



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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Dear Conferees:

On behalf of Catholic Relief Services and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, thank you for including additional funding for humanitarian emergency programs, as well as for economic reconstruction and rehabilitation in the Middle East, in the FY2007 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act. As you engage in conference deliberations between House and Senate versions of the legislation, we urge you to support the most robust levels of funding, program-by-program, as proposed by either chamber.

CRS and USCCB, in concert with others, have identified a gap of almost \$1.8 billion in emergency humanitarian funding for FY2007. These areas include Title II food aid, refugee and migration assistance, emergency refugee and migration assistance, disaster and famine relief, peacekeeping operations and contributions to international peacekeeping activities. Without additional funding for these programs, malnutrition in emergency situations will spiral, diseases and outbreaks of violence will spread, and numerous lives will be lost.

The United States leads the world in the support of global humanitarian causes for the most desperate of humanity. Now, more than ever, American leadership is critical in addressing emerging and continuing humanitarian crises, including Sudan, the Horn of Africa, Iraq, Afghanistan and the West Bank and Gaza. While we are grateful for the proposed additional funding for Palestinian refugees, we urge you to consider additional humanitarian assistance for the continuing suffering in the Palestinian territories.

Funding for reconstruction and rehabilitation are critically important in Iraq, Lebanon and Afghanistan. CRS and USCCB support the highest level of funding proposed by either chamber for the Economic Support Fund for both Lebanon and Afghanistan and ask Congress to come as close as possible to the President's request of \$2.1 billion for Iraqi reconstruction.

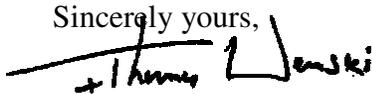
Regarding the difficult situation in Iraq, USCCB has taken the position that our nation's military forces should remain in Iraq only as long as their presence actually contributes to a responsible transition. Basic benchmarks for a responsible transition include: minimally acceptable levels of security; 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. USCCB urges that possible courses of action and deadlines be evaluated by how they concretely advance the goal of a responsible transition in light of the traditional principle of “probability of success.”

Both the House and Senate versions of the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act also include provisions to address the needs of the poor and vulnerable here at home. The bills would increase the minimum wage to \$7.25 over the next two years. Raising the minimum wage is a top legislative priority of USCCB, which has long supported the minimum wage as a just means to protect the human rights and dignity of workers. Congress should act quickly to take this small, but overdue, step to help the poorest workers in our country. The Conference Committee should also include in the final version of the bill adequate funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program through the end of FY 2007, for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and for ongoing recovery and rebuilding efforts in the Gulf Coast region.

Congress must be commended for its initial work to provide additional emergency humanitarian and reconstruction funding in the FY2007 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act. But the work is not yet completed, and more must be done. As you move forward in your deliberations, we urge you to support the highest possible levels of global humanitarian and economic reconstruction funding and to consider the USCCB's domestic concerns.

Sincerely yours,



Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International
Policy



Ken Hackett
President
Catholic Relief Services