



**Testimony of Rev. Dr. Mari Castellanos
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Good morning Chairman Markey, Ranking member Upton and members of the Committee. Thank you for the invitation to testify today. It is a pleasure to be here. I am Rev. Dr. Mari Castellanos, Minister for Policy Advocacy for the United Church of Christ. I am here today representing the National Council of Churches.

The church is called to address the issue of climate change in order to remain faithful to our teachings about justice and stewardship. Throughout the Bible, we are taught to love our neighbors as ourselves, to protect and provide for those living in poverty and to tend to God's Creation in a manner that recognizes the beauty and the bounty that the Lord has blessed us with. Climate change is a moral issue and a reflection of our failure to live out God's call. Diverse faith traditions including Catholics, Protestants, and Jews have recognized the importance and necessity of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions to a level that will prevent the worst impacts of climate change.

A recent report by the Global Humanitarian Forum paints a bleak picture of the impact that climate change is having and will continue to have on God's creation and God's people. The findings indicate that every year climate change leaves over 300,000 people dead, 325 million people seriously affected, and creates economic losses of US\$125 billion. In addition, 4 billion people are vulnerable, and 500 million people are at extreme risk. These are astonishing numbers but they provide the quick realization that climate change is no longer something that may happen, but rather it is already happening and we must act decisively to prevent the worst impacts while protecting the most vulnerable.

I have had heartrending occasions to listen to victim's accounts of the impacts of climate change around the world; as well as the privilege to see how churches and communities are responding to the needs of our global neighbors. Rosemary Mayiga is one individual whose story comes to mind. A middle aged Ugandan woman, after retiring from government work, Rosemary started her own farming cooperative. After 5 successful years of Rosemary working with local farmers in her region, helping them increase their profit, the rain patterns in Uganda began to shift. What had been a flourishing, self sufficient farming community became impoverished almost overnight.

Churches and non-governmental organizations around the world are working to help communities adapt to changes in their local environment, but it is not enough. Estimates indicate that \$86 billion per year will be needed to help developing countries adapt to climate change. As the world's largest historical emitter of greenhouse gases, it is morally imperative for the US to provide a response that is adequate to their needs and proportional to our contribution to this global crisis. We must provide sufficient assistance to help these countries and communities adapt. This is why ample international adaptation assistance must be included in any climate legislation the US puts in place.

At a bare minimum, the US should provide \$7 billion a year to the most vulnerable developing nations to help those who are suffering and will suffer from the impacts of climate change we can no longer reverse. This is an issue of justice and our moral responsibility. It is also an issue of global security and stability.

Our willingness to adequately assist our global neighbors in their time of need will be a direct reflection of our ability to accept responsibility for our past actions and will play a critical role in the development of a successful global agreement that addresses climate change.

As the United Nations currently negotiates the post Kyoto treaty, it is vital for the US to recognize those who are already suffering, and to commit to a more equitable response in the future. Your inclusion of international adaptation assistance shows the US interest in engaging with other nations while contributing to the global effort to alleviate the devastating effects of the climate crisis. For the US to be seen as a good global neighbor, we must provide financial assistance to developing countries through both bilateral and multilateral agreements. For too long we have dragged our feet. If we are to be taken seriously, we must bring something substantial to the table.

The inclusion of responsible international adaptation assistance will help to maintain both economic stability and global security. We truly live in a global village and depend on all of our neighbors for our continued prosperity. International adaptation assistance will help ensure the economic and political stability of developing nations.

This committee's inclusion of equitable international adaptation assistance in the American Clean Energy and Security Act is a compassionate, just and appropriate step forward to meet the severe needs of those who are already suffering and at risk.

While we are thankful for your support of this critical component, we do fear that the amount of money available to this program is insufficient to meet the present and growing needs of communities around the world. To adequately meet our responsibility the initial allocation of 1% to this fund must be substantially increased now and quickly augmented over time to reflect the growing global need for adaptation assistance.

The churches that make up the National Council of Churches wish to express our appreciation and gratitude for your willingness to work hard to address climate change in a just and equitable manner and we look forward to working with as you move forward in this process.

Thank you very much. May God bless your endeavors.