

# A Policy Agenda for



## President Obama's Second Term from Communities of Faith

- ~ American Friends Service Committee ~
- ~ Center of Concern ~
- ~ Church of the Brethren Advocacy and Peace Witness Ministries ~
- ~ Church World Service ~
- ~ Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach ~
- ~ Conference of Major Superiors of Men ~
- ~ Disciples Justice Action Network ~
- ~ Franciscan Action Network ~
- ~ Friends Committee on National Legislation ~
- ~ Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ ~
- ~ Leadership Conference of Women Religious ~
- ~ Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns ~
- ~ Missionary Oblates ~
- ~ Muslim Public Affairs Council ~
- ~ National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd ~
- ~ NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby ~
- ~ Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Public Witness ~
- ~ Progressive National Baptist Convention ~
- ~ Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Institute Justice Team ~
- ~ Union for Reform Judaism ~
- ~ Unitarian Universalist Association, Witness Ministries ~
- ~ United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries ~
- ~ United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society ~

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*“Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and  
no one will make them afraid.”*  
(Micah 4:4).



As religious bodies and faith-based organizations, we represent a broad U.S. constituency. We also maintain vital relationships with millions of partners in every part of the world. These common bonds, a commitment to the dignity and basic human rights of all people as children of God, and theologies calling us to ministries furthering a just peace in the world, form the basis of the foreign policy agenda that we offer to the President for the next four years.

We are inspired by faith traditions that share the conviction that all people – women and girls equally with men and boys – must have the opportunity to live securely while fully participating in the decisions that shape their lives and addressing the challenges that face the human community. Our faiths also recognize that responsible care and respect for the earth and all life is a sacred calling. Responding to human suffering, protecting the natural environment, and seeking true human security for our neighbors near and far are commitments deeply imbedded in the shared values of the American people.

*While as a broad coalition none of our organizations addresses all the policies recommended here, members of and coalitions within our interfaith community will advocate in the years ahead on behalf of the following policies:*

## **I. CONFRONTING POVERTY, DISEASE AND INEQUALITY**

We have witnessed the incredible courage and resilience of our global neighbors who struggle daily to meet their basic food, shelter, and health care needs. Even with our own economic and budget challenges, the United States has a tremendous capacity to reach out in compassion to those who are hungry, thirsty, and homeless. Beyond the question of funding is the divine imperative to establish right and just relationships among the peoples of the world – acting to remove the economic inequality and power disparity between peoples that prevent authentic development. Our wellbeing as Americans is inextricably bound up with the wellbeing of the entire human family. We cannot prosper unless all prosper.

### **Humanitarian and Poverty-focused Development Assistance**

Using less than 1 percent of the federal budget, countless lives have been saved, many new livelihoods created and hope restored through international aid programs supported by Republicans and Democrats alike.

- Increase funding for humanitarian and poverty-focused foreign assistance and global health.
- Create measurable indicators that ensure that development is equitable and sustainable, with a special focus on equal opportunity and full participation of women and girls.

### ***Hunger & Food Security***

Recognizing the dignity of each person and the integrity of creation, food and nutrition security

must be viewed in light of the fundamental human right to food and the human responsibility to respect and care for creation.

- Promote holistic, climate friendly, sustainable, culturally appropriate and farmer controlled forms of agricultural development rather than pursuing a one-dimensional focus on economic growth.
- Ensure that agricultural investment is directed in close consultation with farmer and civil society groups and in ways that prioritize measureable benefit to small-holder farmers and especially women producers;
- Encourage local and regional food economies;
- Increase U.S. funding for global nutrition, with a special focus on women and children during the 1,000 day window;
- Ensure that private sector investments in agriculture do not replace public investment, and put in place mechanisms guaranteeing transparency and democratic accountability.

### ***Education***

It is estimated that 61 million children and 74 million adolescents – the majority girls -- across the globe do not attend school. No nation can hope to end poverty and inequality without prioritizing education for all.

- Prioritize funding for education to ensure the successful completion of at least nine years of quality education with an intentional emphasis on gender equality for all people everywhere.

### ***Water & Sanitation***

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) provides among the most efficient investments for reducing poverty around the world: for every \$1 invested, at least \$4 is returned in increased economic productivity.

- Support passage of the Water for the World Act.
- Increase funding for clean water and sanitation in countries and communities where it is most needed.

### ***Refugee Assistance***

The number of the world's refugees spiked in 2012, with the onset of new conflicts and new displacement from ongoing complex crises, including violent conflict, political oppression, climate change and other natural disasters, and the usurpation of land for natural resource extraction or large-scale infrastructure projects.

- Protect refugees and other forcibly displaced populations around the world through robust funding of the International Disaster Assistance account and Migration and Refugee Assistance account.

### ***Global Health***

Investment in programs to address preventable diseases in developing countries results in healthier and more productive communities in the U.S. as well as globally. U.S. leadership, technical resources, and funding have contributed hugely to impressive, sometimes even spectacular, improvements in child survival; control of HIV/AIDS, diarrhea, and malaria; reduction in vaccine-preventable diseases; and maternal and family health. By expanding U.S. leadership, lifesaving knowledge, technologies, and services can be disseminated to unreached populations, transforming lives globally while providing substantial benefits for the U.S.

- Build on past successes in child survival to end preventable child deaths by 2035.
- Increase resources and improve delivery mechanisms to extend to unreached populations services for prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis; immunizations; maternal, child, and family health; and other lifesaving interventions.

- Continue attention to the integration of various services and the strengthening of health systems to maximize efficient use of limited resources for sustainable progress.
- Strengthen partnerships with all available stakeholders, including the faith community, to mobilize the potential of everyone to build a healthier, happier, and more productive world.

***Climate Funding (See Section #IV below)***

***Region and Country Specific Priorities***

Work as a true partner in support of Latin American governmental and civil society efforts to implement development strategies that alleviate poverty, with special emphasis on marginalized communities including indigenous and Afro-descendents.

Direct counter-narcotics efforts for Latin America toward alternative development and reduction of demand in the U.S. rather than on harsh strategies that harm farmers and minority communities.

Honor financial commitments made to the Government of Haiti while holding it accountable for measurable and transparent pro-poor initiatives which have clear benchmarks and timelines for their implementation, with particular reference to food security, housing, public health and gender equity.

Require that U.S. companies and investors operate with greater transparency regarding their land purchases in Africa, and work to end African land speculation that is destroying livelihoods and pushing thousands off their ancestral lands.

**Debt Cancellation and Responsible Lending and Borrowing**

Excessive debt, tax avoidance by individuals and corporations , and irresponsible lending and borrowing divert needed resources from investments in poverty alleviation, education, environmental sustainability, the fight against disease, and the promotion of clean water and sanitation.

- Expand debt cancellation to allow countries burdened with unsustainable debt levels to invest in sustainable development and meeting human needs.
- Encourage future assistance in the form of grants rather than loans.
- Curb global tax avoidance, especially by corporations, and illicit financial flows that enable trillions of dollars to leave the developing world untaxed.
- Encourage greater transparency and accountability at International Financial Institutions by advocating for the implementation of principles of responsible lending and borrowing as developed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and endorsed by the US Government.
- Encourage G20 countries to support the establishment of a fair and transparent arbitration process or international bankruptcy process for sovereign nations.

**Trade Justice**

International trade and investment policies and practices present a moral challenge because of their profound effect upon the lives of people around the world and upon creation. U.S. trade policies and practices must further genuine social and economic development for our neighbors around the world while preserving and creating good jobs here at home. U.S. trade policy should protect public health and the natural environment at home and abroad.

- Reject investor-state provisions in U.S. trade agreements – a far-reaching concession to foreign investors that would allow multi-national corporations to sue governments in international tribunals, resulting in harm to public health, essential services, and the environment.
- Work with the Colombian government to implement key elements of the Labor Action Plan for the Colombia Free Trade Agreement which are critically needed to protect trade unionists, guard against labor rights abuses, eliminate the abusive associative labor cooperative model, and advance prosecutions of perpetrators of anti-labor violence.

## II. PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT AND CREATING A JUST PEACE

According to the World Bank's 2011 report, 1.5 billion civilians live under the threat of violent conflict. Even though the number of armed conflicts has declined significantly over the last few decades, civilians are still indiscriminately targeted in armed conflict and killed at increasing rates. What is needed is a new vision of a just peace, which fully embraces alternative conflict engagement methodologies and peace building efforts including:

- **Restorative justice:** Support for truth and reconciliation commissions and psycho-social trauma healing practices at various stages of conflict.
- **Conflict transformation:** Addressing all four dimensions of acute conflict: personal, relational, structural, and cultural.
- **Nonviolent resistance** and **unarmed civilian peacekeeping.** Prioritizing and increasingly promoting nonviolent resistance movements to injustice and unarmed civilian peacekeeping practices.

### *Build for Peace*

Support structures designed to prevent conflict:

- Fully fund the Complex Crises Fund (flexible funding for responding to erupting crises), the newly established Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO), as well as the interagency Atrocities Prevention Board.
- Include women as equal partners in preventing violent conflict and building a just peace in countries threatened by war, violence, and insecurity.

### *Act to Transform Conflicts*

#### *Israel/Palestine*

Engage in robust diplomacy at multiple levels to encourage concrete progress toward a viable two-state agreement resulting in a secure Israel and a viable Palestine existing peacefully, side-by-side within secure and recognized borders.

- Urge Israelis and Palestinians to abide by obligations under existing agreements and negotiate key unresolved issues.
- Promote pluralism in the Holy Land by supporting the rights of ethnic and religious minorities in both Israel and the Palestinian territories.
- Promote the protection of both Palestinian and Israeli human rights.

#### *Afghanistan, Pakistan*

- Bring a responsible end to the war in Afghanistan.
- Increase political, economic and humanitarian support to help Afghanistan meet current challenges and ensure the future well-being of that nation.
- Promote restorative justice practices at multiple levels to help heal the wounds created by the war.

- Increase nonmilitary assistance to Pakistan in the form of economic and development aid and support for democratic initiatives.
- Provide greater transparency around the use of drones in the region.

### ***Syria***

- Continue providing humanitarian aid to those affected by the conflict.
- Continue pursuing consensus through the United Nations Security Council to create a practical, united, and effective response to the mounting humanitarian crisis.
- Promote the de-militarization of the conflict by all parties, especially leveraging our influence on the suppliers of weapons to the rebels; and support the nonviolent resistance capacity *as requested by them*.
- Actively work with all parties involved to ensure that post-conflict Syria will be an open society that fosters the peaceful coexistence of all political and religious groups.

### ***Iran***

- Pursue robust diplomatic efforts with the Iranian government to ensure the peaceful resolution of all outstanding concerns and disputes.

### ***In Africa***

- Increase transparency around and ensure vigilant monitoring and oversight of U.S. security assistance to African countries.
- Condition aid on respect for human rights and security sector reform where needed, withholding assistance in the event of abuses.
- Shift U.S. investment away from lethal military and counterterrorism operations that often exacerbate conflict, and increase support for local efforts to address root causes of violence and build peace.
- Support an effective democratic process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, help the region come together in a viable peace process that addresses the root causes of war, and support accountability measures for any actors that play a destabilizing role.
- Close the loopholes on the conflict minerals trade through a focus on conflict gold and improved monitoring.
- Support the aspirations of Sudanese citizens for a peaceful democratic transformation. Ensure effective aid delivery for civilians in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states and any other region affected by government-sponsored violence, and expand support for development and humanitarian operations in South Sudan with an emphasis on building capacity for protection, especially through unarmed civilian peacekeeping groups

### ***In Latin America and the Caribbean***

- Vigorously support the developing peace process in Colombia, with special attention to land restitution and victims' rights.
- Provide assistance for improving the rule of law and public security, particularly restorative justice practices and unarmed civilian peacekeeping.

### ***In Asia***

- Bring greater transparency to all aspects of the U.S. military "pivot" to Asia and the Pacific region.
- Seek alternatives to a greater U.S. military presence in the region.
- Pursue formal negotiations for a peace agreement between North Korea and South Korea that will formally end the conflict.

### **III. PROMOTING, ENSURING AND PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS**

In many parts of the world today, human rights are threatened. Children face myriad threats to their civil, political, economic, social, health, and cultural rights. Victims of human trafficking, though too often an unseen population, comprise an estimated 700,000 to 2 million people around the globe. The number of the world's refugees spiked in 2012. All human beings possess human dignity and are entitled to the full and equal protection of their human rights. These rights include, but are not limited to: freedoms of belief, speech, and movement; freedom from violence, fear, and torture; freedom from undue repression and want.

- Work with our international partners to safeguard the rights of the vulnerable and the disempowered from threats to their personal security, especially based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual preference and migration status.
- Create the necessary policies and structures and allot the necessary funds to fight human trafficking at home and abroad.
- Institute more robust policy in support of human rights defenders everywhere.
- Ensure free prior and informed consent in infrastructure, energy, mineral, and natural resource development projects.
- Submit the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to the Senate and urge its immediate ratification.
- Prioritize respect for the rule of law, human rights, citizen participation, and transparency in Equatorial Guinea as a way to build a strong partner in the Gulf of Guinea region.
- Condition military aid to the Philippines on the end of impunity for government and military officials, the arrest and prosecution of those responsible for disappearances and extrajudicial killings, the release of political prisoners and the inauguration of formal peace negotiations with rebel groups

### **IV. RESPECTING AND PROTECTING THE EARTH**

People in less industrialized countries, especially those that live in conditions of poverty, suffer disproportionately from human-caused climate disruption. As temperatures and carbon-related pollution continue to increase, their broad ranging effects exceed the capacity of more and more communities to respond. The U.S. Department of Defense recognizes that climate change may play a role in sparking, accelerating and exacerbating future conflicts. Inaction not only jeopardizes development gains, but also yields a world overwhelmed with humanitarian crises.

The sooner the United States becomes a world leader in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and building resilience to climate related impacts, the greater the chance all peoples, future generations and the earth upon which we all depend, will be protected from harm. Investments in climate resilience and clean energy infrastructure efforts will reduce emissions, promote stability and mitigate future costs in less industrialized countries. Equitably applied reforestation programs provide economic opportunities, continued subsistence and other benefits for indigenous and local peoples while maintaining the ecosystem health.

Extractive industries too often end up doing serious harm to the integrity of creation. Many communities, especially indigenous and afro-descendent communities, and many other species depend on forest and other ecosystems for clean water, food, and livelihoods. The loss of these ecosystems means a loss of biodiversity, local communities, and livelihoods. The loss of these ecosystems also contributes to climate change through deforestation.

- Exercise global leadership to establishing legally binding targets for reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions.

- Provide increased, consistent international assistance that builds the climate resilience in less industrialized nations, particularly in vulnerable communities and ecosystems, including the Global Climate Change Initiative within the State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs, and in ways that do not come at the expense of existing humanitarian and development programs.
- Increase investments in clean energy infrastructure in less industrialized countries to reduce global emissions and improve their energy security through reliable, diversified, and cost-effective energy supplies.
- Implement and fund programs that combat deforestation in consultation with, and with the free prior and informed consent of, indigenous and other local peoples, and ensure their equitable access to the programs' benefit.
- In anticipation of greater intra-state and inter-state competition for increasingly scarce natural resources, and in seeking foundations for lasting peace following conflict, advocate for the establishment of accords between parties centered upon the co-management of shared natural resources.



