

July 8, 2003

The Honorable John W. Snow
Secretary
United States Department of Treasury
15th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Snow:

As long-time advocates of providing responsible debt relief to poor countries working toward economic growth, poverty reduction and sound governance, the undersigned religious leaders were quite pleased by the modifications to the Enhanced HIPC Initiative provisions contained in the recently enacted HIV/AIDS Assistance Act (P.L. 108-25). We urge you to act swiftly to implement the debt relief provisions and begin negotiations with the World Bank, IMF and our G-8 partners to reduce the debt service payments of the world=s Heavily Indebted Poor Countries.

Increased investment, including debt relief, in responsible development assistance programs is not only a moral obligation, but helps nations move their people out of the hopelessness of poverty and despair that fosters instability in our world. Limiting debt service obligations will not only improve the existing debt relief program, but also will expand the benefits of the President=s AIDS initiative for Africa. This enhanced link between debt relief and government spending on health care will improve and save the lives of those affected by this disease as well as enhance the economic and political futures of these nations. We are confident that the successful completion of negotiations will help achieve these results, but U.S. leadership is imperative and must begin as soon as possible.

Debt relief is an important component of U.S. foreign assistance and we hope that we can continue to work with you to achieve our common goal of securing an agreement to benefit the world=s poorest people.

Sincerely,

The Most Reverend Frank T. Griswold
Presiding Bishop and Primate
The Episcopal Church, USA

Reverend Elenora Giddings Ivory
Director, Washington Office
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Reverend John L. McCullough
Executive Director
Church World Service

Jose Ortiz
Executive Director
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

Most Reverend John H. Ricard
Bishop of Pensacola-Tallahassee
Chairman, International Policy Committee
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Bishop Melvin G. Talbert
Ecumenical Officer
Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church

