

# Religious Leaders' Statement

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

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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. govern-

ment 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.

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