

March 21, 2007

The Honorable Maxine Waters  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Waters:

As leaders of development organizations, religious denominations, faith-based networks, think tanks, and Africa solidarity groups, we are writing to urge you to take leadership in addressing the crisis of debt and global poverty by re-introducing a 2007 JUBILEE Act.

We are extremely grateful for your consistent and unwavering support for Jubilee debt cancellation. Your leadership helped to achieve the initial Jubilee 2000 commitments, as well as the more recent 2005 debt cancellation deal. Your continued leadership has helped to raise the profile of the challenges facing Haiti and Liberia in achieving full debt cancellation.

As you know, 2007 is the Sabbath year, seven years after the Jubilee 2000 campaign. Despite the international community's new commitments to poverty eradication over the past seven years, particularly the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, the basic inequities that fuel deadly poverty in our world are as pronounced as ever. Every day, 13 percent of the world's population goes to bed hungry and nearly 15,000 people die of AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. The Jubilee vision that we find in scripture challenge us to address these realities as part our nation's commitment to building a more prosperous, stable world for all people.

2007 is also the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the transatlantic slave trade. Two centuries later, we are deeply mindful that the one of history's most towering evils, the enslavement of human beings, came to an end only when citizens challenged their governments to understand slavery as incompatible with basic laws of God and humanity. Around the world today, citizen campaigners are leading their governments to understand that deadly poverty and crippling debt, slaveries of our own age, similarly are incompatible with the basic laws of human dignity. 2007 is a critical year in these efforts, and we are deeply grateful for your leadership.

In the Hebrew Scriptures we find a vision of life in community that is liberating and just, governed by Sabbath cycles: the Sabbath Day, the Sabbath Year, and the Jubilee Year. These cycles are a powerful reminder of God's intent that all creatures enjoy fullness of life and partake in the abundance of God's world. Sabbath Year observance requires that every seven years debts are canceled and those enslaved because of debts are freed, restoring equal relations among community members and preventing a situation of ongoing exploitation.

Seven years after Jubilee 2000, the Sabbath year is an opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the Jubilee campaign, and to address the unfinished agenda on international debt.

First, we should celebrate the victories we have achieved: thanks to debt relief commitments in 1999 and 2005, now more than 20 countries have seen 100% debt cancellation from the IMF, World Bank, and African Development Bank. Resources freed up from debt relief are reaching those who need it in the form of greater access to health care, education, and clean water.

Second and even more fundamentally, the Sabbath year is a time to act on the unfinished agenda for international debt:

- Too many countries -- including Liberia, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of Congo – are *caught up in the harmful economic strings* of the IMF/World Bank Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) and face deadly delays to receiving desperately needed full cancellation.
- Many other low-income countries – such as Lesotho, Kenya, Nigeria, and Sri Lanka – have been excluded from debt relief by the IMF/World Bank. We join UK Chancellor Gordon Brown and other leaders in suggesting that all “IDA-only” low-income countries should be eligible to receive full debt cancellation to reach the Millennium Development Goals, assuming they meet good governance and other criteria.
- Nations including Indonesia, South Africa, and the Philippines clearly have unjust and odious debts which require further analysis and study.

The 2007 JUBILEE Act responds to this unfinished agenda. We know that debt relief works, but that our work is far from complete. 2007 marks the halfway point to the Millennium Development Goals, but progress toward achieving the goals falls short of the halfway mark. Our faith and our convictions call us to support bold and prophetic measures to end the crisis of debt and deadly poverty.

Our organizations have joined Jubilee USA Network to support a year-long Sabbath year mobilization designed to create major public awareness and mobilization in support of the 2007 JUBILEE Act. Some activities we have planned include:

- Mobilization of our members to contact their Members of Congress in support of the legislation;
- A call to open-ended fasting and prayer in support of the legislation led by Jubilee and Bread for the World activist Rev. David Duncombe beginning on September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007. While Rev. Duncombe fasts and walks the Halls of Congress as he did during the days of Jubilee 2000, over 20,000 Jubilee supporters and congregations across the country will join him by participating in a 40-day rolling fast in which they will fast for a day or more and meet with their members of Congress to urge their support for the Jubilee Act; and
- A physical mobilization to Washington, DC in October of hundreds of our members for events at the conclusion of the rolling fast, including a Congressional prayer breakfast, advocacy days, and press events ahead of the IMF/World Bank Annual meetings.

In order to maximize the impact of this work, we encourage the reintroduction of the Jubilee Act as soon as possible. Moreover, the G8 summit will be held in Germany from June 6-8 with a focus on Africa, and discussions are already underway on the agenda. The introduction of a JUBILEE Act with a significant number of co-sponsors will send a message to the Administration and leaders of the other G8 nations that the U.S. Congress remains committed to comprehensive debt cancellation.

As you move forward with this critical work, know that your efforts will have the support of millions of Americans who believe that, together, humanity can eradicate poverty in the present generation. In order that we may be of assistance to you as you seek to carry forward this important work, we would like to meet with you and your staff to discuss these issues in greater detail. Thanks in advance for considering this request and for your untiring devotion to building a world in which deadly poverty no longer stands in the way of the full flourishing of all God's people.

Sincerely,

Nii Akuetteh  
Executive Director  
Africa Action

John Cavanagh  
Director  
Institute for Policy Studies

Mhizha Chifamba  
Executive Director  
Washington Office on Africa

Tony Campolo, Ph.D.  
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Emira Woods  
Co-Director  
Foreign Policy in Focus

Dr. Paul Zeitz  
Executive Director  
Global AIDS Alliance

March 21, 2007

The Honorable Spencer Bachus  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Bachus:

As leaders of development organizations, religious denominations, faith-based networks, think tanks, and Africa solidarity groups, we are writing to urge you to take leadership in addressing the crisis of debt and global poverty by re-introducing a 2007 JUBILEE Act.

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As you know, 2007 is the Sabbath year, seven years after the Jubilee 2000 campaign. Despite the international community's new commitments to poverty eradication over the past seven years, particularly the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, the basic inequities that fuel deadly poverty in our world are as pronounced as ever. Every day, 13 percent of the world's population goes to bed hungry and nearly 15,000 people die of AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. The Jubilee vision that we find in scripture challenge us to address these realities as part our nation's commitment to building a more prosperous, stable world for all people.

2007 is also the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the transatlantic slave trade. Two centuries later, we are deeply mindful that the one of history's most towering evils, the enslavement of human beings, came to an end only when citizens challenged their governments to understand slavery as incompatible with basic laws of God and humanity. Around the world today, citizen campaigners are leading their governments to understand that deadly poverty and crippling debt, slaveries of our own age, similarly are incompatible with the basic laws of human dignity. 2007 is a critical year in these efforts, and we are deeply grateful for your leadership.

In the Hebrew Scriptures we find a vision of life in community that is liberating and just, governed by Sabbath cycles: the Sabbath Day, the Sabbath Year, and the Jubilee Year. These cycles are a powerful reminder of God's intent that all creatures enjoy fullness of life and partake in the abundance of God's world. Sabbath Year observance requires that every seven years debts are canceled and those enslaved because of debts are freed, restoring equal relations among community members and preventing a situation of ongoing exploitation.

Seven years after Jubilee 2000, the Sabbath year is an opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the Jubilee campaign, and to address the unfinished agenda on international debt.

First, we should celebrate the victories we have achieved: thanks to debt relief commitments in 1999 and 2005, now more than 20 countries have seen 100% debt cancellation from the IMF, World Bank, and African Development Bank. Resources freed up from debt relief are reaching those who need it in the form of greater access to health care, education, and clean water.

Second and even more fundamentally, the Sabbath year is a time to act on the unfinished agenda for international debt:

- Too many countries -- including Liberia, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of Congo – are *caught up in the harmful economic strings* of the IMF/World Bank Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) and face deadly delays to receiving desperately needed full cancellation.
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The Honorable Barney Frank  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Frank:

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