As leaders of churches and Christian organizations in the United States, we give thanks to God for the progress made against hunger and poverty in recent decades. It is a time unparalleled in human history. From 1990 to 2015, the global poverty rate was cut by more than half. In 1990, 1 in 4 people experienced hunger; today it’s 1 in 8. We are humbled by the opportunity God has given us to contribute to this progress.

We are also encouraged by the action of the nations of the world in adopting the comprehensive Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), one of which is to get to zero hunger in the world by 2030. Yet we recognize the road to ending hunger and poverty will be far from easy. When signing the SDGs, world leaders pledged to “leave no one behind.” It is this principle of the SDGs that makes the SDGs bolder and more visionary than the preceding Millennium Development Goals. The SDGs will be achieved only if they reach everyone everywhere. With a 2030 deadline, there is little time to waste.

Political instability, climate change, violence, displacement, and weak governance often create conditions of fragility—perhaps the greatest challenges on the road to 2030. Research shows, for example, that a child living in a conflict-affected developing country is twice as likely to be hungry as a child living in other developing countries. Hunger and malnutrition, especially for young children, lead to lifelong underachievement and poor health. These are real determinants of a child’s, and a nation’s, ability to flourish.

The challenges we see are not new to people of faith. Vulnerable communities are part of the sacred stories highlighted...
in Scripture. Floods (Genesis 7:7), drought (1 Kings 17:7-9), famine and vulnerability of women (Ruth 1-5), political instability (1 Samuel 21:10), ethnic struggles (Acts 18:1-2), and religious persecution (Acts 8, 11, 12) have affected peoples throughout the ages. Stories such as Joseph being sold into slavery (Genesis 37:28) or Mary and Joseph’s flight to Egypt to escape violence and death (Matthew 2:13-14) are key to the arc of our biblical narrative. Our ministries with people in need as well as Scripture convince us of the great resilience and strength of people rising in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges.

With abiding faith and courage, we address this challenge called fragility as a barrier to ending hunger—for all people regardless of their faith tradition. We urge the U.S. government and the international community to come together to invest more in fragile countries to promote peace, create stability and opportunity, and build resilience. Reaching the “furthest behind first” will take unprecedented investments over the next 13 years. Humanitarian and development assistance are critical to achieve rapid progress, and we need to focus on peace and institution building to sustain progress and ultimately lead the way out of fragility. Here at home, we urge our government to focus on communities with concentrated poverty—they are fragile environments within our midst. We must make fragile environments everywhere a national priority.

With more political will and resources devoted to partnering with fragile countries, alongside national stakeholders rising to the challenge, we can end hunger and extreme poverty.

SIGNATORIES

Rev. Vy T. Nguyen
Executive Director
Week of Compassion

Rev. Rubén Ortiz
Director of National Programs
Esperanza

Bishop Bruce R. Ough
President
The United Methodist Church

Ms. Susan (Suzii) Youngblood Paynter
Executive Coordinator
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Sr. Mary Pellegrino, CSJ
President
Leadership Conference of Women Religious

The Reverend Dr. James C. Perkins
President
Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

Dr. Alton B. Pollard III, Ph.D.
Dean and Professor of Religion and Culture
Howard University School of Divinity

Dr. Shirley Cason Reed
International President
Women’s Missionary Society, AMEC

Dr. Gus Reyes, Ph.D.
Director
Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission

Dr. Bernard L. Richardson, Ph.D.
Dean of the Chapel
Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel
Howard University

Rev. Daniel Rift
Director
World Hunger and Disaster Appeal
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Dr. Samuel Rodriguez
President
NHCLC/CONELA

Rev. Gabriel Saguero
Pastor, El Calvario Church Orlando, Fla.
President of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition (NALEC)

Ms. Djamilah Samad
Executive Director
Church Women United Inc.

Rev. Monroe Saunders Jr.
Presiding Bishop
United Church of Jesus Christ (Apostolic), Inc.

Mr. Stephen Schneck
Director, Institute for Policy Research &
Catholic Studies
The Catholic University of America

Mr. Stephen M. Veazey
President
Community of Christ

Ms. Jane Walsh
Executive Director
Just Faith Ministries

Mr. Gary B. Walter
President
The Evangelical Covenant Church

Rev. Cecilia Williams
Executive Minister
Love Mercy Do Justice

Ms. Carol Lloyd Winkler
Moderator
Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church
(USA) Inc.

Mr. Jim Winkler
President and General Secretary
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA

Dr. Carolyn Y. Woo
President and CEO
Catholic Relief Services

Dr. Jerry Young
President
National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.