



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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April 20, 2009

The Honorable Kent Conrad
Chair
Senate Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Judd Gregg
Ranking Member
Senate Budget Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Conrad and Ranking Member Gregg:

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) appreciate in advance the work the House and Senate will conduct in conference to approve a consensus federal budget resolution for Fiscal Year 2010. We respectfully urge you to retain the Senate version of the Function 150 International Affairs Account which included \$5.3 billion more than the House version. This additional funding would put the United States on a path towards the Administration's needed goal of doubling U.S. foreign assistance.

USCCB and CRS recognize that the Conference Committee is operating under constraints in the midst of the economic crisis. However, increased support for humanitarian and development assistance is crucial to help the poorest people in developing countries, who are also suffering even more as a result of the global economic downturn. Without the funding included in the Senate version, USCCB and CRS fear that millions of people will needlessly suffer and fail to reach their potential because critical increases in the following poverty-focused programs will be impossible:

- a. HIV/AIDS programs, especially the President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR);
- b. Development and Humanitarian assistance and emergency programs with a special attention to the most vulnerable people like women and children;
- c. Title II Food Aid Program for development and emergency programs;
- d. Millennium Challenge Account;
- e. Debt relief for poor developing nations; and
- f. Peacekeeping programs.
- g. Refugee funding under the Migration and Refugee Assistance Account (MRA) and the office of Refugee Resettlement

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The Bishops' Conference and CRS support foreign assistance based on our belief that each person is created in the image of God and has dignity. Aid to poor people overseas protects human life and dignity by promoting human development and reducing crushing poverty and deadly diseases and malnutrition. We stand willing to work with you to increase and improve the United States' support to the poorest people living in the world today.

Sincerely yours,



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



Ken Hackett
President
Catholic Relief Services

Cc: The Honorable Harry Reid, Majority Leader, United States Senate
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader, United States Senate
Members of the Senate Budget Committee