



The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
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June 23, 2008

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

We write to you as you prepare to attend the 34th meeting of the G8, to take place from July 7-9, in Hokkaido, Japan. This meeting of the world's most powerful leaders always creates high expectations for achieving progress in addressing some of the planet's most daunting problems. This year, 2008, presents no exception.

From our point of view as members of a Congregation of women religious with a presence in nine different countries, we would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to four issues that cry out for Canadian leadership in these days leading up to the G8 meeting:

Hunger and International Development Assistance

There are expectations that G8 leaders will make the world food crisis an important focus of your meeting this year. The World Bank reports that food grain prices have more than doubled since January 2006, with some staples like rice tripling in price between January and April of this year. There are already 800 million hungry people in the world, a number that could "increase sharply" as a result of this crisis. Indeed, several of the Millennium Development Goals will not be met if mitigating action is not taken.ⁱ

Canadian responses to world hunger must take several forms, but it is now imperative that our government increase spending on development assistance to the target of 0.7% of GNI. A public commitment from you to keep the promise to reach this target, with firm timelines for scheduled increases, would be a most welcome indication of Canadian resolve to address the development needs of the planet's poorest peoples. Now that Parliament has approved the better aid bill (C-293) in this last session, Canadians will

have increased confidence that our international development assistance will be used to reduce hunger and poverty.

Global Peace

It is symbolically important to note that the G8 meeting is to be held this year in a country which has prohibited the possession, production and introduction of nuclear weapons into its territory. We join the Sisters of the *Congrégation de Notre Dame* in Japan who oppose attempts to revoke Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, which “renounced war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat to use force as a means of settling international disputes.”

Our *Congrégation* is the Canadian affiliated member of *Pax Christi*, the international movement that has repeatedly called for the global abolition of nuclear weapons. We believe it is immoral for states and non-state actors alike to use, threaten to use, or possess nuclear weapons. With *Pax Christi* members around the globe, we urge the G8 leaders to take strong leadership toward achieving the complete and irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons and to strengthen the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and regime.ⁱⁱ

Global Warming

While the G8 encounter in Japan plans to be an “environmental summit,” the 2007 G8 meeting in Heiligendamm explicitly recognized that climate change is a global problem requiring a global response. Mr. Prime Minister, you stated there that “we...need to accelerate our action to achieve deep reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.” Yet, most unfortunately, independent academic analysts see only very partial compliance with Canada’s Heiligendamm commitments.ⁱⁱⁱ Rather, Canada has been pilloried internationally for abandoning our Kyoto commitments. At the December 2007 U.N. Climate Change Conference in Bali, Canada was accused of “poisoning the talks”^{iv} and the UNDP was quoted as criticizing Canada for being “all talk” and “no action.”^v

The G8 countries, and Canada in particular, needs to do much more than (as the final summit document of 2007 stated) “consider seriously” the commitment to halve global emissions by 2050. Canada should establish binding targets to reduce GHG emissions, with a view to limiting global average temperature rise to under 2°C, while providing additional resources to poor countries who are already most adversely affected by global warming.

Accountability in Mining Practices

At the closure of the June 2007 meeting of the G8, you noted before the international press corps that “Canada has recently completed a nation-wide consultation process involving stakeholders with the Canadian extractive sector (mining, oil and gas) in developing countries. Implementation of the recommendations from this process will place Canada among the most active G8 countries in advancing international guidelines

and principles on corporate social responsibility (CSR) in this sector.”^{vi} However, one year later, the recommendations from this process have yet to be approved by your government, thus remaining far from implementation.

Released on March 29, 2007 after a ten month long process of roundtable discussions and public consultation, “The Final Report of the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries” provided 27 consensus recommendations to government. Among the most important of these is the establishment of an Ombudsperson’s Office. It will simply not be enough for Canada to support the *status quo* by maintaining an office for the National Contact Point for the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. On three occasions already, sisters in leadership from this *Congrégation* have written to you and your Ministers asking for implementation of the consensus recommendations of the Final Report of the Roundtables^{vii}, and your government has received hundreds of thousands of petitions encouraging you to act from supporters of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace. Mr. Prime Minister, we believe that it would be most timely for you to announce your government’s support for all of these recommendations before the G8 meeting next month.

In conclusion, we can only imagine the weight and range of issues that leaders of the G8 face as they prepare to gather. Please be assured that Canadians, blessed by God’s bounty, expect leaders to take generous and far-reaching leadership stances on the planet’s major challenges. It is our hope that the powerful G8 leaders will see, in the words of the New Testament, that, “from everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.”^{viii} We pray that God’s wisdom and good judgment accompany all your deliberations.

Very sincerely yours,

Mary Corbett, CND
Donna Egan, CND
Anne T. Gillis, CND

Alice Gazeley, CND Associate
Eleanor McCloskey, CND
Bernadette Walsh, CND Associate

Members of the Core Committee, Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

ⁱ World Bank, “Addressing the Food Crisis: The Need for Rapid and Coordinated Action”, Meeting of G8 Finance Ministers, June 13 -14, 2008, Osaka, Japan, pp. 1 and 4.

http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/foodprices/pdf/G8_food%20price%20paper.pdf

ⁱⁱ See: <http://storage.paxchristi.net/PUBLIC/2008-0521-en-gl-SD.doc>

ⁱⁱⁱ See: <http://www.g7.utoronto.ca/oxford/g8rg-ox-interim-2007.pdf>

^{iv} Canadian Press, “Chorus of Condemnation Hits Canada in Bali”, December 11, 2007. See: <http://news.therecord.com/article/281054>

^v CBC News, “Canada Flounders on Issue of Climate Change”, December 4, 2007.

^{vi} PMO website: <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1688>

^{vii} See: <http://www.jpjc-visitation.org/news/letters.html>

^{viii} Luke 12: 48.