

**Testimony of
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**Before the
Subcommittee on Energy and Environment
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
On
Ensuring U.S. Competitiveness and International Participation
April 23, 2009**

Introduction

Good morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee.

I am Doug Smith, Executive Director of the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy. The Virginia Interfaith Center is a unique partnership among Virginia's mainstream faith community that seeks to address hunger, poverty, and the care for God's creation through the development and adoption of sound policy. While the faith community is so diverse that there is no one who can claim to represent it completely, I would like to share with you the perspective of many of us including the National Council of Churches and a number of our ecumenical and interfaith partners relevant to the issue of international adaptation funding.

First and foremost, we applaud the inclusion of strong international adaptation assistance measures in the draft of the American Clean Energy and Security Act. We see this as a necessary component of any US legislation, particularly as we work to ensure a strong and robust post-Kyoto agreement.

I would like to speak to the importance of this section as understood by the faith community.

Statement

There is a reality that is becoming clearer: The days of addressing shifting climate patterns, rising sea levels and rising global temperatures in ways that pit the interests of businesses against workers, and the needs of a growing human race against the sanctity of the Earth, must now end. We must act today to ensure that future generations – our children, their children, and their children's children -- remember that we acted today in good faith to protect all people from the impact of global climate change tomorrow. The interconnectedness of what I refer to as God's Creation – or more plainly people, plants, animals and the climate we live in -- now forces us to reconcile ourselves not to the past, but to a compassionate future that includes providing support to developing nations for adaptation as part of international aid and security priorities.

There are shifting climate realities taking hold all around us. Our best scientists and global security analysts tell us that the impacts of climate change will soon include increased hunger, poverty, and war. By the middle of this century, just four short decades from now, one billion people will likely face significant water shortages. With 75% of persons in developing countries

subsisting on agriculture, they are assured of a famine-filled future and we of an unstable geopolitical future if we do not act with boldness and compassion. If these shifting climate realities before us are not addressed it will be almost impossible to keep hundreds of millions of people alive, much less able to participate in emerging global markets or resist extremist factions.

CNA Analysis and Solutions recently issued a report referring to global climate change as a “threat multiplier,” where retired military leaders presented research that the United States and potentially a dozen other national states will face increased security risks as a result of climate change. While these concerns are focused on the assets of the US government, and among our allies around the world, in the NGO community we are also seeing a multiplying threat. The desperation of those facing poverty is threatening our aid workers, our ongoing development projects, and creating emerging needs for security in almost every developing country in which we work. This situation has manifested itself in kidnappings and even assassinations. At this rate, additional threats resulting from climate change may complicate our capacity to fulfill our mission to serve others to the point where vulnerable people at risk are not efficiently served and humanitarian disasters are exacerbated.

As an example, groups that I am connected to including the National Council of Churches of Christ, Church World Service, and Action by Churches Together have spent the last decade working with internally displaced people as a result of ethnic conflicts in Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia. As peoples are displaced, they move into heavily populated areas where an already strained infrastructure struggles to handle additional consumers of food and other already scarce resources. One only needs to look to the country of Zimbabwe, once referred to as the breadbasket of Africa. Hunger and disease are widespread as the result of agricultural mismanagement. When I worked in Zimbabwe 10 years ago, the country was on the verge of food shortages. Today, “Africa’s breadbasket” is better known as an area where famine is growing at an alarming rate. According to one report almost 5 million Zimbabweans struggle with starvation, 66% of children are no longer in school, and diseases like cholera are rampant. As conditions deteriorate, the competition for dwindling resources creates an explosive cocktail of civil unrest, regional instability, and economic disruption. If we factor in the additional complications related to water and food access as a result of global climate change, we will most certainly see exacerbated conflicts that are more and more difficult, and expensive, to address as an international community. The desertification of once fertile lands in Zimbabwe would most certainly tip the country to a point of no return.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Virginia Interfaith Center recently sent a staff person, Ryan Rinn, on a fact-finding mission to Nicaragua. Mr. Rinn tells the story of Santa Marta, an ancient east coast Miskito community whose language had never before needed a word for hurricane. They had never known a hurricane landfall. But in 2007, Felix, a category five hurricane, slammed into the small village of Santa Marta almost wiping it out. Felix’s fury was felt further south than any storm of its magnitude before. As weather patterns shift as a result of global climate change, the people of Santa Marta, and other indigenous peoples, are grappling to adapt to new realities for which they are unprepared. For the Miskito’s, they could not even describe the new situation because their ancient language had never needed to before. If support for these communities to adapt to the changing weather patterns had been available it could have saved lives, property, and helped to alleviate the suffering that continues today.

The international consequences of global climate change are impacting millions of people, and the faith community is united in our call to provide international adaptation assistance to protect and provide for the most vulnerable communities around the world. We urge the Committee to

support the language included in the American Clean Energy and Security Act and ask for the following related legislative objectives to be included in this or any climate bill:

The funds should be appropriately targeted in terms of recipient countries; they should go to the “most vulnerable developing countries” and no more than 10% should go to any one country in any single year.

Local communities must be engaged in a participatory process through transparent mechanisms with adequate monitoring and evaluation.

The funds provided should be in addition to current funding levels of official development assistance.

The funds should be appropriately targeted to adapting to climate impacts, including impacts related to drought, natural disasters, diseases, and migration.

Legislation should also enhance developing country efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing deforestation (and encouraging reforestation) and by transitioning to clean energy technologies.

We in the U.S. have a moral responsibility to those in need in this global crisis. I would like to ask you to commit to providing substantial financial support of no less than \$7 billion per year to this desperate need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on these important matters, for your time and for your consideration.

http://www.upi.com/Top_News/2008/10/14/Severe-famine-overtaking-Zimbabwe/UPI-43951224001005/

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