



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

**Background on International Assistance and Diplomacy
February 2018**

Violence is not the cure for our broken world. Countering violence with violence leads at best to forced migrations and enormous suffering, because vast amounts of resources are diverted to military ends and away from the everyday needs of young people, families experiencing hardship, the elderly, the infirm and the great majority of people in our world. At worst, it can lead to the death, physical and spiritual, of many people, if not of all. -- Pope Francis, 2017 World Day of Peace Message, *Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace*

BACKGROUND:

The U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Relief Services strongly support international assistance for poverty-reducing programs. This aid amounted to \$22.6 billion in Fiscal Year 2017, just over one-half percent (.55%) 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 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 2016, the President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has saved 11.5 million lives, and nearly 2 million babies at risk of AIDS were born HIV-free. The President's Malaria Initiative has saved over 6 million lives, and in 2015 USAID provided life-saving support to 109 million trying to survive a humanitarian emergency. Over the past eight 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 helps 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 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. One result of these military actions is that the very nature and definition of war has expanded with few boundaries and little Congressional oversight.

While defense spending has risen sharply, investments in diplomacy and development have stagnated. In 1950, the State Department budget was about half as large as the Defense Department. Today it amounts to 10% of the defense budget. For Fiscal Year 2018, 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. Secretary Tillerson has proposed a reform program that could cut \$10 billion over the next five years, or roughly one third of the current budget. The State Department also plans

to cut about 2,000 positions over the next two and half years. Reports show that since January 2017, the State Department has lost 60% of its ambassadors. There is also a hiring freeze in effect.

While at the U.S. Central Command, Defense Secretary James Mattis said, “If you don’t fully fund the State Department, then I need to buy more ammunition.” 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!”

In October 2017, Bishop Oscar Cantú, then Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace, [wrote](#) to Secretary Tillerson urging him to protect funding for diplomacy and to increase investments in building peace and promoting human rights and accountable, transparent governance to reduce root causes of violent conflict. In December 2017, Archbishop Timothy Broglio, Chairman of the International Committee, [wrote](#) leaders in the House and Senate to support “vital investments in diplomacy and development to prevent the outbreaks of conflict and terrorism by addressing long-standing root causes.”

Our nation should elevate diplomacy and international development as primary tools for promoting peace, regional stability and human rights, not adopt deep cuts to these budgets. USCCB has repeatedly called for intensive diplomatic efforts to end conflicts in a range of countries, including Syria and Iraq, and to resolve the crisis on the Korean peninsula where the use of military force would have catastrophic consequences. It is hard to reconcile the need for diplomacy and political solutions with significant cuts to the State Department budget.

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 and cannot be established by force of arms.

ACTION REQUESTED:

Urge Congress to preserve funding to at least Fiscal Year 2017 levels for **poverty-reducing development and humanitarian programs** that save lives, address the root causes of conflicts, and reduce crushing poverty, including the **Complex Crises Fund** and the **Atrocities Prevention Board**. (See chart for programs supported by USCCB and CRS.)

Remind Congress to increase funding to humanitarian accounts (**International Disaster Assistance, Migration and Refugee Assistance, and Food for Peace**) to assist the record number of 65 million forcibly displaced persons in the world, including 21 million refugees.

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

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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