

Ambassador Todd Stern  
Special Envoy on Climate Change  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

August 5, 2009

Dear Ambassador Stern:

We write to you as a broad coalition of U.S. faith-based organizations with long-standing international partnerships and a shared concern for the global common good. Climate change is already impacting the lives, livelihoods, and communities of many of our international partners and constituencies, particularly in the Global South. Our global connections allow us to see first-hand the effects of climate change in the communities where we work. Whether it is changing rainfall patterns in Bolivia severely damaging coffee farmers' harvests or the spread of malaria into East African communities that have never known the disease, climate change is impacting those who are most vulnerable. Experiences such as these prompt the U.S. constituencies we represent to voice their concern that creation and its vulnerable inhabitants be protected.

We are encouraged by increased U.S. engagement on this critical global justice issue, and thank you for your leadership. Yet, we remain deeply concerned that the needs and rights of those most impacted by climate change are being ignored in the face of political expediencies. In particular, we request an opportunity to clarify in person with you or your staff several key points regarding the U.S. position within the international climate negotiations currently taking place under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), due to culminate this December in Copenhagen.

- We are pleased with the strong position the U.S. delegation has taken in regards to maintaining the UNFCCC negotiations as open and transparent. We hope that you will continue to advocate in support of a process that facilitates the active and meaningful participation of all Parties, as well as relevant stakeholders, including civil society, women and indigenous peoples. Furthermore, we encourage you to broaden your efforts in support of openness, transparency and accountability to include all multilateral forums feeding into the UNFCCC negotiations, including future gatherings of the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate.
- We question the role, structure and functioning of a global carbon market in an international climate agreement, particularly regarding its predictability and appropriateness as a source of international climate finance. Speculation in the energy and commodities markets drove prices, including prices of basic food items, artificially high in the spring and summer of 2008. Combined with the unregulated nature of Wall Street and the economic collapse in the fall of 2008, we are troubled by the potential impact that a global carbon trading market will have on people living in poverty in countries around the world. Is the U.S. wedded to this model or are

other alternatives being sought? What type of regulation is the U.S. prepared to propose for a global carbon market?

- While the U.S. has acknowledged the urgent adaptation requirements of the most impacted developing countries, we are deeply concerned by the emphasis on private finance to address these needs. In keeping with President Obama's recognition of the historical responsibility of the U.S. in regards to climate change, reiterated at the July 9th closing of the Major Economies Forum, the U.S. has a moral obligation to provide substantial new *public* funds in support of the efforts of vulnerable developing countries to adapt to the effects of climate changes. The vulnerability of Southern countries to the impact of climate change should not be taken advantage of to enforce structural economic change, market liberalization or financial deregulation to create attractive environments in order for private investment to fulfill a public obligation.
- As our planet changes, and shifts in weather patterns impact vulnerable people's ability to provide for their families, many are forced to leave their homes. This phenomenon will only increase in years to come, especially if the international community does not commit to appropriate and scientifically-sound climate mitigation and robustly-funded adaptation. It is expected that 200 million people will be permanently displaced by 2050 due to climate related challenges.<sup>1</sup> In the final Copenhagen outcome agreement, we encourage the U.S. to advocate for including official recognition of and a meaningful support mechanism to provide for peoples that are forced from their homes, whether due to immediate disaster or long-term changes in their climate.

As people of faith, we affirm Earth, and all its diverse forms of life, habitat and natural rhythms, as a sacred gift, one with an inherent order and beauty that cannot be violated without consequence. We recognize our urgent moral responsibility to prevent further damage to our planet's atmosphere, and to ensure that the damage already incurred does not infringe on the legitimate claim of all people, particularly those living in poverty, to dignified and sustainable development. As U.S. representative for international climate negotiations, we ask that you ensure strong U.S. engagement in a new global deal which will support transparency, find a way to publicly pay for appropriate adaptation measures for vulnerable populations and support those who will be seeking refuge due to climate changes in their own regions.

We would enjoy the opportunity to continue this conversation in person with you and your staff at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your attention to our concerns and questions. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Nicholas Stern. The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change. October 2006.

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Adrian Dominican Sisters

Ruth Messinger, President  
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cc: Jonathan Pershing, Deputy Special Envoy on Climate Change  
Trigg Talley, Director, Office of Global Change, Department of State  
Ko Barrett, Director for International Affairs, Climate Program Office, NOAA  
Eric Schwartz, Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration  
William Pizer, Director, Office of Environment and Energy, U.S. Treasury  
William Breed, Director, Climate Change Program, USAID  
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Michael Froman, National Security Council  
Paul Monteiro, Religious Liaison, White House Office of Public Liaison