

Attention: Foreign Policy Aides

June 2003

Dear Member of Congress,

As religious, humanitarian and policy organizations, we are concerned about the lack of attention and resources to address critical international health and development priorities as we look at the Administration's FY 2004 budget request for foreign operations. More than a billion people worldwide lack access to safe water, and more than 2.4 billion lack access to adequate sanitation. Global crises such as the pandemic of HIV/AIDS threaten human and economic health in the developing world. Real security for all of us comes in part from meeting these basic human needs worldwide. Yet we see in the Administration's request an overemphasis on military foreign aid programs while programs to meet human needs continue to receive scant attention.

Africa. There is an urgent need to strengthen core development assistance accounts for Africa. The nexus between the HIV/AIDS crisis and the current food crisis is likely to worsen the hunger and poverty situation in many African countries, unless the United States and the international community move now and rise to the challenge. Yet, the President's FY 2004 budget request for the Child Survival and Health and Development Assistance accounts is about \$265.5 million less than Congress appropriated for FY 2003. Congress should ensure that there are no cuts in spending on core development programs in 2004.

Latin America. The Latin America budget request shows an erosion in social aid and an upward trend in military programs. Development assistance declined from \$268 million in FY 2003 to \$244 million in FY 2004. Military aid has seen a steady increase, now substantially above development spending. Yet the poverty rate rose in the region in the past two years, and per capita income is less than it was five years ago, while the region maintains the highest level of inequality in the world. Congress should increase development assistance to Latin America to equal at least FY 2003 levels.

We are particularly concerned with the increasing emphasis on military aid to Colombia. The Colombian government's human rights record continues to be poor, according to the State Department; collaboration by the army with paramilitary forces engaged in human rights violations persists and goes unpunished. In the face of a spiraling humanitarian crisis, with social needs unmet in conflict zones, the administration's request for social aid is inadequate. Congress should cut the \$140 million in foreign military financing for Colombia and increase by \$25 million social aid to the country.

Near East. The disillusioned people of the Middle East must have reason to believe that hopes for peace and economic development are more than abstract promises. At this time,

the Road Map peace plan does brings cautious hope of ending the longstanding conflict that has stifled the potential of the people and consumed the resources of the region. Still, the level of military financing going to the troubled Middle East -- \$3,751,000,000 for FY2004--consumes nearly 20% of all Foreign Operations funds.

It is our conviction that elements of a regional economic development program can be explored and implemented while political solutions unfold. It is impossible to imagine an enduring peace that ignores the pressing human needs of most people in the region. Congress should undergird the pursuit of peace by accelerating a redirection of Foreign Military Financing toward sustainable development programs.

HIV/AIDS. Today, some 42 million people are living with HIV/AIDS. Half of the 38.6 million adults are women; another 3.2 million are children. During 2002, 3.1 million people died, and an additional five million were infected. In his State of the Union message, President Bush committed the United States to spend \$15 billion over the next five years on Global HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment.

Congress should act now to provide \$3.5 billion to stop global AIDS. \$3 billion should be appropriated for FY 2004, of which \$1.2 billion should go to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB & Malaria. \$1.8 billion should go to new and existing bilateral AIDS programs, including at least \$300 million for orphans and vulnerable children. Additionally, \$500 million is needed immediately as a 2003 emergency supplemental appropriation to ensure that the Global Fund has sufficient funds for its fall disbursement.

Debt. Congress should approve appropriations sufficient to fund the additional debt relief for impoverished countries called for in the United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Act of 2003 (Public Law #108-25). This plan would double the amount of debt relief available to heavily indebted poor countries. It calls on the U.S. Treasury Department to seek deeper debt cancellation by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and regional development banks. If other donor countries agree, enough debt would be canceled to lower impoverished countries' annual repayment obligations ("debt service payments") to no more than 10 percent of their government revenues from internal sources, or 5 percent for countries experiencing public health crises.

We would appreciate your careful consideration of the FY 2004 foreign operations budget to ensure that the United States makes a generous contribution to authentic global security and health and development challenges.

Sincerely,

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