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April 27, 2010

The Honorable David R. Obey  
Chairman, Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerry Lewis  
Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Lewis:

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the relief and development agency of the Catholic Church in the U.S., are writing to present our priorities for how the United States can promote integral human development, reduce poverty, and improve stability in the world's poorest countries and communities in morally appropriate ways.

USCCB and CRS appreciate the Administration's proposed \$1.6 billion increase in its FY 2011 International Affairs budget outline, which is a modest 2.8 percent increase over the total of this year's budget and supplemental. Although a small step towards doubling U.S. foreign assistance, the increase is noteworthy under the current economic conditions and budget pressures. We are particularly encouraged by the increase of \$749 million in the President's Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative, the additional \$351 million for Maternal Child Health, and the \$262 million in new funds in HIV/AIDS/TB and Malaria, but are concerned that the lack of an increase in PEPFAR funds and the decreased Global Fund allocation may jeopardize their continued success.

The United States is morally obligated to maintain its commitment to increasing assistance to poor countries hit hard by the global economic crisis, the impact of climate change, and the global food crisis. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, last year alone more than 100 million people in developing countries became malnourished, and for the first time in decades both the absolute number and percentage of malnourished persons increased. Consequently, we urge the Appropriations Committee to support the Administration's budget request for those humanitarian and development assistance accounts focused on poverty reduction and increase funding for several such accounts listed below:

- a. Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA), an additional \$695 million;
- b. Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance, an additional \$100 million;
- c. Peacekeeping programs, an additional \$45.6 million; and
- d. Food for Peace, an additional \$635 million.

While foreign assistance should be increased, it must also be made more effective. USCCB and CRS are encouraged by the potential for reforming the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. We have long advocated for a coherent and comprehensive foreign assistance strategy that sets

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poverty reduction as its principal goal. International assistance programs should be designed and implemented based on in-country expertise, rather than by outside contractors, and in close consultation with local government and civil society. They should be monitored and evaluated for their impact on people's well being and should benefit from flexible and accountable funding mechanisms. Finally, if development programs are to help people lift themselves out of poverty, they must partner with and build the capacity of civil society, taking advantage of American non-governmental and faith-based groups like CRS, who have long term experience and partnerships with local civil society.

We note that a significant portion of the increase in the President's budget is directed to front-line states. We have called for responsible transitions out of Iraq and Afghanistan, so we support in principle efforts to address humanitarian needs, rebuild these countries, and promote development there. However, we urge that this assistance flow through civilian channels, rather than the military, and that these large increases not come out of other core poverty accounts that are meeting real needs elsewhere.

USCCB and CRS are committed to working with the Congress and the Administration to meet the U.S. imperative to increase poverty-focused international assistance and to reform it to improve the lives of those in greatest need. Our commitment to human life and dignity demands no less.

Sincerely yours,



Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard  
Bishop of Albany  
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



Ken Hackett  
President  
Catholic Relief Services

Cc: The Honorable Rosa L. Delauro  
The Honorable Kay Granger  
The Honorable Jack Kingston  
The Honorable Nita M. Lowey