The Honorable John Boehner Speaker of the House of Representatives

The Honorable Eric Cantor Majority Leader, House of Representatives

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi Minority Leader, House of Representatives

February 22, 2011

Dear Speaker Boehner, Majority Leader Cantor, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

It is shocking to imagine that in the next major global humanitarian crisis – the next Haiti, Tsunami, or Darfur – the United States might simply fail to show up. Yet that is the very real risk posed by H.R. 1. The bill cuts global disaster aid by 67%, global refugee assistance by 45%, and global food relief by 41% relative to FY10 enacted levels. Addressing the drivers of the national debt is wise. Abruptly reducing US humanitarian commitments in order to save less than one quarter of one percent of total discretionary spending is not. These cuts would imperil the longstanding US commitment to provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance for those threatened by disaster and conflict.

The United States has – with strong bipartisan support – long been the backbone of worldwide humanitarian response. This US leadership saves hundreds of thousands of lives each year. With the fiscal year nearly half over, the move to halve US humanitarian budgets would leave the US without even a minimal level of humanitarian operating resources for the rest of the fiscal year. This could potentially cost many lives:

- Without additional funding, the US will be unable to respond to major new emergencies. If a natural disaster strikes, a drought turns into a famine, or a new civil war breaks out somewhere in the world, America will be forced to stay home while the rest of the world struggles to cover for our sudden absence.
- The reduced funding for US food assistance in H.R. 1 would decimate America's capacity to respond to a worsening drought in the Horn of Africa. Following several weak rain cycles, this region stands on the verge of a famine that could push more than seven million people towards starvation. This would badly undermine a region whose stability is a significant strategic priority for the United States.
- The humanitarian accounts support life-saving programs in Afghanistan and Pakistan for people displaced by conflict and natural disasters, for 1.7 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and for refugees who have returned home to Afghanistan to

- rebuild their country. A failure to help meet the needs of these populations would undermine US goals in the region at a critical moment.
- Funds from the humanitarian accounts provide the vast majority of America's support to Darfur as well as substantial support to the future state of South Sudan. The cuts in H.R. 1 would put hundreds of thousand of Sudanese lives at risk, just as the country embarks on the fragile process of North-South separation.
- HR1 would slash USAID's disaster risk reduction (DRR) funding, which saves lives and money by reducing the humanitarian impact of disasters. Without this kind of smart investment, the US will ultimately have to spend far more money responding to crises after the fact as we recently saw in Haiti.

Such outcomes would be devastating – for the world's refugees and conflict victims, for US interests, and for the United States' standing and reputation as a global leader.

Effective humanitarian response requires up-front funds in order to support life-saving activities during the onset of an emergency. For this reason it is urgent that the humanitarian accounts receive full funding now rather than be patched up with supplemental appropriations later in the fiscal year. We would also stress that robust humanitarian funding should not come at the expense of other international poverty reduction and development accounts. We strongly urge that House leadership work to increase the International Disaster Assistance, Migration and Refugee Assistance, and Title II Food Aid accounts to FY 2010 enacted levels as the budget process moves forward.

Sincerely,

Rudolf Maier President ADRA International

Ruth Messinger President American Jewish World Service

Daniel Wordsworth President and CEO American Refugee Committee

Dr. Helene D. Gayle President and CEO CARE

Ken Hackett President Catholic Relief Services David A. Weiss President and CEO CHF International

Anne Lynam Goddard President and CEO ChildFund International

Rev. John McCullough CEO

Church World Service

David Evans
President

Food for the Hungry

Gideon Aronoff
President and CEO

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

Nancy A. Aossey President and CEO

International Medical Corps

Dr. Arthur B. Keys President and CEO

International Relief and Development

A. Barry La Forgia Executive Director

International Relief Teams

George Rupp President and CEO

International Rescue Committee

Fr. Michael A. Evans, S.J.

National Director

Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

Dr. Mujahid Al-Fayadh President and CEO

Life for Relief & Development

John A. Nunes President and CEO Lutheran World Relief

Neal Keny-Guyer

CEO

Mercy Corps

Raymond C. Offenheiser

President

Oxfam America

Michel Gabaudan

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Refugees International

Farshad Rastegar

CEO

Relief International

Michael Poffenberger Executive Director

Resolve

Charles MacCormack President and CEO Save the Children

William F. Schulz President and CEO

Unitarian Universalist Service

Committee

Lavinia Limon President and CEO

US Committee for Refugees and

Immigrants

Sarah Costa

Executive Director

Women's Refugee Commission

Richard Leach President and CEO

World Food Program - USA

Dr. Karl Eastlack President and CEO

World Hope International

Richard Stearns

President

World Vision

Cc:

The Honorable Harold Rogers Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Norm Dicks Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Kay Granger Chairwoman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations

The Honorable Nita Lowey Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations

The Honorable Jack Kingston Chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture

The Honorable Sam Farr Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture

The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen Chairwoman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs

The Honorable Howard Berman Ranking Member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs