



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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March 7, 2006

Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

As the Congress takes up consideration of the request by President Bush for Fiscal Year 2006 emergency appropriations, we write on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) to urge your active support for essential funding for urgent humanitarian and development activities. This support is based on our extensive experience among some of the most vulnerable people around the world. In solidarity with our brothers and sisters in need, we urge you to ensure that the following critical funding requirements are included in the FY 2006 supplemental legislation currently before you:

Sudan: USCCB and CRS support the President's request for emergency funding for the situation in Sudan. This funding for refugee and humanitarian assistance as well as support for peacekeeping—including the transition from the African Union to a United Nations operation—is crucial to alleviating the conflict and instability that continue to claim too many innocent victims in Sudan. CRS staff in Darfur report both increased violence and insufficient humanitarian resources to respond to what Congress has called genocide. We must do more to prevent the fragile situation on the ground from further endangering the lives and well-being of so many vulnerable people.

Migration and Refugee Assistance: We appreciate the Administration's request for supplemental fiscal year 2006 funds for the Department of State's Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account. However, we believe that the need for additional assistance to refugees is far greater than the Administration's request of \$51.2 million. At a minimum, we urge Congress to appropriate \$117.2 million in fiscal year 2006 funds for the MRA account, which would be an increase of \$66 million above the Administration's request. This would enable the United States to provide a greater level of protection to refugees in Africa, and elsewhere, to meet their urgent unfilled assistance and admissions needs.

Title II Food Aid: We support the \$350 million in Title II resources included in the President's request and we further urge that an additional \$50 million be included to replenish the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust (BEHT). Current food aid shortages have forced USAID/Food for Peace to take resources intended for long-term development programs for agriculture, public health, and education and use them instead for emergency needs. CRS staff sees greatly expanding food insecurity in Kenya, the Sahel, and Southern Africa. While much more food aid will eventually be needed this year, the President's request is a good start. Congress has not

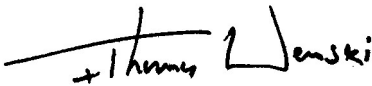
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replenished the BEHT since FY 2003. Unless Congress replenishes the BEHT now, it will be even more difficult for CRS and others to meet emergency needs later in the year.

Iraqi Reconstruction: A recent statement on behalf of the Bishops' Conference called for a "responsible transition" in Iraq that will require "a major commitment of human and financial resources." We know the terrible human costs of this conflict and admire the many men and women who are sacrificing so much to bring about stability and democracy in Iraq. It is essential that the necessary financial support be made available for genuine reconstruction in ways that will help create decent levels of employment and economic opportunity. The future of Iraq depends on creating a sense of hope and opportunity as well as security and democracy.

You are called to target funds where the need is greatest and where it can be most effective. Funding these vital priorities will help meet the imperatives of saving lives and making our world more secure and peaceful.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International Policy



Ken Hackett
President, Catholic Relief Services