



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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February 6, 2013

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), please accept my heartfelt congratulations on your recent nomination and confirmation as Secretary of State. The Conference of Bishops and our Committee in particular have long valued an effective working relationship with the distinguished cabinet Department that you will now lead. The Catholic Church's global presence and institutions make us a natural partner. We look forward to honest, respectful dialogue on how to advance the protection of human life, human dignity, religious freedom, and justice and peace in our world.

The USCCB and our International Committee will be focusing in the immediate future on a number of critical issues, including:

- addressing with great urgency the Israel-Palestine conflict and pushing both sides toward solidifying a two state solution and thus offering hope for peace;
- fostering human rights and religious freedom internationally, especially of threatened Christian communities in the Middle East;
- supporting adequate funding for poverty-focused international assistance to reduce crushing poverty, promote human development, and prevent the spread of disease;
- addressing the root causes of trafficking in persons and supporting prevention programs that provide education and employment to those most vulnerable; and
- promoting policies that address violence and the illicit flows of drugs and arms between the United States and Latin America.

We will also be concentrating on serious situations involving a number of countries and regions, notably: Afghanistan and Pakistan; Colombia; Cuba; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Iran; Mali (and the Sahel); Peru; Sudan and South Sudan; and Syria.

We welcome and appreciate our continuing dialogue with you and your Department on these and other matters of mutual concern. We wish you every blessing and success as you undertake your important responsibilities.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops