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April 24, 2008

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
S-131, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
S-131, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Byrd and Ranking Member Cochran:

As the Senate begins its work on the Fiscal Year 2008 emergency supplemental appropriations bill, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the relief and development agency of the Catholic Bishops of the United States, urge you to include funding for the foreign assistance priorities set out below in order to help relieve the suffering of millions of people in conflict areas around the world. We understand that the supplemental bill may include an economic stimulus package or other domestic spending priorities. In that event, USCCB will write separately to share our position with you on those priorities.

Additional funding through the supplemental bill is essential to meeting critical humanitarian needs in Sudan, Iraq, Palestine, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Afghanistan and a number of other countries, and to strengthening diplomatic and peace-keeping efforts, especially in Sudan. Our commitment to peace and stability in these crisis-ridden areas rests on our fundamental desire to protect human life and promote human dignity. Our reflections are also informed by CRS' daily on-the-ground work in 99 countries.

USCCB and CRS are grateful for the U.S. Government's commitment to the people of Sudan. Our nation was a leader in achieving the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. We also appreciate the ongoing diplomatic efforts aimed at a sustainable resolution to the crisis in Darfur and the continued funding for humanitarian relief and peacekeeping efforts throughout Sudan. Concerning Iraq, we urge our nation to meet its obligation to address the humanitarian crisis of millions of refugees and internally displaced persons. Even with the additional emergency spending provided for Sudan and Iraq in the FY2008 Omnibus Appropriations Act, we remain deeply concerned that current funds are insufficient to meet dire humanitarian needs. Specifically, we strongly support appropriation of these amounts in the FY08 Supplemental:

Humanitarian Assistance

International Disaster Assistance (IDA): We support **\$335 million for the IDA account** to provide emergency aid for Darfur, the DRC, and Afghanistan – among other nations, and for emerging needs in volatile environments such as Chad, Kenya, Somalia, and Sri Lanka. In the DRC, additional funding is urgently needed to address the rampant gender-based violence that continues in the eastern part of the country. IDA funding is also used to support refugees,

internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities in South Sudan and Northern Uganda and to support implementation of fragile peace agreements. Finally, IDA provides funding for the UN World Food Program's Humanitarian Air Services, which is particularly critical in Sudan. Without supplemental funding, this critical transportation service could end, leaving remote areas of Sudan and Darfur with no access to humanitarian food aid delivery.

Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA): We support increasing the \$30 million proposed by the President for Migration and Refugee Assistance to \$345 million. This funding is urgently needed to assist vulnerable Iraqis to meet their daily needs, access much-needed social services and provide for the admission of Iraqi refugees and special immigrants. At least \$125 million is needed to provide immediate assistance to Iraqi refugees who are living throughout Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Turkey, in many cases without legal means of earning income. At least \$48 million is needed to help fulfill the Administration's pledge to admit 12,000 Iraqi refugees in fiscal year 2008 and fulfill Congress' mandate to admit up to 5,000 Iraqis, particularly vulnerable special immigrants who have close ties with the United States or who are especially vulnerable religious minorities.

At least \$172 million is needed to address urgent refugee needs elsewhere in the world. In Darfur, this funding is critical to ensuring that refugees and internally displaced persons receive basic life-saving assistance and preventing drastic cuts in basic assistance to refugees, including those from South Sudan, who are unable to return home as a result of ongoing instability. In the DRC, refugees are returning to some stabilized areas and additional MRA funding is needed to enable them to rebuild their lives. In addition to supporting \$345 million in emergency supplemental funding for the MRA account, we also support a supplemental appropriation of \$68 million for the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to help in the resettlement into the United States of Iraqi refugees and Iraqi special immigrants.

Emergency Food Aid: We support increasing the \$350 million proposed by the President for P. L. 480 emergency food aid to at least \$600 million. Since the President's supplemental request in October 2007, commodity prices have increased by 41 percent as a result of record-low food stocks and poor harvests. The steep rise in prices for all grain crops (wheat, corn, rice and others), which has its most severe impact on the poor and vulnerable, has caused riots in several West African countries and Haiti. Primarily because of these price increases, we urge that no less than \$600 million be appropriated for emergency programs for the remainder of FY2008. In addition, we support **\$100 million for the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust (Trust)**, particularly given the recent drawdown of \$200 million. To ensure that the Trust has the capacity to alleviate periodic food emergencies, including the present one, the Trust must be incrementally replenished.

Support for the Palestinian People

Economic Support Fund and Other Aid: We urge funding the President's request for \$220 million for the West Bank/Gaza to support the peace process and to meet urgent humanitarian needs. The funding should not have onerous conditions that delay aid and its effectiveness

Increased Funding for Peacekeeping Continued U.S. support of U.N. and African Union peacekeeping missions in Darfur and South Sudan is critical to ensuring the protection of innocent civilians and a stable environment for the implementation of humanitarian relief.

Contributions to International Peacekeeping Account (CIPA): We support a funding level no less than the President's request of **\$334 million for the United Nation – African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID)**. In 2007, the Administration requested \$724 million in supplemental funding for UNAMID. Congress appropriated only \$390 million in the FY2008 omnibus. An additional \$334 million is required to meet the U.S. share of the anticipated mission cost in FY2008.

Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) Account: We welcome the President's February announcement that the U.S. will provide bilateral assistance for African troops in the UNAMID mission and urge the inclusion of \$50 million for PKO in the FY2008 supplemental to ensure that promise can be fulfilled. This money will help support African Union troops transitioning to UNAMID and replace and refurbish desperately needed equipment. Many of the troops identified for UNAMID deployment will require training and new equipment.

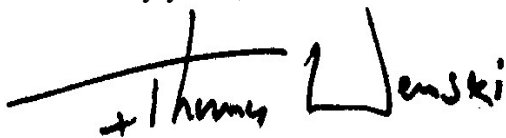
Increased U.S Diplomatic Efforts to Secure Sustainable Political Solutions in Sudan
Comprehensive political solutions that address root causes of conflict in Sudan, and the full implementation of such agreements, should be of highest priority for U.S. bilateral and multilateral efforts to secure a stable and peaceful Sudan, and should be reflected in increased funding.

Economic Support Fund (ESF): We support the Administration's **\$70 million request for ESF**, which will help ensure full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in South Sudan. The success of the CPA, in which the U.S. has invested considerable effort, hangs in the balance as the census and subsequent elections remain far behind schedule. The U.S. must use all diplomatic means necessary to urge full cooperation in the implementation of the CPA. This funding is critical for sustained peace and development in South Sudan.

Diplomatic and Consular Programs: We support an additional **\$1.0 million for Diplomatic and Consular Programs** in the FY2008 supplemental, as most of the \$1.9 million provided in the FY07 supplemental has been spent. This funding is critical to the ongoing efforts of the Special Envoy for Sudan that include helping to broker a political resolution to the crisis in Darfur, to support CPA implementation, and to mitigate the impediments to the delivery of humanitarian aid in Darfur.

USCCB and CRS urge your consideration of these funding requests. Our nation's acts of solidarity with those in need can make a critical contributions to reducing suffering and improving the lives of those at the margins of the global community and help build a more stable and peaceful world. Thank you for your continued consideration.

Sincerely yours,



Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International
Justice and Peace



Ken Hackett
President
Catholic Relief Services