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December 4, 2009

Hon. Beverley J. Oda
Minister for International Cooperation
Canadian International Development Agency
200 Promenade du Portage
Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0G4

Dear Minister Oda,

A little over a year ago, in Accra, I was proud to be a delegate to the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness when Canada pledged its support for the findings and recommendations of the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, declaring “As we build a joint effectiveness agenda beyond Accra, there is an extraordinary opportunity to recognize and support civil society organizations as full partners in development.” Many of us who were at the High Level Forum appreciated the leadership CIDA had taken to improve donor practice, especially regarding support for civil society development actors, and to support civil society initiatives to improve their own development actions.

Since that statement was made in Accra, there have been worrying trends that have caused civil society organizations in Canada, as well as our partners overseas, to lose confidence in the Government of Canada’s continuing commitment to that goal. Your recent decision to decline funding to KAIROS, after a thirty-five year relationship of collaboration, without adequate warning, and after over a year of contract negotiations and discussions, is most alarming. It provides a regrettable example of CIDA’s deteriorating attention to good donor practice, as well as disregard for Canada’s Aid Accountability Act.

KAIROS developed its program proposal with the full cooperation and support of CIDA staff over a full year. The investment of time and good faith of the KAIROS staff, member churches, and especially their overseas partners should not be underestimated or undervalued. So many of us working in the development sector in Canada have appreciated and admired the work of KAIROS (and its founding church coalitions) for over three decades. We have also benefited from their conscientious and collegial approach to research and knowledge sharing on a range of relevant issues. KAIROS is equally appreciated and admired among the many people and organizations with whom the organization has worked so successfully in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

KAIROS has a solid, loyal base of support among Canadian citizens. The organization's work has been consistently and positively evaluated, most recently as part of the process of their current submission. In fact, KAIROS' work with civil society groups in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, with CIDA's support, has brought credit to Canada as a contributor to development and social justice around the world. Canada's reputation as a donor is gravely imperiled by CIDA's disregard for the achievements and relationships of this important Canadian institution. We urge you to reconsider the impact that your decision will have on KAIROS' partners, courageous organizations in many parts of the world who have benefited from Canadian solidarity and who are taking action to care for the people and the environment of the world we share. It would be a reckless travesty of the principles of international cooperation and respect for human rights for them to be forced to bear the impact of this sudden and ill-justified decision.

Through its programmes and relationships, KAIROS has embodied values in the world for which Canadians can be proud and grateful. We urge you to restore CIDA funding to their programme without further delay to ensure that this important work continues.

Sincerely,



Molly Kane
Deputy Director

Cc Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada
Margaret Biggs, President of CIDA
Mary Corkery, Executive Director, KAIROS