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January 5th, 2010

The Honorable Barrack H. Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

Too often past priorities are cast aside while our nation handles unprecedented problems, yet there remains certain persistent issues that can no longer be ignored. Global development must be a top priority. As advances in communication and transportation extinguish former barriers to international trade, business relations between nations have become increasingly intertwined. Unfortunately, the same technology has lessened developing countries' ability to compete. Such nations struggle to provide their average citizen with a comfortable living, and often times fail. The United States benefits from the welcoming global market, but it is also wary of the difficulties the market creates. In several occasions, the U.S. has brought injustices to light when other nations cast a blind eye, but if our nation demands more liberties for the impoverished - whether it be in the field of human rights or global development-, then we must first tackle poverty and sluggish development in growing countries through international partnerships.

Still, America cannot solve the world's problems alone despite being a large and prosperous country. Our nation has recognized the importance of international partnerships with membership to various United Nations (UN) bodies such as the United Nations Development Programme,

World Bank and International Labour Organization. By the start of the century, all UN member-states took a large step by adopting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). During your election campaign, you stated that you would “make the MDGs America’s goals”, so I trust that you will take necessary actions to procure the targets under MDG Eight (UNA-USA/Better World Campaign questionnaire). With 2015 rapidly approaching, it is the appropriate time to level the developmental “playing field”, though the greatest difficulty is settling on the correct strategy. Although my suggestions are not definite cure-alls, I propose the United States:

- i. promote international sustainable development and economic growth by encouraging the equal status of women as income contributors by CEDAW ratification;
- ii. support non-governmental organization (NGOs) which educate communities in least-developed nations on debt-management and financial market navigation;
- iii. urge for fairer loan policies for less-developed nations (LDCs), and foster technologies as tools for global development.

With the propositions above, the United States should continue to collaborate with other nations during multilateral discussions, because global participation will be the only way for world issues to be solved.

I. Encouraging the Equal Status of Women as Income Contributors with CEDAW ratification

In January 2009, later-appointed UN ambassador Susan Rice reported that “nearly 60 countries -- over a quarter of all U.N. members -- [were] unable to meet the basic requirements

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of statehood” according to the *Index of State Weakness in the Developing World* project she co-directed (“The 'Weak States' Gap” Washington Post). Of those sixty countries, 47 governments do not respect a woman's income-providing capability. Justification for all male workforce often stem from religious and social norms, but restricting employment to solely males hampers a nation's economic growth. By barring women from profitable work, poorer families lose the prospect of significant, added income. “Women must be full partners in development, so they can lift themselves and their communities out of poverty” said Secretary General Ban Ki Moon; he explained that empowered women are more likely to pass on good health and care to their children—calling investment in women “the best investment for the future”(Ban). The World Bank Group echoed Ban's belief by stating, “Expanding economic opportunities for poor women should be a core theme of public works and other safety nets, and financial sector operations.” (World Bank PREM).

Though the United States embraces gender equality, our nation has not ratified the UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW). If the U.S. accepts CEDAW, our country's statement to the world would be: “America recognizes a woman's equal status in the workplace, family structure and in all aspects of daily life.”. Our inability to ratify the Convention reflects on our nation's reluctance to fully endorse the breaking of stereotypical gender roles. However, President Obama, you can be the voice of reason; urge the Senate to ratify CEDAW. Dissenters of CEDAW call the Convention's agenda intrusively

radical, but decisions fostering human rights have always seen criticism. In the United States, women's suffrage was blasphemous before the 1920s, when women won their right to vote. Progressive times, as a catalyst for change, pervade even some strict Muslim countries today. Bangladesh and Indonesia are beginning to appreciate women's roles as financial contributors, where women dominate the garment and textile industry and enjoy greater freedom as wage-earners. America should commit to CEDAW—not only because of moral obligations, but because women have a powerful part in economic and sustainable development.

II. Educating Communities on Debt Management and Financial Market Navigation

Least developed countries “as compared with industrialized economies, are agrarian societies or produce extractive minerals whose prices rise less slowly in world markets than do the prices of their imports, generally of industrial products. Thus the term of trade do not favor LDCs. This phenomenon exacerbates their poverty.” (Baker 2). A potential pitfall in the presence of aid-organizations is the greater dependency on foreign resources. Basic living supplies are essentially needed, but the community must be given more than material objects; they must be educated on how be self-sustaining. Developing nations must be waned off excessive “help” from other nations, since national problems must ultimately be solved by the community, not outside relief agencies. The situation is dire when a country's infrastructure is so poor, the government cannot help its own destitute people. Luckily, replicative scenarios can be prevented.

Target three of the MDG 8 is to allow developing nations to successfully handle debt, which

is best addressed by education. LDC's youth will inevitably be burdened with their forefather's problems in the future, so it is natural to place the emerging leaders in school. When formal education detracts from a community's income generation, financial maneuverability lessons are a good option. Non-profit organizations such as Kiva promote local entrepreneurship by micro-loans; its field partners teach communities about monetary accountability before any individual is financed. By supporting community-minded NGOs, the U.S. saves itself from spending more money treating symptoms of underdevelopment; it will have more money to invest in attacking underdevelopment's core causes. Global concerns align to national interest, because stronger nation-states are less susceptible to corruption and provide less of a security threat to the United States.

III. Urge for Fairer Loan Policies to LDCs and Foster Technologies as Tools for Global Development

In addition, the United States should push for fairer financial-lending for LDCs. The World Bank secures its investments by “hard loans” in terms lasting up to 15 years with high interest, which may be bonded out to prospective buyers, but this practice hurts less-developed nations. Impoverished nations cannot prosper if they are eternally indebted to another nation, similar to the auspices of imperialism. Instead, the “soft loans” from the International Development Association (IDA) fits better with its longer terms of 35 to 40 years with no interest. The IDA is criticized for its regular need for replenishment, but IDA assistance proves worthwhile, as most

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projects IDA-associated have successful outcomes (IDA Data). Since IDA funds are specifically employed to fortify production in developing nations, employment rates rise and LDC economies improve. After graduation from IDA funds, LDC economies are sufficient enough to accommodate the cost of imports. Moreover, the United States, with allied nations, can inform LDCs about the monetary support available through the UN auxiliary.

The United States currently contributes the most money to aid organizations of all nations, but more importantly, it nurtures other countries' involvement and initiates the desire for change. “The well-to-do overlap substantially with those who have access to information and communication technologies, whereas the poor almost always lack access even to telephones.” wrote scholar Mark Warschauer, but technology inaccessibility can be alleviated (23). In lieu of an all-encompassing solution, the U.S. Agency for International Development called for “students, budding entrepreneurs, and other innovators” to submit project proposals utilizing technology to address global development issues during the *Development 2.0 Challenge* (USAID website). Ideas covered health, humanitarian assistance, education, agriculture, crosscutting and economical growth. Openness to new solutions establishes a model for hope, and this willingness to cooperate should continue.

Americans swear allegiance to liberty, freedom and justice to all, but I cannot see justice in places where the average laborer makes less than a dollar a day, and therefore cannot feed his/her family. President Obama, you and other world leaders have the conscience of the international

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community laying on your desks. By considering policies that would progress the development of growing nations, the international community will win over high levels of poverty and low development. In 2015, the world plans to have economic infrastructure strengthened, poverty reduced and development bolstered—all of which would be only possible if existing efforts continue. Thus, it is imperative that the United States upholds its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals as a crucial player in global partnerships.

Sincerely,



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