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May 18, 2009

The Honorable Howard Berman
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Berman,

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) appreciate your leadership in efforts to improve the effectiveness of U.S. foreign assistance. We also value the opportunities we have had to share our experience and perspectives with the Committee through correspondence, testimony and meetings. The introduction of the “Initiating Foreign Assistance Reform Act of 2009” (H.R. 2139) is an encouraging step towards more comprehensive reform of U.S. foreign assistance.

The USCCB and CRS recognize the importance of creating a comprehensive national development strategy, especially one directed towards poverty alleviation and broad-based economic growth as H.R. 2139 requires.

We support this basic thrust of H.R. 2139 and look forward to the opportunity to review the comprehensive strategy called for in the legislation in order to examine its objectives, approaches, and basic framework in light of our experience and moral teaching.

As international assistance reform efforts advance, we hope the Congress will work for strong bi-partisan ownership and support. We believe that foreign assistance reflects the commitment of the American people to fulfill its moral responsibility to the poor of the world. In the long-term that commitment requires solid support from both Democrats and Republicans for comprehensive reform.

We look forward to your continued leadership in reforming U.S. foreign assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard
Bishop of Albany
Chairman,
Committee on International Justice and Peace

Ken Hackett
President
Catholic Relief Services