



International Justice and Peace
3211 4th Street, NE
Washington, DC 20017
Tel. (202) 541-3160
Fax (202) 541-3339



228 West Lexington Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
Tel. (410) 625-2220
Fax (410) 685-1635

September 23, 2014

Ambassador Susan Rice
National Security Advisor
National Security Council
Washington, DC

Dear Ambassador Rice:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace and President of Catholic Relief Services, we welcome the Administration's expanded response to the outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa and leadership in bringing the United Nations Security Council together as positive first steps towards halting the downward spiral of this epidemic. The commitment of 3,000 military personnel and funds for 17 treatment centers and training of local health care workers at a cost of \$750 million is an increase commensurate with the growing threat that is Ebola.

The Catholic Church is on the ground in West Africa exercising ministries of healing and comfort. The Church has a long history of engaging in health care and has an extensive network of health care institutions. We believe that every person is created in the image of God and that we encounter the divine in the sick: "For I was ... ill and you cared for me" (Matthew 25).

In Liberia, Bishop Andrew Karnley reported that Ebola is the "biggest crisis since the civil war" ended a decade ago. "We are saddened that we have lost lives and it has thrown the country back in a reverse mode. But I hope it will challenge us to improve the health sector and create a long-term response to any form of health risk." Msgr. Robert Vitillo, special advisor to the Catholic relief confederation, Caritas Internationalis, confirms that the Church and others are doing much to help Ebola victims; however, "extraordinary measures" are needed. Catholic Relief Services is also engaged throughout the region providing education and awareness of the disease.

The World Health Organization says the Ebola outbreak is growing exponentially and the number of cases could double every three weeks. If the international community does not follow through on its commitments in a timely manner and arrest this growth, it could cost hundreds of thousands of lives. At least \$1 billion and many months of intensive action are needed to bring the epidemic under control. As a result, we urge the United States to:

1. Use the occasion of the United Nations General Assembly to urge other donor nations to increase dramatically their commitment to send disaster response teams and resources.
2. Ensure that the availability of treatment centers, medical equipment, materials and trained personnel keeps pace with the epidemic.

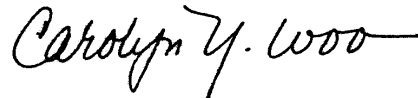
3. Make a long-term commitment to resolving the underlying problem of the severe lack of capacity and resilience in the health systems of the affected countries. Even after the Ebola outbreak is contained, donors will need to help reinforce, if not rebuild, health systems to prevent future outbreaks.
4. Collaborate with the Catholic Church and its affiliated health structures and other community-based organizations to develop public education programs to help halt the spread of the virus. Fear of the disease and distrust of government health services have complicated efforts to contain the epidemic. More and better information will help counter disinformation, reduce stigma, and rebuild the trust in local health facilities and governments.
5. Prepare for the growing humanitarian and long-term impacts of the outbreak. Food shortages can be expected due to quarantines, market disruptions, border closures, and reduced trade. Out of fear, people are forgoing hospital treatment for preventable diseases, like malaria, possibly leading to increased morbidity and mortality. Education systems will be disrupted due to school closures and many children will be left vulnerable and orphaned due to the loss of their parents.

We fully recognize that the world today presents many international crises and challenges, such as those in the Middle East and Ukraine, but I urge our great nation also to focus attention on protecting the sick. The victims of Ebola are some of the most vulnerable people on the planet.

Sincerely yours,

+ 

Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace



Dr. Carolyn Y. Woo
President
Catholic Relief Services