



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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October 31, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

As you conduct an assessment of State Department and USAID operations, I offer some reflections on the critical aspects of the mission of the State Department and USAID in light of the Church's moral teaching and experience.

Diplomatic and international assistance efforts should be measured in terms of their effectiveness in promoting human life and dignity. Governments have a special responsibility to foster the common good which consists of "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily." An integral part of our human dignity is our need to live in just social relationships with others. In a world of instant communication, exchange of goods and services that blur national boundaries, rapid travel, and the growing impact of humanity on our natural world, interdependence is a fact of life. Peace is much more than the absence of war; it is built on the foundation of justice. Human development, prosperity and true human security in the world are long-term projects that depend on national governments promoting a culture of human rights, representative democracy, and the common good.

Pope Francis urges, "Let us treat others with the same passion and compassion with which we want to be treated. Let us seek for others the same possibilities which we seek for ourselves. Let us help others to grow, as we would like to be helped ourselves. In a word, if we want security, let us give security; if we want life, let us give life; if we want opportunities, let us provide opportunities."

Around the world, people come to expect more from their own governments because in part, they see that the United States is willing to defend their rights and to lead based on our fundamental moral values. It is my hope that the United States will not succumb to a narrow focus on self-interest. It is my fear that the proposed sharp reductions in funding to the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development will radically reduce our ability to produce results that protect human dignity, end violence and mass atrocities, protect human rights, and lift people out of poverty.

International affairs funding represents just over 1% of the entire federal budget. International assistance, a part of the International Affairs funding, is an even smaller portion of our country's federal budget. A survey found that most Americans think 25% of the federal budget goes to foreign aid. They believe it should be about 10%. In reality international assistance is less than 1%. In absolute terms, the United States gives the highest level of international assistance, but as a percentage of our national wealth, our country is almost last.

In stark contrast, American defense spending accounts for about one-third of worldwide military expenditures and far exceeds that of all other nations. The United States spends as much on the military as at least the next eight nations combined, many of whom are our allies. Approximately, 50% of discretionary funding goes to military spending. Many would argue that the fighting in Iraq

and Afghanistan continues, not because our armed forces haven't prevailed, but because we have not deployed sufficient diplomatic and development assistance resources wisely to resolve the root causes of the conflicts. The United States needs to do more to help these countries to rebuild. We should assist political, ethnic/tribal, and religious leaders to negotiate ceasefires, build well-functioning inclusive governments, promote development and economic opportunity, and support a culture of peace and democracy. It is only these long term diplomatic and development efforts that can avoid the rise of an ISIS 3.0.

Tragically, similar conflicts and conditions exist in many other nations. Arduous and long-term efforts to protect human dignity, promote the common good and build peace are the only ways to address the root causes of conflict. Such efforts will save lives and save money. A recent study by the Institute for Economics and Peace estimates that every dollar invested in peacebuilding leads to a \$16 reduction in the cost of conflict.

Based on moral teaching, our relationship with the Church across the world, and the experience of Catholic Relief Services, we propose these recommendations for your consideration during the review of State Department operations:

1. Base U.S. foreign policy on universal values, promoting human life and dignity, the common good, international solidarity and peace.
2. Increase resources to State Department's diplomatic and conflict resolution efforts.
3. Give priority to promoting peace through the prevention of conflict, the resolution of existing conflicts, and the building of inclusive governance that promotes human dignity, human development, and the common good.
4. Reform and reinforce international and regional structures of dialogue and negotiation to resolve conflict, including the United Nations.
5. Preserve USAID as an independent agency with professionals who have expertise in human and economic development, humanitarian assistance, governance and peacebuilding and whose operations go beyond short-term political calculations in order to pursue long-term goals.
6. Participate in the Atrocities Prevention Board and deploy Department resources to train and assist country-level missions to stop conflict, build democratic, responsive and accountable governments, and promote social cohesion and reconciliation.
7. Maintain robust support to the Office for Religion and Global Affairs and its mission to work with faith communities to avoid, reduce and resolve conflict.

Let me reiterate our commitment to support your efforts to promote the common good of our world.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Oscar Cantú', written in a cursive style.

Most Reverend Oscar Cantú
Bishop of Las Cruces
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace