



**Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development
Office of International Justice and Peace**

**Background on International Assistance and Diplomacy
February 2019**

One thing is certain: good politics is at the service of peace. It respects and promotes fundamental human rights, ... In these days, we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in the wake of the Second World War... Peace, in effect, is the fruit of a great political project grounded in the mutual responsibility and interdependence of human beings. But it is also a challenge that demands to be taken up ever anew. It entails a conversion of heart and soul; it is both interior and communal; --

Pope Francis, 2019 World Day of Peace Message: Good Politics is at the Service of Peace

BACKGROUND:

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) strongly support international assistance for poverty-reducing programs. This aid amounted to \$23.8 billion in the Fiscal Year 2018, just over one-half percent (.58%) of federal spending. These programs serve the poorest communities in the developing world. U.S. assistance saves lives, reduces violent conflict, and defends people's dignity. These programs provide: agricultural assistance that helps poor farmers feed their families; medicines to extend the lives of people with HIV/AIDS; cost-effective vaccines to prevent diseases; and mosquito nets to avert malaria. This aid assists orphans and vulnerable children, people facing famine in Africa, and refugees and nations devastated by conflicts such as in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq. International assistance provides support for peacekeepers to protect innocent civilians in places like South Sudan and the Congo.

International assistance works. More than one billion people lifted themselves from extreme poverty since 1990. As of 2018, the President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has saved 17 million lives, and nearly 2.4 million babies at risk of AIDS were born HIV-free. The President's Malaria Initiative has saved over 7 million lives and in 2015 USAID provided life-saving support to 109 million trying to survive a humanitarian emergency. Over the past ten years, aid saved 4.6 million children from death due to preventable disease. Less desperation equals more prosperity and security for our nation and world.

In concert with international assistance, the State Department plays a crucial role in a world marred by violent conflict and a slide toward authoritarian rule. Diplomacy works to end violent conflicts and strengthen democracy and the rule of law. In recent years, the State Department has added efforts to prevent violent conflict in places where deep divisions and powerful interests threaten peace.

Since September 11, 2001, the United States has been in a state of constant warfare in Afghanistan, later in Iraq, and then with the so-called Islamic State in Syria. In addition to large-scale conflicts, the United States has used armed drones and smaller military forces to intervene in a number of other countries such as Yemen, Somalia, Niger, and Mali.

While defense spending has risen sharply, investments in diplomacy and development have stagnated. In 1950, the State Department budget was about half that of the Defense Department. Today it amounts to 10% of the defense budget. For Fiscal Year 2018 and 2019, the Administration sought to cut funding for diplomacy and development by more than one-third. Such cuts would devastate the U.S. ability to

save lives and influence governments overseas. Although Secretary Mike Pompeo vowed to rebuild State and lifted the hiring freeze, as of a month ago almost half of key positions in State remain empty.

Catholic teaching asserts that military action should always be the last resort. By fully funding the Department of State, we help to manage and mitigate conflict, and reduce the likelihood that our nation will go to war. Providing safety and opportunity to those lacking hope – through development programs - reduces the likelihood that they despair or turn to illicit work to simply feed their families.

USCCB and CRS POSITION:

The Church views international aid as an essential tool for promoting human life and dignity, reducing poverty, advancing solidarity, and enhancing peace and security throughout the world. International assistance is not simply an optional commitment; it is a moral responsibility to assist “the least of these” (Matthew 25). Pope Francis calls us to avoid the “culture of comfort, which makes us think only of ourselves, makes us insensitive to the cries of other people.... In this globalized world, we have fallen into globalized indifference. We have become used to the suffering of others: it doesn’t affect me; it doesn’t concern me; it’s none of my business!”

On three occasions in 2018, Archbishop Timothy Broglio, the Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace, wrote to the Administration and Congress urging them to protect funding for development, humanitarian aid, and diplomacy; to increase investments in building peace; and to promote human rights and accountable, transparent governance to reduce root causes of violent conflict.

USCCB has repeatedly called for intensive diplomatic efforts to end conflicts in a range of countries across the world through the strategic deployment of diplomatic and development resources to avoid the use of military force where it is unsuited to the task or would have catastrophic unintended consequences. It is hard to reconcile the need for diplomacy and political solutions with significant cuts to the State Department budget. In April 2018 Archbishop Broglio wrote Congress to urge their support for the Global Fragility and Violence Reduction Act (HR 5273). This bill sets up a global conflict prevention initiative to coordinate U.S. Government action to identify particularly fragile countries and develop and implement interagency plans to prevent the outbreak of violence. This bill builds on the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act which both houses of Congress passed with Conference support and was signed into law by President Trump in January 14, 2019. The bill sets up the Atrocities Prevention Board that brings together various Federal departments to coordinate action to prevent violence from breaking out.

Military force should only be employed in a just cause as a last resort within strict moral limits of proportionality, discrimination and probability of success. The brave men and women of our military deserve our support and gratitude as well as prudent consideration of the stress of repeated deployments over the years. Peace is built on the foundation of justice. It cannot be imposed by force of arms.

ACTION REQUESTED:

Urge Congress to preserve funding for Fiscal Year 2020 to at least Fiscal Year 2019 proposed levels for **poverty-reducing development and humanitarian programs** that save lives, address the root causes of conflicts, reduce crushing poverty, and support the record number of 68 million forcibly displaced persons around the world, including 25 million refugees. (See chart for programs supported by USCCB and CRS.)

Ask Congress to maintain strong and vibrant **investments in diplomacy** to help developing countries build peaceful and prosperous societies; do not cut non-defense spending to increase military funding.

Urge Congress to reintroduce and pass the Global Fragility and Violence Reduction Act (HR 5273 as passed by the House in the 115th Congress) to increase and improve the U.S.’ ability to deploy diplomatic and good governance resources to prevent the outbreak of violent conflict and avoid the need for military force.

RESOURCES: Visit: www.usccb.org/about/international-justice-and-peace/ or www.confrontglobalpoverty.org/. Contact: *Steve Hilbert*, USCCB Office of International Justice and Peace, shilbert@usccb.org, 202-541-3149

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