



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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September 7, 2005

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

The gathering of leaders of more than 170 nations at the World Summit in New York on September 14-16 presents an unparalleled opportunity to initiate bold actions to further world peace and security, promote human rights and development, and revitalize the United Nations. All of these issues are of major interest to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and we hope and pray that important progress is made at this historic meeting. Since it is an ambitious agenda, we are concerned that due attention may not be given to the needs of the world's poorest people.

I urge the United States to give high priority to strengthening implementation of the global compact between rich and poor countries to achieve the human development and poverty eradication goals agreed to in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

As you know, this Declaration set out specific targets to be achieved by 2015. These targets include halving extreme poverty and hunger; assuring that all children, boys and girls alike, are able to complete primary education; halting and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases; and reducing sharply maternal and child mortality. While progress is being made towards these goals in quite a few countries, it is lagging in others, particularly in Africa. The World Summit is a unique forum for initiating new, concrete measures for accelerating progress toward the Millennium goals.

We commend President Bush for the commitment of his Administration to improving the well-being of the people in Africa and other poor countries. The President has demonstrated this commitment most notably through the initiative to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, the Millennium Challenge Account, and major new debt relief. However, an enormous task still lies ahead, and that task can be best accomplished by effective international cooperation in which the U.S. demonstrates clear leadership. Strong efforts will be required to accelerate progress towards the Millennium goals. These efforts will have to come primarily from the developing countries themselves, but they can only succeed with commensurate support from the rich countries.

We urge the Administration to make the World Summit an occasion to build on the Administration's strong record by working with Summit colleagues to adopt new initiatives that enable poor countries, particularly in Africa, to break the cycle of poverty and achieve the human development goals of the Millennium Declaration. We urge continued United States leadership in this effort primarily because of the moral obligation that we all share


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for the well-being of every human person, but also because replacing despair with hope in poor nations will lead to a more secure world for all of us.

We have all been touched by the generous outpouring of prayers and assistance for Gulf coast communities that were devastated by Hurricane Katrina. This response is an embodiment of our moral obligation to reach out to the poor and vulnerable. At the same time that we respond generously and effectively to those who have lost so much, we must meet our responsibilities towards those who have so little. Our great nation has the will and the resources to do both, and we have the moral obligation to aid our “neighbors” near and far.

Clearly, one meeting, even a World Summit, will not overcome poverty and despair, but sustained implementation of commitments made at this meeting can lead to a more just and peaceful world. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, which has worked for so many years on these global priorities, will continue to work with the Administration and Congress to ensure that commitments are kept and resources are found to meet our nation’s promises to hungry and suffering people throughout the world.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John H. Ricard S.S.J.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Most Reverend John H. Ricard, S.S.J.
Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee
Chairman, Committee on International Policy