

# Religious Voices for UNFPA

January 20, 2004

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush,

As people of faith and leaders in the religious community, we are deeply concerned that you are considering not funding the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). We urge you to release the full appropriation of \$34 million for the UNFPA in the Fiscal Year 2004 Budget. Religious leaders actively supported the founding of the UN and continue to believe that the UN and its agencies are critical vehicles for world peace and justice. We recognize the importance of the United Nations in providing the world with humanitarian assistance, especially to those living in developing countries. As a UN agency, UNFPA is vital to the reproductive health needs of women, men and their families by providing life-saving services such as family planning, and HIV/AIDS prevention, counseling and services to people living in developing countries around the world.

As people of faith, we understand that women and men must have access to information and services so they can act morally and responsibly in their sexual behavior. We also understand that when family planning services are not available to women and men, women's health and livelihood suffer. Highly respected religious leaders have supported modern family planning as a moral good. Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu has stated, "Planned parenthood is an obligation of those who are Christians. Our church thinks we should use scientific methods that assist in planning families."

As people of faith we oppose any coercive measures in reproductive health. We believe that UNFPA has been unequivocally committed to providing informed and voluntary family planning. The agency has used, and continues to use, its stature as a UN agency to help governments, like China, to move more and more towards respect for the rights of women and men to decide for themselves on the number and spacing of their children and to move away from draconian practices. The agency deserves and needs your support.

Again, we respectfully urge you to respond with compassion and provide \$34 million for the UNFPA to help them promote the health and well-being of women and families around the world.

Sincerely,

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