



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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February 19, 2010

[This letter was sent to the members of the Finance Committee and the Foreign Relations Committee.]

Dear Senator:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I write to express our support for the Renewing Hope for Haiti Act (S. 2978) and ask you to cosponsor the bill so that it moves quickly through the legislative process. While an integrated vision of what it will take to help Haiti recover from the earthquake of January 12, 2010 is needed, the people of Haiti cannot wait until a comprehensive strategic plan is developed. Thousands of jobs could be quickly created in Haiti if this legislation passes. The bill represents an important start and an opportunity to improve the lives of the Haitian people.

As you know, the Conference of Bishops and our relief and development agency, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), took immediate and urgent steps to respond to the earthquake in Haiti. However, as Bishop Pierre-André Dumas of the Diocese of Anse-a-Veau and Miragoane and President of Caritas Haiti affirmed: "At the moment it's all about the emergency, but one day the questions will be about reconstruction." Therefore, we have written to the Administration recommending that the U.S. government adopt a coherent strategy for long-term sustainable development that coordinates different U.S. government agencies in an integrated approach, engaging other groups with expertise and experience with Haiti.

A critically important part of any integrated strategy is the extension of the trade preferences that Haiti was granted through the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Acts (HOPE I and HOPE II), which our Conference strongly supported. The Renewing Hope for Haiti Act does just this. While under this modest legislation Haitian factories are still limited in what they can produce and export under the U.S. preference program to basic garments that have "little" added value, extending the existing trade preferences will help the Haitian economy quickly create badly needed jobs and can reduce poverty in the long-term as well as encourage exporters to rebuild more quickly. Down the road it will be important to adopt broader preferential treatment for Haitian goods, but immediately extending the existing preferences will be important to the sustainable development of Haiti.

Thank you for your leadership in responding to this human catastrophe and for recognizing the need for a long-term coherent strategy for recovery, development and poverty reduction in Haiti. Be assured that the Conference of Bishops and Catholic Relief Services will be doing everything possible to act in solidarity with the people and Church in Haiti as they rebuild their country.

Sincerely yours,

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