusion, though it has intensified dramatically in recent years due in part to the infusion of drug-related profits that many of the armed actors currently receive.

Illegal armed actors, including the FARC and ELN guerilla groups and the nominally demobilized paramilitary combatants (AUC), continue to be responsible for significant levels of violence against the civilian population each year. Colombia has the second highest number of internally displaced persons in the world. It is increasingly recognized that displacement is intimately linked to strategies of depopulation and subsequent concentration of land and resources.

Colombia is the country from which 80% of the cocaine in the U.S. comes, as well as most of the heroin on the East Coast. It is one of the largest recipients of U.S. foreign aid, an aid package that has been excessively tilted toward anti-narcotics and counter-insurgency strategies.

Colombia has become one the most dangerous places for human rights workers, journalists, union leaders and church workers. In the last decade some 60 Catholic representatives, including bishops, priests, nuns and seminarians, and even higher numbers of Protestant workers, have been killed.

There has been little progress toward ending widespread impunity for human rights abusers. The State Department calls impunity the “greatest challenge to the credibility of the Government’s commitment to human rights.” Criminal investigations and prosecutions of military personnel are exceedingly rare. Not a single high-ranking officer has been convicted of a human rights offense. According to the U.N., there were no actions “by the Minister of Defense to suspend personnel as a preventive measure in cases of grave human rights violations.”

**U.S. Aid:** U.S. aid to “Plan Colombia” was originally approved in 2000 as a six-year plan primarily dedicated to military support (80%) for counter-narcotics activities. The remaining funds were for alternative development, judicial reform, and aid to the internally displaced. The centerpiece of the U.S. aid was an anti-narcotics program to create and train new battalions, providing helicopters and intelligence aid, and relying on widespread fumigation as the principal means for eradicating coca. From 2000-2005, \$4 billion in U.S. aid has been provided, with \$3.2 billion dedicated to the security forces. Congress approved \$734.5 million for the overall Andean Counternarcotics Initiative in FY06. For FY07, the Administration request is for \$755.9 million with Congress calling for more.

A new area of concern is the paramilitary demobilization process. Although demobilization of armed actors is an important goal, the recent demobilization process with the AUC paramilitaries has occurred under a noticeably weak legal framework that does little to dismantle the paramilitaries or address impunity by those responsible for human rights violations and massacres, and is unlikely to be able to provide real compensation for the victims of the conflict. The U.S. Congress approved \$20 million to fund the paramilitary demobilization in Colombia in FY06. The Administration plans to take the \$20 million in aid for the demobilization out of the limited social aid for Colombia, including the aid for alternative development and possibly aid for the internally displaced.

**USCCB Position:** Since the spring of 2000, USCCB has stressed that U.S. aid should (1) strike an essential balance between assistance to the armed forces and aid that more directly addresses the root causes of the conflict and assists the victims; (2) condition all aid on human rights criteria; (3) provide major support for programs that advance the peace process, including (4) alternative development, (5) judicial reform, and (6) humanitarian aid to the displaced.

**USCCB urges the U.S. Government to:**

**Include basic standards for the protection of human rights in all aid programs.** Particular importance should be given this year to monitoring the impact of the paramilitary demobilization and re-integration process, to ensure strict application of the recently developed (Human Rights) conditions on U.S. aid for this process.

**Support multi-lateral efforts to bolster a negotiated, political path towards peace.** The Colombian Bishops have repeatedly emphasized the importance of continuing on the path to a negotiated peace process as the only viable long-term strategy for resolving the conflict. A small proportion of U.S. aid is dedicated to peace-building initiatives and the U.S. has not shown demonstrable support for U.N. and multi-national efforts to support national peace processes. An effort should be made to achieve a politically negotiated peace process with civil society participation.

**Increase development and humanitarian aid to Colombia.** Assistance to the internally displaced should be increased and its impact well documented. The U.S. can make a significant positive contribution to long-term peace and stability in Colombia by shifting the focus of its foreign aid toward greater emphasis on effective social development. Additionally, aid to the internally displaced is one of the most positive elements of the U.S. funds allocated to Colombia and it is greatly needed. These funds are a small percentage of overall U.S. aid and have been decreasing each year.

**Phase out aerial fumigation, and increase appropriate alternative development.** The Colombian Bishops have stated their clear opposition to fumigation. There are ongoing reports of legal food crops and livestock destroyed, water source contamination and increases in health problems. Many farmers who were fumigated and not provided either emergency food aid or crop substitution programs have either joined the ranks of the internally displaced or in some cases moved to neighboring provinces to grow illicit crops once more.

**Resources:** Statements (11/02) (3/02) (2/02) (3/00) and letters (3/02) (7/99) (1/99) can be found at <http://usccb.org/sdwp/international/latinamerica/colombia.htm>. See also the “CRS in Solidarity with Colombia” link at <http://www.catholicrelief.org/where/Colombia/index.cfm>. **For further information:** Tom Quigley 202-541-3184 (ph); 202-541-3339 (fax); [tquigley@usccb.org](mailto:tquigley@usccb.org)



Department of Social Development and World Peace  
Office of International Justice and Peace

**Background on Trade  
February 2007**

**“The delay in implementing the commitments undertaken by the international community during the last few years is another cause of concern. So it is to be hoped that the trade negotiations of the ‘Doha Development Round’ of the World Trade Organization will be resumed.”**

-- Pope Benedict XVI, January 8, 2007

## **BACKGROUND**

Global trade talks and negotiations involving the 150 member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are conducted under the auspices of the WTO. The current series of trade negotiations are called the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) and were due to conclude by the end of 2006. Last July, the Round was put “on hold” by WTO Director General Pascal Lamy. Since then there have been a series of informal negotiating sessions that have produced little progress. The main sticking point in the negotiations remains a dispute over the level to which WTO members, especially the US and Europe, are prepared to open up their agricultural sectors.

Trade ministers hope to make some steps towards an agreement by March 2007. While many consider this time-table ambitious, the U.S. Administration is under pressure to show concrete gains in the Doha Round that would justify granting an extension to the President’s Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) when it expires in June 2007. TPA allows the President to negotiate trade agreements without having them altered by Congress. Congressional leaders have stated their intention to take a close look at a possible renewal of TPA to increase the involvement of Congress during trade negotiations. Elections in France in 2007 may create a difficult environment for the French government (and therefore the European Union) in which to offer the commitments sought by other negotiating parties. Some commentators are speculating that the Doha Round may not conclude until 2010, if at all.

### **Bi-lateral trade agreements**

In addition to global trade talks, the U.S. has continued its efforts to negotiate *bilateral trade agreements*. Negotiations between the U.S. and countries of the Andean region, Colombia, Peru and Ecuador on the U.S.-Andean Trade Promotion Act continue. Peru was the first to conclude an agreement made public in January 2006. It awaits Congressional ratification. Colombia signed a trade agreement with the United States in October which also needs action by Congress.

For the first time a “side letter” was issued by all parties acknowledging the importance of traditional knowledge in the area of biodiversity accompanies a trade agreement. While not contained within the

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body of the agreement, the “side letter” clarifies in a non-binding way the intention of the trade agreement to respect indigenous rights. Moving forward, many argue that protecting indigenous rights should be binding on the parties with an appropriate enforcement mechanism if these obligations are breached. The U.S. and Peru agreed, in effect, to compensate those indigenous groups that have traditionally preserved such knowledge and techniques. This “side letter” marks a new step in ensuring trade respects the rights of indigenous people. USCCB sent a letter to Ambassador Portman, the U.S. Trade Representative, highlighting concerns regarding the agreement. (See [www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/tradeind.htm](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/tradeind.htm).)

**Other developments:** Negotiations appear stalled in the proposed agreement between the U.S. and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) that includes the countries of Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland. The United States hopes to achieve progress in a regional trade agreement with the 34 countries of the Western hemisphere (excluding Cuba) called the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Negotiations on the FTAA are stalled awaiting progress on agriculture and intellectual property rights at the WTO.

In the new Congress, members have declared their intention to subject trade agreements to closer scrutiny in regard to strengthening labor standards and environmental protections. Since the change in Congressional leadership, groups traditionally resistant to the inclusion of labor and environmental protections within trade agreements have shown increasing flexibility on this question. The selection of Representative Sander Levin as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Trade of the House Ways and Means Committee signals a strong move in the direction of inclusion of these protections.

### **Haitian Trade Preferences**

See section in Haiti Backgrounder entitled “Trade and Haiti’s Economic Development.”

### **USCCB POSITION**

For over a decade, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has addressed aspects of international trade. Rather than take a position for or against complex trade agreements, the Conference has proposed a set of ethical criteria that should guide trade negotiations. In July 2004 these criteria were applied to the US-CAFTA agreement in the Bishops’ Joint Declaration and in November 2005 they were applied to the US-Andean Trade Promotion Act.

In November 2003, the U.S. Catholic Bishops issued the statement *For I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food: Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers and Farmworkers*. It can be found at this website: [www.usccb.org/bishops/agricultural.htm](http://www.usccb.org/bishops/agricultural.htm). This statement articulates the Conference’s specific policy on trade, particularly as it applies to agriculture.

*The continuing deterioration in terms of the... gap between rich and poor countries has prompted the social Magisterium to point out the importance of ethical criteria that should form the basis of international economic relations: the pursuit of the common good and the universal destination of goods; equity in trade relationships; and attention to the rights and needs of the poor in policies concerning trade and international cooperation.*

*--Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, # 364*

## **USCCB PRIORITIES**

### **Domestic Farm Policy**

- The United States should target agricultural supports to small- and moderate-income farmers and to programs that promote sustainable agricultural practices and promote rural development (see Farm Bill Background 2007).

### **International Trade Policy—Subsidies, Tariffs and Quotas and Differential Treatment**

- The subsidies, tariffs and quotas of richer countries that severely constrict poorer countries in their ability to sustain their own agriculture should be reduced.
- Developing countries should be given some flexibility (technically referred to as “special and differential treatment”) in using appropriate subsidies, tariffs, quotas and other support measures to make sure they have sufficient food supplies, enhance rural incomes and promote rural development.

### **Having a Voice**

- Trade documents should be made available during the process of negotiation for review and public comment.
- Major elements of civil society, including groups representing the poor, business, labor and religious communities, should have greater access to participation in the process.
- Richer countries should provide technical assistance to help poorer countries be able to participate more fully in trade negotiations.

### **Labor and Environment**

- Trade agreements should treat labor and environmental concerns as integral to trade agreements and not as peripheral matters.
- Trade agreements should lead to economic and social improvements at home and abroad, particularly for poor and vulnerable workers and their families; this can be accomplished by adopting internationally agreed upon labor standards.
- Trade agreements should foster the right to organize and bargain collectively.
- Trade agreements should encourage and not undermine the ability of poor countries to promote environmental protection and sustainable agricultural practices.

### **Migration**

- The impact of trade on migration should be concretely addressed when trade measures are considered.

**For more information:** Visit these websites: [www.usccb.org/globalpoverty/](http://www.usccb.org/globalpoverty/) and [www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/tradeind.htm](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/tradeind.htm) or contact Rev. Andrew Small, OMI, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, at (202) 541-3153 or [asmall@usccb.org](mailto:asmall@usccb.org).



Department of Social Development and World Peace  
Office of International Justice and Peace

**Background on East Timor**  
**February 2007**

*In East Timor, the Catholic Church intends to continue making her contribution, notably in the fields of education, healthcare and national reconciliation. The political crisis experienced by this young State...highlights a certain fragility in the processes of democratization.*

--Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Diplomatic Corps, January 8, 2007

**CURRENT SITUATION:** More tragedy has recently struck East Timor. It has been four years since the island territory achieved its independence after twenty-four years of brutal occupation by Indonesia--during which more than a quarter of the original population of less than 700,000 perished from the combined effects of the war. Renewed violence erupted in April and May of 2006, as rival East Timorese security forces turned on each other. There are a significant number of internally displaced persons who, worried over their safety during the crisis in 2006, have yet to return to their homes. They remain in tent cities, several of which are maintained by the local Church.

According to East Timor's bishops, the fresh outbreak of violence underscored the unhealed wounds of the long quest for freedom. While the signs of the current crisis are political and institutional, poverty and high urban unemployment, especially among young people, also contributed to the crisis. The bishops emphasize that these issues must be addressed with urgency.

The UN Security Council responded to East Timor's plight, as did an international peacekeeping force led by Australia, New Zealand, and Portugal. A renewed United Nations assistance mission is being constituted; it needs the generous support of the international community.

It is generally accepted now that the original UN transitional mission in East Timor at the time of independence should have remained in place. Instead, it was far too short in duration, scaling down drastically after less than three years after independence in May 2002. The same mistake should not be made again. The current UN mission should be fully supported, stressing institution-building and social and economic development, consolidating stability and enhancing a culture of democratic governance.

A process of national dialogue has begun, both at the grassroots and leadership levels, working to facilitate national reconciliation and to foster social cohesion. Efforts are also underway to prepare East Timor for its 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections, which must be free and fair.

Health is a crucial issue in East Timor. Standards remain low, aggravated by the fact that more than 150,000 people were displaced in 2006. Most of the population remains highly vulnerable to respiratory and gastrointestinal diseases, in addition to malaria, dengue fever, tuberculosis and leprosy. Despite some improvements, the health situation remains worse than in any other Southeast Asian country. Life expectancy in 2004 was 49, and child mortality rates are the highest in the region. Only 24% of births are attended by skilled medical personnel. Malaria incidence has increased threefold since 1999. Still,

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there has been progress. More health awareness information is available locally. Local clinics have been opened, enabling doctors and nurses to reach poor households more successfully. Fully 87% of the population now has some access to health care, so a foundation is being laid for future improvements in health conditions.

**THE CHURCH IN EAST TIMOR:** As both of East Timor's Catholic bishops have emphasized, there are no quick solutions possible after decades of warfare and widespread suffering. The bishops have stressed that special mechanisms, both economic and social, must be put in place to ameliorate the situation in the years ahead, and the support of the United States for these mechanisms, including public works employment to repair the destruction, is vital. In addition to increased, direct U.S. assistance, the bishops in East Timor firmly believe the U.S. should support a UN peacekeeping mission, which will be needed for the foreseeable future, and a well-focused UN presence.

**USCCB POSITION:** For many years, USCCB questioned the support of successive U.S. Administrations for Indonesia's oppressive occupation of East Timor, and called for respect for human rights there. Since the Indonesian occupation ended in 1999, USCCB has been supportive of reconciliation efforts and sustainable development in the country and has also advocated for adequate U.S. government assistance to East Timor.

**SUGGESTED ACTION:** Especially in light of the current crisis, it is crucial that the U.S. maintain and expand its relatively modest financial contributions to East Timor's development. At present there is the threat of deep cuts in the Administration's aid budget for East Timor -- which could have a severe impact on health programs supported by USAID -- in addition to possible cuts in critical programs related to democracy, governance and economic growth. These reductions could have grave consequences, especially at this critical time. Communications with Congress should also stress that the elections scheduled for East Timor this year be fair and free of intimidation and manipulation.

**Please ask your Senators and Representative to support a U.S. aid budget for East Timor at the \$35 million level for the next year -- which would enable a significant expansion of vital health efforts and employment programs. The U.S. should also support continuing UN efforts in East Timor, including peacekeeping.**

**RESOURCES:** [http: www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/easttimor.htm](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/easttimor.htm)

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## Department of Social Development and World Peace Office of International Justice and Peace

### Background on the Sudan February 2007

*The horror of events unfolding in Darfur, to which my beloved predecessor Pope John Paul II referred on many occasions, points to the need for a stronger international resolve to ensure security and basic human rights. Today, I add my voice to the cry of the suffering and assure you that the Holy See ... will continue to do everything possible to end the cycle of violence and misery.*

-Pope Benedict XVI, November 2005

#### BACKGROUND

The horrific situation in Darfur continues to demand a more consistent and effective response from the U.S. and the international community. More than 400,000 people have died, 2.5 million are displaced, 220,000 are refugees in Chad, and hundreds of thousands more go hungry every day. The situation on the ground has grown increasingly untenable for humanitarian efforts to alleviate massive suffering. This new wave of violence points to a collective failure on the part of the international community to stem what can only be described as a catastrophe. The situation between the north and the south is less dire, but still dangerous. After more than two decades of civil war, the government in Khartoum and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005. This agreement provides an opportunity for Sudanese to resolve the north-south conflict through a peaceful process.

**Crisis in Darfur** Despite regular discussions in the UN Security Council and the ongoing African Union (AU) mission, reports indicate that large-scale attacks on civilians, including the rape of women and girls and the burning of villages, continue unabated, as thousands more join the 2.5 million people who have already fled their homes. Proposals have been made to fortify the AU presence until its projected transformation into a more robust peacekeeping mission. Negotiations between the government and Darfur rebels have been hobbled by splintering of rebel groups, while the growing instability in Darfur has only resulted in the deterioration of the situation since September 2005. Although the government in Khartoum continues to reject allegations of links with the Arab militias known as *janjaweed*, undeniable military action by the government has contributed to the wave of violence. A resurgence in fighting among the various warring parties and renewal of scorched-earth tactics of the militia groups mean that prospects are bleak for ending the cycle of violence without a focused and concerted international effort.

#### Facts about Sudan

**Geography:** At 2.5-million square kilometers, Sudan is the largest country in Africa and nearly equal in area to the US east of the Mississippi River. (Darfur Region, comprised of 3 states, is approximately the size of France.)

**Population:** 40.2 million (2005 est.), with over 6 million in Darfur

**Life Expectancy:** 58.5 years

**Religions:** 70% Sunni Muslim (official); 22% Indigenous Traditional Beliefs; 8% Christian (south, Khartoum)

**Ethnic Groups:** 52% Black African; 39% Arab; 6% Beja; 2% foreigners

**Economy:** 80% of Sudanese work in agriculture; oil production equals 250,000 barrels per day; \$2 billion in annual exports, chiefly petroleum.

Despite the signing of a Darfur Peace Agreement in May 2006, attacks on villages are increasing, and people are again fleeing their homes. The African Union (AMIS) peacekeeping force's mandate was extended through June

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2007. However, there is still no international agreement on the timetable for transformation of AMIS into a more robust force with a stronger mandate. Over a dozen humanitarian aid workers have been killed since June. CRS access to IDPs and other vulnerable groups in West Darfur is increasingly imperiled due to fighting.

In September 2006, President Bush appointed Andrew Natsios to be the President's Special Envoy for Sudan. Ambassador Natsios has been working to bring a resolution to the conflict in Darfur. At the end of its session in 2006, Congress enacted the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act (DPAA). Among other important provisions, the DPAA presses the government of Sudan to disarm the warring factions, cease all attacks against innocent civilians, provide unimpeded humanitarian access and bring to justice those perpetrating crimes against humanity. At the same time, Congress passed a Defense Appropriations bill that includes an additional \$20 million for the African Union peacekeeping operations in Darfur.

**The North/South Peace Agreement:** The CPA provides for a six-year interim period during which the people of the south will create a functioning government, healthcare and educational institutions, a regional army and police, and viable economic institutions, as outlined in a regional constitution signed into law in December 2005. After this interim period, the people of the south will have the right to decide whether to remain part of Sudan or to declare independence. Other provisions of the peace agreement include a wealth-sharing mechanism to manage an equitable distribution of petroleum revenues, representation in the national government and the parliament and guarantees of civil and religious liberties. Although the shari'a Islamic penal code will apply only in the north, concerns remain over what protections and exclusions will be provided to non-Muslims living in the north. The UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) has been monitoring compliance with the peace agreement, but SPLM withdrawals scheduled under the CPA have stoked fears of renewed fighting between government forces and remaining rebel groups. Other concerns center on the deepening disaster in Darfur, that lies on the border with an increasingly destabilized Chad, as well as Eastern Sudan, which would be flooded with refugees if hostilities were to break out between neighboring Ethiopia and Eritrea.

## USCCB POSITION

Sudan remains an urgent priority for USCCB with active and ongoing advocacy work in solidarity with the people of Sudan. USCCB continues to work closely with the Catholic Church in Sudan so that violence might be stopped and the benefits of peace and stability might be extended to all Sudanese. Our Conference has repeatedly visited northern and southern Sudan, as well as Darfur, while playing an active role in the U.S. policy debate. Last year the U.S. bishops urged American Catholics to participate in the *Million Voices for Darfur Campaign*, in alliance with over 150 faith-based, humanitarian and human rights organizations that seek to collect one-million postcards encouraging the President in his call for a stronger multinational force to protect the people of Darfur. USCCB supported the successful passage of the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act and funding for peacekeeping operations in Darfur.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has extended its services to Darfur, where it is providing desperately needed food and other basic assistance. In addition, CRS manages the Southern Sudan Agricultural Revitalization Project, the largest agricultural development program in the country. In partnership with local and international organizations, CRS also supports initiatives focused on peace-building, health, education and other critical sectors.



## ACTION REQUESTED

### On Darfur

1. Ask the U.S. to pressure both the government and the rebels to respect a ceasefire and to intensify the search for a just and durable peace, while urging both Sudan and Chad to refrain from supporting each other's rebel movements.
2. Urge the U.S. to use its voice in the UN Security Council to continue and strengthen the mandate of the African Union in Darfur to monitor the ceasefire, protect innocent civilians and assist international

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humanitarian relief organizations, while urging NATO to provide AMIS with all possible logistical support, until its transition to a more robust, well funded force with a strong mandate.

**On the Comprehensive Peace Agreement**

1. Encourage the U.S. Administration to hold the signatories to the peace agreement accountable and to honor its promise to provide substantial financial and political support to the government of national unity to undertake the reconstruction of the country and its civil society.
2. Urge the UN Security Council to continue its support for the peacekeeping mission that is working with all parties to the national-unity government to implement the peace accord. The United States should provide adequate funding and logistical support so that peace and security might be achieved.

**RESOURCES:** See USCCB statements, letters and alerts on Sudan at this website:

[www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/callafrica/sudan.htm](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/callafrica/sudan.htm).

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## Department of Social Development and World Peace Office of International Justice and Peace

### Background on Religious Liberty February 2007

*Peace is based on respect for the rights of all. Conscious of this, the Church champions the fundamental rights of each person. In particular, she promotes and defends respect for life and the religious freedom of everyone.*

--Pope Benedict XVI, World Day of Peace Message, January 1, 2007

#### BACKGROUND

Since the 1970s, the place of human rights in U.S. foreign policy has stirred vigorous debate. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has worked to make religious liberty an important part of this debate. Religious liberty is a core American value that should help shape U.S. foreign policy. Significant developments include:

- In October 1998, the *International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA)* was enacted. IRFA, which USCCB supported, makes promotion of religious freedom an explicit U.S. foreign policy goal. The law provides policy options to respond to the most serious violations, and better integrates religious liberty concerns into U.S. foreign policy by creating a new office for religious freedom within the State Department, providing for improved training and monitoring, and requiring annual reports by the State Department. The law covers all religious freedom violations in all countries without preference.
- IRFA also created a new nine-member *U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom* to monitor religious freedom violations and make recommendations to the Administration and Congress. This commission issues its own annual report on the status of religious liberty. Bishop Ricardo Ramírez of Las Cruces and Archbishop Chaput of Denver are currently members. Former members include Cardinal Theodore McCarrick and Bishop William Murphy.

#### USCCB POSITION

**The Significance of Religious Freedom:** The concern for religious liberty is not new to USCCB. From the Soviet bloc and Latin America in the 70s and 80s to China, Sudan and Iraq today, the Bishops have promoted respect for religious liberty. Fostering religious freedom is part of USCCB's broader efforts to ensure that promotion of human rights is central to U.S. foreign, security and trade policies.

**Human Rights Conventions:** USCCB supported U.S. ratification of the torture and genocide conventions, the covenants on race, and civil and political rights, and U.S. legislation governing trafficking. USCCB also urges ratification of the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. U.S. participation in these and other human rights instruments is critical for strengthening international norms and adding credibility to its own efforts to promote greater respect for religious liberty and other basic rights.

**Specific Cases:** Dozens of countries violate religious freedom and human rights, often as part of a general disrespect for human rights. USCCB has focused, among others, on the following:

**China:** USCCB had opposed extending Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR), formerly Most Favored Nation Trade Status, to China due to serious violations of religious freedom and other human rights. The U.S. Congress, however, granted permanent trade relations to China. USCCB continues to monitor and press for greater religious liberty in China. The recent ordinations of bishops without consultation with the Vatican is a serious setback and places new obstacles that impede the effort to improve relations between China and the Holy See. Improving relations with China is a high priority for the Church, as evidenced by the high-level China meeting at the Vatican in January. In addition, the USCCB is concerned with the persecution of religious groups, such as the unregistered Catholic and Protestant churches, and the intrusive interference by the state in the internal life of the "open" or recognized churches.

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**Cuba:** For the Church in Cuba the 1998 papal visit is a key reference point, but the expectations that Cubans would enjoy full religious freedom have not been realized. The Cuban government still maintains excessive control over almost every aspect of daily life. The early years of outright persecution, expulsion of clergy, and confiscation of religious properties are past, but the Church is still restricted in receiving pastoral workers from abroad and gaining access to the media, and cannot conduct its own schools. The arrests of March 2003 and lengthy sentences given to 75 non-violent dissidents, more than half of whom are Catholic activists of the Varela Project, remains a major obstacle to improved relations between the Church and the state. Their release continues to be a principal demand of human rights groups.

**Iraq:** Iraq is engulfed in horrific civil and sectarian violence, making even more uncertain the country's future and whether and how the constitution's contradictory clauses concerning basic human rights and protections for religious freedom will fare. Christians now suffer targeted violence with many fleeing to surrounding countries or to the north to the Plain of Nineveh, a traditional area of Christians in Iraq. The Iraqi bishops and our Conference share the view that, the historical role of Islam deserves respect, but this must be done in a way that ensures full religious freedom and human rights for minorities. USCCB will continue to urge the US government to encourage Iraq to respect human rights and religious liberty.

**Nigeria:** Religious conflict has increased after the transfer of power from a military to a civilian government, a situation worsened by the imposition of *Shari'a* law in Muslim-dominated northern states. Hundreds of Muslims and Christians in northern and central Nigeria have died in recent years as a result of violence between the two communities. Inertia and impunity have resulted in the failure both to prosecute those responsible for the violence and to implement the proposed truth and reconciliation commission to defuse tensions and prevent a recurrence of the conflict.

**Pakistan:** Recent years have seen the massacres of Christian worshipers and attacks on Christian centers. Official discrimination against non-Muslim minorities has lessened, but has not been eliminated. The state has ended the separate electorate system whereby Christians could vote only for Christians and Muslims could vote only for Muslims, a 20-year system that the Bishops called religious apartheid. Islamic extremists, however, continue to pose a serious danger. The coordinated attacks against Catholic and Protestant churches in the Punjab two years ago by Islamist fundamentalists and last spring's capital trial of a man charged with converting from Islam to Christianity illustrate the still difficult situation in the country.

**Sudan:** In Darfur, widespread violence and violations of human rights continue, despite international attempts to alleviate the suffering. The violations of human rights in Darfur are egregious, but reflect primarily an ethnic, not a religious conflict. At the heart of Sudan's north-south civil war was the struggle for religious liberty, ethnic "African" identity, and control of the country's natural resources. While the creation of a government of national unity is a hopeful development for the north-south conflict, obstacles remain to the full implementation of the comprehensive peace agreement. Among those challenges are continuing tensions with neighboring Chad, sagging international commitment to the peace process, separatist movements in the east and west of the country, and the crisis in Darfur. Questions persist about genuine freedom of religion for non-Muslims living in areas in the north.

**Vietnam:** While extensive restrictions on religious freedom still exist, recent years seem to have brought some improvement, especially in relations between the Catholic Church and the government. Outright persecution of certain Buddhist and Evangelical groups persists. The long delays before allowing candidates for the priesthood and religious life to enter seminaries and novitiates have been somewhat mitigated, but the state still insists on maintaining excessive controls over religious practice. USCCB is hopeful that the need for greater trade with the rest of the world will lead to loosening restrictions on religious life.

## RESOURCES

Related USCCB statements on human rights and religious freedom, including Congressional testimony offered in November 2005 and March 2006, can be found at: <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/libertyind.htm>

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## Department of Social Development and World Peace Office of International Justice and Peace

### **Background on Iraq February 2007**

#### **CURRENT SITUATION**

The deteriorating situation in Iraq, together with new Congressional leadership and the report by the Iraq Study Group, a bipartisan effort chaired by former Secretary James Baker and former Congressman Lee Hamilton, have increased political pressures within the U.S. to reevaluate U.S. policy toward Iraq .

On January 10, President Bush set out a new policy to meet the growing violence; it calls for a surge of about 20,000 U.S. troops in Iraq and the doubling of provincial reconstruction teams to help local Iraqi communities. The new Democratic majority and many Republicans in Congress are skeptical of the President's policy. Various congressional resolutions are pending which question the policy and ask for specific benchmarks to be met in an ongoing assessment of effectiveness.

The elections of January 2005 and December 2005 and the adoption of a constitution in October 2005 were seen as signs of progress for Iraqis, but the situation in Iraq has deteriorated seriously. The need to establish security remains paramount.

Terrorists and insurgents continue to target both security forces and civilians in an effort to destabilize the government. The U.S. remains in the difficult position of trying to provide basic security even though its presence is resented by many Iraqis and much of the Muslim world. The reports of prisoner abuse and mistreatment of detainees have also compromised the role of occupation forces. On the other hand, many Iraqi leaders have made it clear that the presence of Coalition forces is important to stabilize the country. Other important ways to enhance security are to accelerate economic and social reconstruction in Iraq; but both seem to be lagging.

For Iraqi Christians, the security situation continues to worsen. For a long time many Christians viewed the attacks on Christians as attacks on all Iraqis and this may still be the case to a large extent. However, a pattern of deliberate violence against Christians and other vulnerable minorities is emerging. The continuing violence and instability has led to a high proportion of Iraqi refugees being Christians. Earlier statements by Shia leaders that they will respect the rights of minorities were encouraging, but many still fear that the new Iraqi government may not fully respect religious liberty. The adopted constitution has contradictory clauses regarding human rights and religious liberty. A key now is the implementation of the constitution in law and practice. Many agree that the role of Islam must be respected, but this must be done in a way that protects the rights of religious minorities, including Christian minorities.

#### **THE BISHOPS' POSITION PRIOR TO THE WAR**

USCCB issued four major letters/statements prior to the war, including a statement of the USCCB President that outlines the bishops' position:

*Our bishops' conference continues to question the moral legitimacy of any preemptive, unilateral use of military force to overthrow the government of Iraq. To permit preemptive or preventive uses of military force to overthrow threatening or hostile regimes would create deeply troubling moral and legal precedents. Based on the facts that are known, it is difficult to justify resort to war against Iraq, lacking*

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*clear and adequate evidence of an imminent attack of a grave nature or Iraq's involvement in the terrorist attacks of September 11. With the Holy See and many religious leaders throughout the world, we believe that resort to war would not meet the strict conditions in Catholic teaching for the use of military force. (2/26/2003)*

## **USCCB POSITION**

In November 2006, Bishop William Skylstad, President of USCCB, issued a major statement on a “Call for Dialogue and Action on *Responsible Transition* in Iraq.” The statement was discussed and affirmed by the full body of bishops gathered in plenary assembly. The statement was based on an earlier one issued by Bishop Thomas Wenski, Chairman of the Committee on International Policy.

In the wake of the President’s new plan for Iraq, Bishop Skylstad on January 12 issued “Evaluating Plans for a Responsible Transition in Iraq.” The newest statement reiterates the “grave moral concerns about military intervention in Iraq and the unpredictable and uncontrollable negative consequences of invasion and occupation” that were expressed by the Holy See and the bishops’ Conference. However, it goes on to argue that the Conference now supports “broader regional and international engagement to increase security, stability and reconstruction in Iraq.”

The statement lifts up a key moral question that ought to guide our nation’s actions: “How can the U.S. bring about a responsible transition in Iraq?” Each alternative course of action “ought to be evaluated in light of our nation’s moral responsibility to help Iraqis to live with security and dignity in the aftermath of U.S. military action. Our nation’s military forces should remain in Iraq only as long as their presence actually contributes to a responsible transition. Our nation should seek effective ways to end their deployment at the earliest opportunity consistent with this goal.”

Concretely, basic benchmarks for evaluating progress toward a responsible transition include: “minimally acceptable levels of security; economic reconstruction to create employment for Iraqis; and political structures and agreements that help overcome divisions, reduce violence, broaden participation, and increase respect for religious freedom and basic human rights.” The benchmarks ought to be measured in light of “the traditional principle of ‘probability of success.’”

In repeatedly calling for a “responsible transition,” the Conference consistently highlighted the need for substantive and civil discussion of ways to bring about a responsible transition in Iraq.

USCCB acknowledges that the work of stabilizing and rebuilding Iraq rests primarily on Iraqis, but the United States must play a key role in supporting Iraqis and engaging other countries in the region and the international community in the task.

Of special concern is the dire situation of Christians and other minorities in Iraq. Their particular vulnerability is a sign of the violence and lack of the rule of law that affects all Iraqis. This concern is reflected in USCCB’s major statements on Iraq. In addition, Bishop Skylstad has written a letter of solidarity to Patriarch Emmanuel III Delly on the targeting of Christian Churches for attacks; and USCCB has brought the situation of Christians to the attention of the U.S. State Department, urging the U.S. to review economic reconstruction aid programs to ensure that aid is distributed fairly to all elements of Iraqi society, to institute a more generous U.S. refugee and asylum policy, and to encourage the central government of Iraq and the Kurdish regional government to respect the rights of Christians and other minorities.

## **ACTION REQUESTED**

Urge members of Congress to assess whether U.S. policies move toward a “responsible transition” or

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are “likely to increase divisions, violence and loss of life.” Ask them to evaluate benchmarks for a “responsible transition” in light of the traditional principle of “probability of success,” with our military forces remaining only as long as their presence can contribute to a “responsible transition.”

**For further information:** *Stephen Colecchi*, Director, Office of International Justice and Peace, USCCB, 202-541-3160 (ph); 541-3339 (fax); [scolecchi@usccb.org](mailto:scolecchi@usccb.org). Also visit: [www.usccb.org/sdwp/peace/churchleaders.htm](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/peace/churchleaders.htm). On refugee questions: *Kevin Appleby*, MRS, USCCB, 202-541-3260, [KAppleby@usccb.org](mailto:KAppleby@usccb.org).



## Department of Social Development and World Peace Office of International Justice and Peace

### **Background on the Holy Land February 2007**

*[T]he Israelis have a right to live in peace in their State; the Palestinians have a right to a free and sovereign homeland. When each of the peoples in the region sees that its expectations are taken into consideration and thus feels less threatened, then mutual trust will be strengthened.*  
--Pope Benedict XVI, January 8, 2007

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Middle East is a land holy to Jews, Christians and Muslims, but tragically it is also a land that yearns for a just peace. USCCB has a long history of working to address the conflict. Palestinian leaders must recognize Israel and clearly renounce terrorism, take effective steps to stop it, and bring to justice those responsible. It is reprehensible to call suicide bombers “martyrs.” Israel’s often-aggressive military response, its expansion of settlements, and its construction of a wall deep in Palestinian areas increase misery and tension that often breed violence. The route of the “barrier” presents a further impediment to creation of a viable Palestinian state that is necessary for a two-state resolution of the conflict.

In January 2005 Palestinians elected President Abbas, Israelis withdrew from some Palestinian lands, and President Bush urged a renewed peace process. The President secured U.S. funding to “support Palestinian political, economic and security reforms,” but Congress attached provisions delaying aid and making it less effective. Despite new leadership, the Palestinian Authority was widely seen as plagued by corruption, cronyism and inefficiency that crippled its ability to improve the lives of the Palestinian people who suffered growing poverty and desperation. The unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, while welcome, was not seen as a result of the peace process or President Abbas’ efforts. The security situation in Gaza collapsed after the withdrawal and Palestinians believe that Israeli security measures and the wall effectively confiscate Palestinian lands and water resources.

The election of a Hamas majority to the Palestinian parliament in January 2006 was a serious setback for the peace process, a setback compounded by the intensified violence and armed conflict of this summer. This cycle of violence and the ongoing crisis in Gaza were immediately precipitated by provocative acts by Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, including abductions, cross-border raids against Israeli military personnel, and rocket attacks against Israeli civilians. Israel acted to defend its citizens, but its military response was disproportionate and indiscriminate in some instances, endangering Palestinian and Lebanese civilians and destroying civilian infrastructure. With Hamas refusing to recognize Israel and in control of the Palestinian Authority U.S. aid has been cut, deepening the humanitarian crisis. Catholic Relief Services is on the ground providing humanitarian aid in both Gaza and Lebanon.

In January 2007 Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met with Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas in an attempt to revive the peace process. President Bush reaffirmed U.S. support for a two-state solution in his recent State of the Union address, but concerted U.S. leadership is required.

The dwindling Christian community feels increasingly isolated and some Christians are still emigrating. The goal of Hamas to create an Islamic state may pose a fundamental threat to the freedom and future of the Church and other Christians in the Holy Land. The precarious situation of the Church in the Holy Land is exacerbated by the failure to make adequate progress in the Vatican-Israeli negotiations on the Fundamental Agreement between Israel and the Holy See. Many Church agencies and institutions are put at risk by tax policies and other problems.

#### **USCCB RESPONSE**

##### **National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East (NILI)**

Since 2003 USCCB has been part of an unprecedented initiative of 35 U.S. Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious

leaders who are urging the U.S. government to work to revive the peace process. In the wake of a difficult and tragic year, NILI leaders were convened by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick in September and agreed on a new consensus for a just peace in the midst of a seriously deteriorated situation. In December 2006 NILI released a major statement and met with Secretary of State Rice in January to urge renewed U.S. leadership for peace.

### **The Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land**

The Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land was launched in February 2005 as part of the National Interreligious Initiative. The Campaign invites bishops and Catholic leaders to work with local religious leaders in Jewish, Muslim and other Christian traditions. The goal is to create a shared commitment to the broad outlines of a just resolution of the conflict and to raise a united voice with policy makers and the wider public.

### **USCCB Advocacy**

USCCB insists that a just peace demands an end to the violence, real security for the State of Israel, an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the establishment of an internationally-recognized and viable state for Palestinians, just resolution of the refugee problem, an agreement on Jerusalem that protects religious freedom and other basic rights, an equitable sharing of resources, especially water, and implementation of relevant UN resolutions and other provisions of international law. USCCB believes that U.S. leadership is needed to challenge and restrain both parties to the conflict, but in different ways. We join others in calling on Hamas to reject terrorism and recognize Israel in order to enter into a sustainable peace process. We urge Israel to restrain military responses and avoid actions that compromise a two-state solution.

USCCB maintains that it is not in the best interests of either Israelis or Palestinians for the dire situation in Palestinian areas to deteriorate further. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including CRS, play a crucial role in delivering Palestinian aid. Bishop Wenski, Chairman of the Committee on International Policy, wrote several letters to congressional leaders on Palestinian aid and expressed USCCB's concerns regarding the impact of H.R. 4681 on both Palestinian aid and the peace process. In response to the crisis in Gaza, Bishop Wenski issued a statement and sent letters to U.S. officials that decried the provocative and violent acts of Hamas, criticized some indiscriminant and disproportionate Israeli military responses, called for an immediate ceasefire, urged humanitarian aid, and supported negotiations to bring about a just and lasting peace.

### **The Christian Communities in the Holy Land**

The Christian presence in the Holy Land needs our constant support. The continuing violence and growing despair could further marginalize the Christian community and accelerate the departure of Christians. Successful completion of negotiations between the Holy See and Israel on the Fundamental Agreement of 1993 is critical both for the future of the Church in the Holy Land and for religious freedom in the region. In the past year, USCCB has worked to promote a resolution, including numerous meetings with and letters to American and Israeli officials. At the request of the Church in the Holy Land, USCCB has also intervened with officials regarding the route of the wall near the Christian town of Aboud. For the past six years, leaders of episcopal conferences from Europe and North America have met in the Holy Land to enhance solidarity.

### **ACTION REQUESTED**

Despite significant setbacks and discouraging developments, we cannot abandon the people of the Holy Land.

- **Join the Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land.** Reach out to Jewish and Muslim religious leaders to work **together** to promote strong U.S. leadership. Website: [www.usccb.org/sdwp/holylandpeace/](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/holylandpeace/).
- **Call for Greater U.S. Leadership.** Urge President Bush to make pursuit of a just peace a top priority and to challenge and restrain both parties. Ask Congress to support funding for NGOs providing aid to Palestinians.
- **Support the Church in the Holy Land.** Urge members of Congress and Jewish leaders to press Israel to successfully conclude negotiations with the Holy See related to the Fundamental Agreement.

### **RESOURCES**

For additional materials, see [www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/mideast.htm](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/mideast.htm). For further information: *Stephen Colecchi*, Director, Office of International Justice and Peace, 202-541-3160 (phone), 541-3339 (fax), [scolecchi@usccb.org](mailto:scolecchi@usccb.org) (email).



Department of Social Development and World Peace  
Office of International Justice and Peace

**Background on Haiti**  
**February 2007**

*The current Haitian society calls for a profound change in all constituents. In the name of Christ and his church, we raise up our voices to ask all Haitians to work for the advent of a new society and a new way of governing the country, with a foundation in an orderly state, moral values, and the common good.*

The Bishops of Haiti, September 29, 2004

**THE GENERAL SITUATION:**

A new day may be dawning for Haiti. With the largely successful elections last year and the inauguration of President René Préal, Haiti may have begun the long process of recovery from years of corrupt government, international boycotts, the flight of businesses and the violent attacks of armed gangs. In a concrete recognition of progress, the U.S. Congress this year passed the HOPE Act that provides preferential trade treatment for Haitian goods, a bill that USCCB advocacy efforts did much to support. Internal security is still far from achieved, but there has been a downturn in killings and kidnappings since the elections. An effective national police force is still in its formative stages and will require the continued presence of the nearly 2,000 international police trainers in the country.

The UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti—MINUSTAH—has been roundly criticized for its failure to control the armed gangs with their campaign of kidnappings for ransom. MINUSTAH's original task was to disarm and demobilize the armed actors and reintegrate them into civil society, so far with little success. Widespread criticism of the inaction of the UN mission resulted in a general strike called by civil society groups and allegedly led to the Brazilian force commander's suicide. Discontent with the behavior of many of the troops is widespread, including accusations of proselytizing by some of the troops from Muslim nations. The cultural and linguistic divide between them and the Haitian people is wide and needs to be addressed by the Préal government.

**THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH:**

The bishops of Haiti are seeking their proper role in helping that society find its way to peace and reconciliation. Over the past year they had issued statements on the elections and the role of citizen participation and sent a strong warning against priests running for political office. Catholic Relief Services' Haiti program, one of its largest in the world, is engaged in responding to the bishops' call to help develop the Church's role in promoting lasting peace and true reconciliation. In addition, CRS and other major non-governmental organizations are playing their traditional role of providing critically needed supplies of food and medicines throughout the country.

## **THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY:**

In the months after his election, President Préval completed a very successful round of meetings with the White House, the Congress, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations the Inter-American Development Bank and the Organization of American States. The urgent financial needs of Haiti, well known for years to all these U.S. and international bodies, may at last begin to be addressed. Mr. Préval has called on other governments, especially those of France, Canada and the U.S., to step up long-term development aid.

At the UN, he made it clear that the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti should not be withdrawn until real security throughout the country is achieved, but he also called for a change in orientation of the mission. He said Haiti needs “fewer tanks and more tractors, more road-building, more construction of waterways.”

At the OAS, he promised to start a national dialogue with all the highly divided political sectors in order to forge a development framework that should last, he said, for a quarter century.

## **TRADE AND HAITI’S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**

A significant element in Haiti’s economic development could be the restoration of the once vibrant apparel industry. For this to go forward, special tariff concessions must be made for Haiti’s devastated economy to grow. For two years, legislation that USCCB has supported has been introduced in both houses of Congress but did not come to a vote. Both the Haiti Economic Recovery Opportunity (HERO) Act of 2005 and the less generous Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act of 2005 failed to be brought up for a vote by the House leadership.

This year promised to be different. In September, House and Ways Committee Chairman Thomas introduced HR 6142 that included the HOPE language which provides that, for a limited period of time, articles of apparel manufactured in Haiti could be imported into the United States free of duty. In December 2006, with the help of extensive advocacy from the Catholic community, Congress passed and the President signed the HOPE Act. Experts estimate that the bill will create thousands of direct jobs and associated service jobs. While the passage of HOPE was a tremendous victory for Haiti and for a compassionate trade policy, there still remain obstacles to overcome before Haiti begins to benefit. First, Haiti needs to be “certified” by President Bush as qualifying for the trade preferences, a process that should be straightforward, but could be used by opponents of the bill to stall implementation. Also, advocates need to be vigilant that the jobs created in Haiti respect the dignity and core labor rights of workers.

## **RESOURCES**

For copies of statements, visit: [www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/latinamerica/haiti.htm](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/latinamerica/haiti.htm).

**For further information:** *Tom Quigley* 202-541-3184 (ph); 202-541-3339 (fax); [tquigley@usccb.org](mailto:tquigley@usccb.org).



## Department of Social Development and World Peace Office of International Justice and Peace

### Background on Debt February 2007

*So it is to be hoped that... the process of debt cancellation and reduction for the poorest countries will be continued and accelerated.*

-- Pope Benedict XVI, January 8, 2007

#### ISSUE

Heavy debt burdens continue to draw precious government resources away from critical investments in health care, education, water and other sectors necessary to improve lives in the poorest countries. Debt burdens also impede the ability of governments to respond to crises such as HIV/AIDS, natural disasters and civil strife.

#### BACKGROUND

Many poor countries have begun to see their debts reduced through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative that was adopted in 1996 and expanded in 1999 in response to successful advocacy by the global Jubilee 2000 movement, in which the Catholic Church played a major role. However, as implementation of the HIPC program progressed, it became increasingly apparent that the amount of debt relief provided was insufficient for the kind of “fresh start” that countries needed in order to address deep-seated poverty.

USCCB and CRS have consistently made important contributions to the debt cancellation effort that offers new hope to some of the world’s poorest and most forgotten people. It has always been a key aspect of USCCB and CRS policy that the losses incurred by the international financial institutions from the debt cancellation not be offset by reductions in new assistance to poor countries. USCCB urged that debt cancellation result in new and real resources to poor countries.

A major breakthrough occurred in the July 2005 Summit of leaders of the major industrialized countries plus Russia (the G8). They announced a proposal to cancel 100% of the debt owed by about 18 HIPC countries (eventually as many as 42 HIPC’s) to the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank, the African Development Fund (AfDF), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The G8 called for the major donor countries to reimburse the IDA and AfDF for losses from debt cancellation. (The IMF will finance its costs mainly from internal resources.)

The G8 proposal was accepted by all member countries of the World Bank, IMF and AfDF at their recent annual meetings. The IMF gave final approval to the proposal in December 2005, and the World Bank gave approval in January 2006. In response to efforts by USCCB and the Church, the World Bank agreed to reduce the timeframe for granting debt relief to countries that qualified after July 1, 2006. This decision reversed previous policy that would have required qualifying countries to wait up to 15 months before receiving debt relief. The AfDF gave its approval in mid-2006.

Congress appropriated \$950 million for IDA in the FY06 Foreign Operations (ForOps) bill, which is sufficient to satisfy the U.S.’s initial commitment to finance a share of the cost of the new debt cancellation to the international financial institutions. To assure that the U.S. can continue to meet its

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financial commitment, it is essential that the Congress provide \$950 million for IDA in spending measures for FY07 (See Backgrounder on Development Assistance).

A major goal of USCCB has been to promote fairness in country eligibility so that all of the poorest countries that have heavy debt burdens are included in the new debt cancellation. The G8 proposal is limited to HIPC countries. An appropriate standard would be to include all poor countries with debt burdens sufficient to qualify for grants (rather than loans) from IDA. World Bank analysis shows that non-HIPC countries eligible for grants have debt burdens at least as heavy as the HIPCs.

The G8 meeting to be held in Germany this year will give the world's richest countries an opportunity to evaluate the progress that has been made in fulfilling the promise made in July 2005. USCCB will be monitoring developments carefully.

Another USCCB goal is to include debt owed to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the largest creditor of Latin American HIPC countries. USCCB has worked closely with Congressional offices in drafting a bill that supports the debt cancellation in the G8 proposal, but also authorizes cancellation of IDB debt and urges the U.S. Treasury to work to expand the group of eligible countries. The Administration has supported cancellation of HIPC country debt owed to the IDB. They agreed to provide debt cancellation to Honduras, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Guyana, and Haiti.

In addition to these efforts at the multilateral level, USCCB has been supporting efforts to help Liberia get out from beneath a heavy "debt overhang" that prevents that country, and its democratically elected government, from attracting investment to stimulate the economy and provide better health care and education for its citizens. Support for prompt debt relief for Liberia may need Congressional action at some point. USCCB is monitoring this possibility.

## **ACTION REQUESTED**

After many years of sustained advocacy on the part of USCCB, CRS and other advocates, the world's wealthier nations, and the financial institutions over which they hold significant influence, have made the right decisions on how to proceed in cancelling poor country debt. However, these initiatives require funding so that new resources can be made available to invest in health and education in poor countries. Supporting the required funding is substantially the task that lies ahead.

USCCB and CRS commend the Administration for its leadership in bringing about a new debt cancellation agreement. USCCB and CRS will seek opportunities to:

- Advocate with the Congress for appropriation of \$950 million for IDA for FY 2007;
- Encourage the Administration to work for:
  - (1) implementation of the IDB debt cancellation agreement; and
  - (2) extension of the program to all poor countries entitled to grant financing from IDA.

## **RESOURCES**

See the letters on Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty website of the USCCB and CRS at [www.usccb.org/globalpoverty](http://www.usccb.org/globalpoverty). **For more information contact:** Gerry Flood, 202-541-3167; [gflood@usccb.org](mailto:gflood@usccb.org); and Fr. Andrew Small, OMI, 202-541-3153; [asmall@usccb.org](mailto:asmall@usccb.org)



## Department of Social Development and World Peace Office of International Justice and Peace

### Background on Development Assistance February 2007

*The worsening scandal of hunger is unacceptable in a world which has the resources, the knowledge, and the means available to bring it to an end. It impels us to change our way of life, it reminds us of the urgent need to eliminate the structural causes of global economic dysfunction and to correct models of growth that seem incapable of guaranteeing respect for the environment and for integral human development, both now and in the future* .--Pope Benedict XVI, January 8, 2007

Poverty, hunger and disease devastate the lives and dignity of most of our brothers and sisters in the world. Of the world's 6 billion people, 5 billion live in developing countries with access to only 20% of the world's resources. Nearly 3 billion continue to struggle on less than \$2 per day. Health crises such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria threaten the existence of whole generations, and poor countries continue to face enormous development and humanitarian challenges.

Fighting poverty, hunger and disease by adequately funding foreign assistance is not simply an optional commitment. This action invests in solidarity with poor nations, creates the prosperity that improves our own national security, and promotes the human dignity of the poorest in the world.

**Congress is still considering changes to the FY 2007 budget as it takes up a Continuing Resolution. USCCB asked Congress to take the following positions on the FY 2007 Budget:**

**Global Health:** Support appropriation of at least \$4.0 billion for morally appropriate, comprehensive programs to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

**Development and Humanitarian Assistance:** Provide \$5 billion for core development and humanitarian assistance accounts. These programs help enhance skills and provide basic services in the areas of education, health care, agriculture, rural development and microenterprise/ microfinance, as well as urgent assistance to victims of natural disasters and other emergencies.

**Debt Relief/International Financial Institutions:** Appropriation of at least \$950 million for the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) is crucial not only to provide badly needed development assistance to the world's poorest countries, but also to fulfill the U.S. commitment to the new international debt cancellation program for poor countries that USCCB worked for and welcomed.

**Millennium Challenge Account (MCA):** Support \$3 billion for the MCA. Without significant funding for the MCA, any hope for the success of this innovative approach to foreign assistance will remain far off. Also urge focusing of MCA funding on the poorest countries.

In addition to the above priorities and in addition to funding for other health, development and humanitarian assistance programs, USCCB urges action to help countries with these critical needs:

**Sudan:** Support \$100 million for the African Union peacekeeping mission and increased funding for critical humanitarian efforts in the Darfur region and the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Southern Sudan.

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**Colombia:** Include basic standards for the protection of human rights in all U.S. aid to Colombia. Support multilateral efforts for a negotiated peace process. Increase development and humanitarian aid. Phase out aerial fumigation and increase alternative development. (See Colombia Backgrounder.)

**Haiti:** Support the appropriation of at least \$100 million for Haiti. As the poorest country in the hemisphere and now that elections have taken place successfully, Haiti deserves special consideration to help the country deal with ongoing political and social unrest.

**Indonesia:** As was done last year, adopt language conditioning military assistance to Indonesia upon certification by the Secretary of State that certain well-defined human rights improvements have been made by the Indonesian Armed Forces.

**Food Aid:** \$2 billion for Title II Food for Peace and authorize up to 25% for local purchase of food to help meet some of the chronic situations of hunger and underdevelopment.

**Population Policy:** Support continuing U.S. policies on United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Mexico City Policy:

**United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA):** Support the Kemp-Kasten amendment that prohibits funding to organizations involved in coercive abortion or involuntary sterilization.

**Mexico City Policy:** Support the Mexico City policy, which prevents U.S. funding of NGOs that perform or promote abortion as a family planning method in developing nations.

#### **Possible Future Budget Actions:**

In December 2006, Congress passed a “continuing resolution” (CR) to keep funding the government until February 2007. The new leadership announced that they would abandon attempts to complete work on the unfinished spending bills for FY 2007. Instead, they will support a “continuing resolution” that largely funds foreign aid programs at the FY 2006 levels.

If this were to happen, USCCB is concerned that there would be a cut in essential funding to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in poor countries. The United States has been at the forefront of a major international effort to expand programs to address these devastating diseases. In spite of important gains achieved through this effort, however, HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis continue to wreak havoc on the lives and well-being of millions of people around the world, and the impact is most severe among the very poor. It would be tragic if the momentum that has been built up through U.S. leadership were lost through a failure to provide the necessary funds. USCCB is urging Congress to approve \$4.36 billion, the amount proposed by the Senate Appropriations Committee, for morally appropriate HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis programs in FY2007.

In addition, the Administration is expected to submit an Emergency Supplemental Request in February 2007 that could be as much as \$270 billion, touching on a number of foreign aid concerns.

[See “Campaign Update” of the Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty for current action items at [www.usccb.org/globalpoverty](http://www.usccb.org/globalpoverty) or [www.catholicrelief.org/globalpoverty](http://www.catholicrelief.org/globalpoverty).]

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Department of Social Development and World Peace  
Office of International Justice and Peace

**Background on Cuba**  
**February 2007**

*Our attention is also turned towards Cuba. In voicing the hope that all of its inhabitants may realize their legitimate aspirations, amid concern for the common good, I should like to renew the appeal made by my venerable Predecessor: "Let Cuba open itself to the world, and let the world open itself to Cuba." Mutual openness to other countries can only bring benefits to all concerned.*

--Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Diplomatic Corps, January 8, 2007

## **BACKGROUND**

Hopes for modifying U.S. Cuba policy, seen by many as possible in recent years, have been repeatedly undermined by the House leadership. Despite majority votes in both houses in support of lifting certain provisions of the embargo, especially affecting travel to Cuba, the provisions were either stripped from the final bill or were never brought up. The Administration continues its firm opposition to any changes. The report of the President's Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, now supported by the office of a Cuba Transition Coordinator, further tightens these restrictions.

Several factors behind the new harder line are involved. Beginning with the sudden arrests and sentencing in the spring of 2003 of some 75 peaceful Cuban dissidents, many of them activists with the Catholic-inspired Varela Project, followed by the summary execution of three ferryboat hijackers, the pro-embargo stance of the Florida Congressional delegation has been strengthened.

The U.S. has expelled Cuban diplomats. The Treasury Department has eliminated the exemption for non-degree related educational travel to Cuba. The bilateral migration agreement of 1995, providing for the orderly departure of up to 20,000 Cubans to settle here annually, is in jeopardy. And Cubans in this country are now restricted as to their travel to Cuba and as to what they can send to their families there. Last year, in a reversal, the House voted down amendments to end or modify the embargo.

Two recent developments may contribute to a review of U.S. policy in the near future: one is the illness of Fidel Castro that has necessitated the provisional transfer of his duties; the other is the new makeup of the Congress. Groups pressing for change are mobilizing to challenge current U.S. policies, especially the travel restrictions.

## **THE TRAVEL BAN**

Up until the events of March 2003 and now the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, expectations of reversing the decades-old Cuba sanctions policy were high. Votes in both houses clearly pointed to lifting restrictions in three areas: *the sale of food and medicines, the right of U.S. citizens to travel, and the amount Cubans in this country can send to their families on the island.* Throughout last year, the main attention in

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the Congress has been on travel. Allowing Americans free access to visit the island and interact with the Cuban people is seen by advocates as an important means of advancing the goals of a non-violent transition to a more open and free Cuban society.

In a letter to President Bush, USCCB noted: “Over the many years of the embargo, it has failed to achieve its goals of unseating the Castro government, restoring democracy and protecting human rights. In fact, the embargo hurts the ordinary people of Cuba.... The additional restrictions proposed by the Commission—limiting Cuban-American family visits and the amount of money they can send to Cuba—will only exacerbate the situation within the country.”

### **USCCB POSITION**

The Holy See, the Cuban Bishops and the USCCB have strongly denounced the Cuban crackdown on peaceful dissent and the unwarranted use of the death penalty. USCCB’s basic message over the years has made the following points:

- The principal effect of the U.S. embargo is to strengthen government control, providing the basis for the constant denunciation of the U.S., blaming Cuba’s genuine shortages of medicines and food on the embargo, instead of on a failed economic system and the end of Soviet subsidies.
- Dollar-laden tourists and the party faithful live well enough, and Cuba is a world leader in certain areas of medicine for paying tourists, but the average poor Cuban--a majority--suffers real and constant deprivation of both food and basic healthcare.
- The Church in Cuba is unalterably opposed to the embargo, as are most political dissidents.

USCCB is well aware of the many limitations on the freedom of the Church and other parts of civil society in Cuba, of the routine violations of human rights, and limitations on freedom of speech and assembly. Neither international pressure, nor Pope John Paul II’s visit, has succeeded in changing conditions which may now be worsening. To forestall the disastrous confrontation that some here seem to favor, USCCB seeks to turn a failed policy that serves the interests only of the Castro regime into a humane, morally justified and politically sensible one.

USCCB urges Congress to support efforts to drop the travel limitations for visits by families here to their family members in Cuba and asks their support for legislative efforts by the Senate and House Cuba Working Groups to end an economic embargo that is morally unacceptable and politically counterproductive. The goals of improving the lot of the Cuban people and encouraging the democratization of the governance of Cuba are best accomplished through greater rather than less contact between the Cuban and American people.

**RESOURCES:** <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/cuba.htm>

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## Department of Social Development and World Peace Office of International Justice and Peace

### **Background on the Democratic Republic of the Congo February 2007**

*“These last years your country has lived through a series of deadly conflicts that have left deep scars in the memory of its peoples... At a time when the Catholics of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in union with all people of goodwill, prepare to participate in some important events for the future of their nation, I would like to express my spiritual closeness to them by raising up a fervent prayer to the Lord that they persevere, with unshakable hope, in the construction of peace and fraternity!”*

- Pope Benedict XVI to the Congolese Bishops, January 2006

#### **BACKGROUND**

In 2006, with the support of the world’s largest and most expensive UN Peacekeeping mission (MONUC), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC; formerly Zaire) overcame huge logistical and political challenges and successfully held its first elections in 40 years. While there was some violence and the process was not perfect, major conflict was avoided, the Congolese people participated in massive numbers, and the election was considered free and fair by international observers. Joseph Kabila was sworn in as president in December and the presidential run-off challenger Jean-Pierre Bemba conceded defeat and committed himself to leading the opposition in the newly established parliament. There is great hope now that democratic governance can consolidate the gains that have been made, and lead to peace, stability, and reconstruction throughout the country. The new government, however, is inexperienced, has weak institutions, and faces huge security, political and humanitarian challenges.

The electoral process followed what has been called the “world’s deadliest conflict since World War II.” More than 4 million Congolese have died since 1998 as a result of a six-year war involving eight nations and numerous rebel groups, and the lingering insecurity in the eastern part of the country where rebel groups, militias, and oftentimes underpaid and poorly trained Congolese armed forces continue to attack, rape and loot the population. More than 1,000 people continue to die each day in the DRC--almost half of these are children under the age of five. Most of the deaths are due to disease and malnutrition, the result of displacement of civilians from their homes and fields, and the lack of health services. The root cause of the conflict is the struggle to control the vast natural resource wealth of the DRC that includes diamonds, gold, tin, copper, timber, and coltan – a vital component of our computers and cell phones. Vast quantities of mineral wealth are smuggled from the DRC every year without benefit to the Congolese people.

The Catholic Church is a critical force in the DRC. Fifty-five percent of its over 60 million people are Catholic, making it the largest Catholic population in Africa. In the absence of functioning government structures, the Catholic Church, along with other churches, has for decades provided most of the basic services such as health care and education for the Congolese people. The Church also played an important role in providing non-partisan civic education – supported by CRS and other Caritas agencies – in all 47 dioceses across the country for the referendum on the new constitution, as well as the two rounds of presidential elections. The Church also trained election monitors to help ensure free and fair elections.

The Conference of Congolese Bishops issued numerous public statements over the past two years urging the transitional government to move forward with the electoral process in a fair, transparent, and inclusive manner. In their most recent statement of December 2006, the bishops congratulated all on the successful elections and urged

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the nation to focus now on national reconciliation and reconstruction. Congo's future is in God's hands, said the statement, but depends also on the Congolese people working together for peace and national unity.

### **USCCB POSITION**

USCCB continues its support for the efforts of the Church in the Congo. In July 2005, Bishop William Murphy and USCCB staff visited Bukavu, in eastern Congo, to learn about the continuing crisis in that part of the country from religious, community and political leaders. These leaders expressed their hopes for the emergence from the elections of a peaceful, united and democratic Congo.

CRS and USCCB were instrumental in developing and supporting passage of S.2125, *The Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act*, a bipartisan legislative package initiated by Senator Barack Obama that allocates \$52 million to help create conditions favorable to the electoral process and to improve development and security in the DRC. Now that Congress has passed the bill and the president has signed it, the focus is on implementation of the provisions of the bill.

Some key policy objectives of S.2125 include: ensuring government commitment to democracy, transparency, human rights, peace, rule of law, and anti-corruption measures; expediting the process of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement of armed rebel groups; ensuring governmental commitment to responsible and transparent management of natural resources; protecting internally displaced persons; addressing basic humanitarian needs and the special problems of vulnerable members of the population; and engaging with other governments working to promote peace and security in the region, while holding accountable those working to destabilize the country.

Significantly, the proposed legislation also requires the United States to use its seat on the UN Security Council to strengthen the authority and capacity of MONUC by clarifying its rules of engagement, increasing the availability of resources, and providing authority and support for assisting with the elections and monitoring arms trafficking and natural-resource exploitation.

The UN peacekeeping force in the DRC (MONUC) continues to play a critical role in the DRC, and is up for mandate renewal in February 2007. USCCB believes that MONUC's troop level should be kept at the current level of 17,000 at least through 2007, and that MONUC's mandate should be clarified and revised in the post-election context.

### **ACTION REQUESTED**

- 1) Ask the U.S. Congress and Administration to move forward with implementing the S.2125 legislation, and to provide adequate levels of foreign aid to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- 2) Ask the U.S. to support the renewal of the UN Peacekeeping mission's (MONUC) mandate at current troop levels and continue to provide adequate U.S. funding for it.

**RESOURCES:** See the recent correspondence from Bishop Thomas G. Wenski urging Senate action on the *Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security and Democracy Promotion Act* (S.2125) and other documents on the DRC at: [www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/callafrica/drcstatements.htm](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/callafrica/drcstatements.htm).

**For further information:** Stephen Colecchi, Office of International Justice and Peace, USCCB, 202-541-3196 (voice), 541-3339 (fax), [SColecchi@usccb.org](mailto:SColecchi@usccb.org)



## Department of Social Development and World Peace Office of International Justice and Peace

### **Background on Northern Uganda February 2007**

*“The war in northern Uganda, which started in August 1986, has posed a serious challenge to all of us, the people of Uganda. The loss of so many human lives, the maiming and disfiguring of so many people, the disappearance of so many young and innocent children, the destruction of property and the resultant poverty are all a cause of great shame to our country and to our conscience. We can never, never keep silent on this great evil in our country. We can never say enough has been done to restore peace. We can never give up the search for peaceful means to end this long and bitter war.”* – Catholic Bishops of Uganda, Easter 2004

#### **Background to the Conflict**

For the past 21 years, the people of northern Uganda have endured a brutal conflict involving the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), the Government of Uganda, the Government of Sudan, and others. The roots of the conflict lie in economic inequality between northern and southern Uganda. The conflict is exacerbated by the perceived political marginalization of the northern Acholi people after Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni’s assumption of power in 1986. By the 1990s, however, the LRA rebellion that had started as a northern movement against the government of Uganda had devolved into a pseudo-mystical terrorist operation. The LRA was largely funded by the Government of Sudan and sustained itself by kidnappings of children in northern Uganda and southern Sudan. The LRA captured more than 30,000 children over the past two decades. These children have been held hostage as soldiers, sex slaves, and bondservants, with many forced to kill loved ones to break off family relations and dissuade future desertions. To avoid this grim fate, an estimated 35,000 “night commuters” walk miles each evening from their villages to sleep in the relative safety of town centers.

Today, approximately 1.4 million people remain displaced from their homes in fetid camps for internally displaced persons (IDP). The Acholi region has suffered the most. Although Ugandan military (UPDF) protection of IDP camps has improved since 2004, the most recent UN mortality studies reported an estimated 1,000 IDPs dying each week from disease and lack of access to adequate health care and clean water. In addition, girls and young women routinely suffer sexual and physical abuse. As improving security conditions in parts of northern Uganda allow for the return of some IDPs to their homes, there is an increasing need for the Government of Uganda to guarantee freedom of movement and to restore regional agricultural capabilities.

The ongoing conflict has the potential to destabilize the broader region. The LRA retains a sizeable presence in southern Sudan, threatening the fragile north/south Sudanese peace accords signed in January 2005. More recently, the LRA created a base in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a country that over the past ten years has experienced the worst human-rights catastrophe since the Second World War with more than 4 million fatalities.

Peace talks between the Government of Uganda and the LRA have occurred intermittently since the early 1990s. In light of increased Ugandan/Sudanese cooperation, local and international advocacy and reconciliation efforts, and recent peace overtures from the LRA and the Government of Uganda, the potential for lasting peace and security has improved. The international community needs to step forward to help secure peace and initiate reconstruction. Negotiations sponsored by the Government of South Sudan in Juba offer some hope of bringing this conflict to an end, but there are divisions among community leaders and victims over the competing claims of reconciliation and justice in reaching that goal. The talks are organized around five agenda items: 1) a cessation of hostilities and LRA assembly at two points in south Sudan, 2) economic and political development of Northern Uganda and political participation, 3) accountability and justice, 4) a cease-fire, and 5) disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration. Thus far negotiating parties have only agreed on the first agenda item and the talks have currently stalled with the LRA’s demand for a new venue. A key question is whether perpetrators of violence will be prosecuted or given amnesty as part of a peace agreement.

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Since the inception of the talks in July 2006, security in Northern Uganda has improved slightly and people have been slowly moving to areas outside of the internally displaced camps. IDPs are reluctant, however, to return home as there has been no comprehensive agreement reached between the LRA and the Government of Uganda.

### **USCCB's Relationship with Northern Uganda**

As far back as 1999, USCCB helped to organize inter-religious peace initiatives for northern Uganda, hosting a delegation of Acholi religious leaders to discuss the needed parameters for restoring security in northern Uganda. Then-president of USCCB, Bishop Wilton Gregory, visited Kampala in 2002, meeting with Archbishop John Baptist Odama of Gulu to discuss the escalating conflict in northern Uganda. Since that time, USCCB bishops and staff have met regularly with Archbishop Odama to stay abreast of the pastoral and humanitarian situation in the war-torn area. After a 2004 CRS/USCCB trip to northern Uganda and southern Sudan, the Conference in 2005 hosted the international "African Bishops' Peacebuilding Workshop," dedicated to developing models for church-based peace-building and conflict resolution efforts throughout Africa.

Catholic Relief Services has operated in Uganda since the 1960s. The U.S. Bishops' official international relief and development agency opened a permanent office in Uganda in October 1996 and now operates a regional office in the Gulu district. CRS is currently participating in the U.S. Agency for International Development's Community Resilience and Dialogue Consortium, providing psychosocial rehabilitation, conflict resolution, HIV/AIDS services and inter-religious reconciliation initiatives to the people of northern Uganda. Other programs include food security, water and sanitation and efforts to mitigate the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on orphans and other vulnerable children.

### **USCCB Policy:**

USCCB believes that robust leadership by the United States can contribute to peace in northern Uganda. The U.S. government should:

- **Support a political resolution of the conflict:** The Juba talks represent a historic opportunity for the people of Uganda and cannot be allowed to fail. The U.S. should publicly support the talks as well as appropriate increased resources for mediation, justice system reform, peace incentive packages for combatants, and community reconciliation efforts. The United States Government should also coordinate with and support the newly appointed UN Envoy for Northern Uganda, Joaquim Chissano, Mozambique's former president.
- **Prioritize civilian protection:** Although IDP morbidity rates have fallen slightly from where they were a year ago when estimates were that 1,000 people were dying each week, it is critical that the U.S. Government invest additional financial and diplomatic resources with two goals in mind:
  - 1) improving the health and security conditions in the IDP camps and if violence begins again, the U.S. should work with the Government of Uganda to ensure civilians are adequately protected; and
  - 2) encouraging the Government of Uganda to provide more robust security for IDPs returning to their homes when it is safe to do so.
- **Appoint a U.S. Special Envoy for northern Uganda.** The envoy should travel to the region to see the crisis firsthand, demonstrate its priority status for the U.S., and promote a broad, inclusive process of political reconciliation.

**Resources:** Please visit this link at CRS for helpful background information on the historical, political, and humanitarian context of the northern Uganda conflict: [www.crs.org/get\\_involved/advocacy/grass\\_roots/uganda.cfm](http://www.crs.org/get_involved/advocacy/grass_roots/uganda.cfm). In addition, the entire text of the Ugandan bishops' 2004 Easter pastoral can be located at [www.fides.org/eng/vita\\_chiesa/vescovi\\_uganda130504.html](http://www.fides.org/eng/vita_chiesa/vescovi_uganda130504.html).

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