



October 28, 2015

Mr. Todd Stern
Special Envoy for Climate Change
United States Department of State

Dear Special Envoy Stern,

In his Encyclical, *Laudato Si', On Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis calls on Catholics and people of goodwill to acknowledge “the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet” and the need to address climate change. On his recent visit to our nation Pope Francis said, “[C]limate change is a problem which can no longer be left to a future generation. When it comes to the care of our ‘common home’, we are living at a critical moment of history.”

In the words of a recent appeal by Cardinals, Patriarchs and Bishops from across the globe, the undersigned national Catholic organizations respectfully request that the United States exhibit leadership in reaching “a major break-through in Paris, for a comprehensive and transformational agreement supported by all based on principles of solidarity, justice and participation.” We are grateful for the leadership exhibited by the Administration in proposing national carbon emission standards and including funding for the Green Climate Fund in its budget submission, but even more leadership is needed.

Pope Francis’ call is not new. Indeed, Saint John Paul II and Pope Benedict the XVI both recognized that the realities of climate change and care for Creation require an “urgent moral need for a new solidarity.” In addition, in 2001 the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement on *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*. They wrote: “In facing climate change, what we already know requires a response; it cannot be easily dismissed ... prudence dictates taking mitigating or preventative action.”

Guided by the teachings of Pope Francis, Pope Benedict and Saint John Paul II, and a long tradition of stewardship in Catholic Social Teaching, Catholic organizations across the country are ramping up efforts to educate and mobilize Catholics to take action. Part of this action is encouraging our political leaders to take steps to address climate change. In particular, we urge you to exhibit strong U.S. leadership in securing a global commitment to curb global greenhouse gas emissions in the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris. Climate change is a result of global emissions and it is only through a global accord that we can hope to turn the tide against the worst projected impacts of climate change.

We must also work to protect vulnerable populations both domestically and around the world who are the most adversely affected by rising sea levels, drought conditions, and extreme weather events. Funding for climate change related adaptation and mitigation programs as part of the Paris agreement is urgently needed if we are to meet our common and differentiated

responsibilities for the effects of climate change. We must also act within our own country to curtail carbon emissions that contribute to the problem and assist vulnerable populations. Leading by example will give our nation the moral authority it needs to help hold the rest of the world to their commitments as well.

As Pope Francis writes, “to take up these responsibilities and the costs they entail, politicians will inevitably clash with the mindset of short-term gain and result which dominates present-day economics and politics. But if they are courageous, they will attest to their God-given dignity and leave behind a testimony of selfless responsibility.” It is our moral obligation to be courageous and to act now. This is why we support U.S. leadership in Paris to secure “a major break-through” and global commitments to reduce carbon emissions.

Sincerely,



Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski
Archbishop of Miami
Chair, Committee on Domestic Justice and
Human Development
United States Conference of Catholic
Bishops



Most Reverend Oscar Cantú
Bishop of Las Cruces
Chair, Committee on International Justice
and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic
Bishops



Sister Donna Markham, O.P., Ph.D.
President and CEO
Catholic Charities USA



Dr. Carolyn Woo
President
Catholic Relief Services