

“How can the U.S. promote sustainable development and economic growth in developing countries?”

Honorable Barack H. Obama,
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

Ever since the end of World War II, a fundamental question which has wracked the minds of nations has been how to develop economic and political growth and stability in the third world. In order to ameliorate these ills, the United States must substantially increase aid to developing nations, cultivate creative and working methods for implementing the aid, and encourage other able nations to follow suit. The motivations thereof are not only morally grounded but also pragmatic in nature. The perpetual poverty of citizens of other nations and corrupt governance of the third world affect not only those impoverished nations but also the world as a whole. Just last April, pirates from the anarchic state of Somalia captured and held hostage twenty American Sea men (The New York Times). And instability in the nuclear armed state of Pakistan may very well foreshadow an international nuclear war (Abbas). The solution to the chaos of the world perhaps lies with the United Nations, a unique organization which has formalized the links between its member nations. According to its website, “the United Nations is an international organization founded in 1945 after the Second World War by 51 countries committed to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights,” thereby commanding the networks and mindsets through which constructive perspectives and policies may diffuse. But because the United Nations is a league of sovereign constituents, any support it

confers upon its members is dependent upon the willingness and efficacy of donor nations. Thus arises the need for independent US action.

The primary reason why attempts by industrialized nations to foment growth in the third world have not been effective is because these attempts have not been vigorous enough. Despite pledging in 1970 to spend 0.7% of GNP (Gross National Product) on ODA (Official Development Assistance) by the mid 1970s, rich nations routinely spend only about 0.2-0.4% of GNP on aid to foreign nations (Shah). Even worse, nations often inflate their already dismal figures of foreign aid contribution with the percentage of money sent overseas to relieve nations of debt (Hervonen). Unfortunately, this aid for debt relief goes directly to the governments of foreign nations, and in despotisms nothing ensures that this money ever trickles down to the people and ensures economic growth and sustainable development. And while the US is one of the largest donors of foreign aid in terms of dollars, it almost always gives away less GNP than any other industrialized nation (Shah). Quite clearly, the United States, as the world's largest national economy, and an expansive marketplace of ideas has the greatest potential to change its approach to foreign aid, and to change the world. Peoples of nations such as those in Sub-Saharan Africa, with massive infrastructural deficiencies, corrupt governments, and at the bottom of the world economy need every bit of charity and political reform they can get, but most unfortunately for them, not enough of such aid is currently being pledged by the United States.

Nor has the amount of aid which has been pledged been effectual in promoting long term development of third world countries. Any aid which does make its way to the common peoples often has strings attached; in order to receive aid, nations often must reciprocate with corrupt political favors. In her book Dead Aid, the Oxford-taught economist Dambisa Moyo, herself a native of the African nation of Zambia, notes that as a result of this extranational manipulation,

as well as the economic dependence on other nations which foreign aid engenders, nations in Sub-Saharan Africa which are more invested in aid from other nations have achieved minimal growth and rarely break free from their reliance on foreign aid (Moyo xix). To develop sustainable political and economic growth in the developing world, the United States must abandon the traditional motivations and means by which nations support the third world, and instead adopt more thoughtful methods, like the humanitarian processes of nonprofit charity and philanthropy organizations, such as those of the Carter Center. Founded by former president Jimmy Carter, the foundation engages in an entire spectrum of activities, including monitoring elections to ensure democracy and cultivating environmentally sustainable and more efficient practices in third world farmers (Carter Center Democracy Program, Carter Center Agriculture). Organizations of the United Nations could inspire the US as well. UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, helps children around the globe with such troubles as HIV/AIDS, nutrition, and developing the concept of gender equality at an early age (UNICEF). By working on a grassroots level, such practices would truly develop national autonomy, democratic governance, and economic growth that could last in the long term.

The success of such reforms to US aid would virtually guarantee sustainable democracy and economic progress were the US to induce other nations into reforming their aid policies as well. Active advocacy of such measures may not even be needed. Simply by switching to a more expensive and more humanitarian system of foreign assistance, the United States would thereby make American aid vastly more valuable than that of other nations. Although the recipient nation may still be tied to the US politically, such dependence would be minimal, and economic growth would be well promoted. Countries in need would flock to the American system, and other donor nations would be encouraged to make reforms similar to those of the

United States. And in case other nations consent to the loss of jurisdiction over their neo-colonies, the US could easily coax them into contributing to this informal international framework of aid. As the epicenter of globalization, the United States is home to myriad international supercorporations, ranging from those of the media, such as Thomson Reuters, to those of the food industry, whose iconic McDonalds franchise is also the very face of globalization. If such corporations, in the interest of increased American (and therefore corporate) influence abroad ran advertisements in other nations for an international US aid program with spectacular results, the governments of such nations could be faced with a democratic mandate, promoting sustainable development and economic growth, albeit indirectly. But the most powerful tool for spreading the concepts of increased and innovative aid is likely the United Nations itself. The most pursuant branch ought to be ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council), one of the UN's main deliberative bodies, with independent commissions for sustainable development, and the economies of each of the global regions (UN Economic and Social Council). With such specialization, ECOSOC promises speedy expansion of proposed US reforms to foreign aid to not only the United Nations as a whole, but constituent members as well.

Mr. President, increased aid, innovative and thoughtful measures with which to execute assistance, and encouraging other nations to follow in our footsteps are key to promoting the political and economic welfare of developing nations. If not for moral concerns, such reforms must be implemented because the instability of the developing world threatens the welfare of our own

Sincerely,

Jen-Lor Fung

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