



Office of the President

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Most Reverend William S. Skylstad, D.D.
Bishop of Spokane

October 21, 2005

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to ask for your personal intervention and renewed leadership in ensuring that the Doha Development Round of trade negotiations responds to the needs of the poor.

I was heartened by your words to the United Nations General Assembly on September 15, 2005 in which you called for a global effort against global poverty. I agree that a successful Doha Round will secure "increased wealth from increased trade." I also agree that this will require a commitment, especially from the United States, to reduce tariffs and other barriers on farm goods.

Trade in agriculture is the keystone in the bridge between poverty and opportunity; however, reducing trade barriers and opening markets do not translate automatically into poverty reduction. Some 1.3 billion people, about half the work force in developing countries, are employed in agriculture, usually as small farmers. They face multiple disadvantages in converting their labor into economic growth. They are confronted not only by developed country subsidies and tariff levels – both of which you have proposed to reform; they are also beset by poor physical and financial infrastructures as well as environmental degradation and political insecurity.

Currently, trade in agriculture is a stumbling block in negotiations, and the poor stand to lose out most of all. In this context, I urge you to fight not just for the interests of the people of the United States in current negotiations, but to protect the interests of the poor around the world who have too little access to the negotiating table.

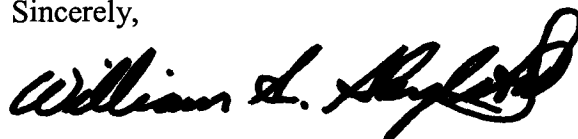
I grew up in a farming family. I appreciate the dignity and value of those who work the land, providing food for others and a livelihood for themselves. Most of the world's poor who try to survive on less than \$1 per day live in rural areas. Like too many struggling farmers in the United States, they hope to sell their goods fairly and competitively and to become more self-reliant and less dependent on others for support. This is surely the great promise of increased trade.

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The Doha Development Round was launched two months after the September 11 terrorist attacks on our country. At that time, the world came together to stand against those who preach hatred and violence. At Doha we accepted the challenge to expand the circle of opportunity that the United States has enjoyed to include the many millions of our sisters and brothers around the world who live daily in abject poverty and who are currently locked out of the opportunities that the global market can offer.

Each WTO Member must play its part in making Doha a true development Round. However, in recalling the link between trade and a more secure and peaceful world, I urge you to go the extra mile on behalf of the United States in seeking a just outcome of the Doha Round for the world's poor. As our beloved Pope John Paul II said, "If there is no hope for the poor, then there is no hope for anyone." On behalf of the Bishops of the United States, I stand ready to offer whatever assistance we can in securing a successful outcome for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William S. Skylstad". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Most Reverend William S. Skylstad
Bishop of Spokane
President