

June 13, 2013

The Hon. John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

The Hon. Ed Fast, Minister of International Trade
Room 105, East Block
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

The Hon. Julian Fantino, Minister of International Cooperation
House of Commons
733 Confederation Building
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Ministers Baird, Fast and Fantino:

As representatives of churches and agencies who are members of KAIROS, we write to share our perspectives on the amalgamation of the Canadian International Development Agency and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as outlined in Bill C-60.

For forty years, KAIROS and its predecessor coalitions have responded to the Biblical call to “act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God.” We have engaged in collaborative efforts to realize the vision of a world where all can live lives of peace, justice and dignity. We have supported women’s roles in peace building in Sudan, promoted sustainable agriculture in Guatemala, trained civil servants in human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and helped to protect women and children from violence in Colombia. Much of this was made possible through partnerships with CIDA.

As churches and agencies, we have a history of policy engagement on the vision of Canadian international development. In March 1973, Canadian church leaders presented a brief to the federal government entitled *Development Demands Justice*. It noted that “Canada’s aid policy has been largely determined by the economic and political interests that shape Canada’s trade policy” and called for alternative aid, trade and monetary policies that would address the needs of the Global South in a holistic manner.

More than three decades later, in November 2005, KAIROS submitted a brief to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs in response to *Canada’s International Policy Statement*. We stated: “Canadian foreign policy should be based on Canadian values of tolerance, respect for human rights and the dignity of persons. Our foreign policy should reflect the kind of society we want to build at home, involving a better, safer, and healthier life for all.” We reiterated our belief in ‘five pillars’ as foundational principles for Canada’s foreign relations: sustainable economic and human development; democracy; human rights for all; ecological sustainability; peace-building, disarmament and demilitarization.

With the current opportunity for increased policy coherence, we reaffirm these foundational pillars of foreign relations. We have been heartened to see progress made in reorienting Canadian aid policy towards the needs of the poor. For example, Canadian development assistance has been progressively untied from requirements to purchase Canadian goods. We are pleased to note that the proposed legislation for the amalgamation of CIDA and DFAIT retains the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act (ODAAA). We very much support the reference in the legislation to poverty reduction as a core mandate for foreign aid, as stipulated in the ODAAA.

At the same time, we would like to see the other core aspects of the ODAAA also referenced. Consistency with international human rights standards and accounting for the perspectives of the poor are equally critical elements. Recent changes in CIDA's approach to partnership have generated some concern that Canadian foreign aid might be straying from this human development approach. As the CIDA/DFAIT amalgamation is implemented, it will be important to ensure that Canadian development assistance stays true to the core mandate and not subordinated to commercial interests.

Faithful commitment "to love our neighbour," whether down the road or across the ocean, motivates our engagement in human rights and development. Canada has a significant responsibility to contribute to building a more equitable and inclusive global community. In any changes to international development, we must work together to ensure that the needs and priorities of the poorest remain paramount.

Thank you for the opportunity for dialogue. We look forward to participating in public discussions as the new Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development takes shape.

Respectfully,

Stephen Allen, Associate Secretary, Justice Ministries
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Michael Blair, Executive Minister, Church in Mission Unit
The United Church of Canada

Louisa Bruinsma
Christian Reformed Church in North America (Canada Corporation)

Rev. Paul Gehrs, Assistant to the Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Paul Heidebrecht, Ottawa Office Director
Mennonite Central Committee Canada

Ken Kim, Executive Director
Presbyterian World Service and Development

Mary Tee, RSM
Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy of Newfoundland

Henriette Thompson, Coordinator of Ecumenical, Interfaith and Government Relations
The Anglican Church of Canada

Sue Wilson, CSJ, Office for Systemic Justice
Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada

Jane MacKay Wright
Canadian Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

310 Dupont Street, Suite 200
Toronto, ON M5R 1V9
416-463-5312
www.kairoscanada.org

