



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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January 19, 2011

Mr. Daniel Restrepo
Senior Director for Western Hemisphere
National Security Council
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Restrepo:

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) welcomes President Obama's statement directing the Secretaries of State, Treasury, and Homeland Security to implement policies allowing purposeful and people-to-people travel to Cuba and allowing all Americans to send financial support to the Cuban people. These needed new policies are modest but important steps toward advancing our hopes for a better relationship between our people and the people of Cuba, a relationship which holds great promise of fostering positive and real change in Cuba.

We urge that the new rules permit many of our parishes and other religious groups to share their faith and solidarity with our Cuban brothers and sisters. Hopefully, they will also offer opportunities for students and faculty at Catholic colleges and universities and other academic institutions to learn directly about the realities of life in Cuba and Cuban culture and society. These would be significant steps forward.

The Church in our country and in Cuba has long maintained that greater, rather than less, engagement with Cuba can bring about positive change in that country. The call of the Church in Cuba has always been one for dialogue—genuine and open dialogue within Cuba and dialogue between Cuba and the outside world. The U.S. bishops continue to call for purposeful engagement rather than ineffective isolation. For many years our Conference has continuously called on the President and the Congress of the United States to remove restrictions on remittances and travel to Cuba. Therefore, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops welcomes these very useful and positive new policies.

We hope and pray that these measures, needed to remove unnecessary restrictions on purposeful travel to Cuba and to offer greater people-to-people assistance to Cubans, will be another step toward supporting the people of Cuba in achieving greater freedom, human rights, and religious liberty.

Sincerely yours,

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