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An Open Letter to President Obama

As leaders from faith-based and finance organizations who are deeply concerned about the climate crisis, we believe the United States can and must meet its commitment to reduce the impacts of climate change on the poorest and most vulnerable communities at home and abroad. Representatives from around the world are meeting in Cancun over the next two weeks to address these pressing problems; in Cancun the U.S. must step up its leadership and shore up its plans to help.

Last year at the UN climate conference in Copenhagen, developed countries pledged to mobilize \$100 billion per year by 2020 for climate adaptation and mitigation. This funding is critical to help at-risk countries build resilience to climate impacts by, for example, developing green technologies; building storm-resistant homes, hospitals and flood shelters; and helping communities grow and store food in the face of extreme weather events.

However, given that Congress has failed to pass comprehensive legislation with funding for international adaptation and mitigation this year, we fear that support for the people most at risk will be delayed.

President Obama's administration must support constructive and innovative approaches to generate public finance to help meet—and exceed—the Copenhagen commitment. Strong public sector support is essential in and of itself and also to complement and leverage private sector initiatives.

We call on the administration in Cancun to renew its commitment to generate public finance to support developing countries in confronting climate change and to support a range of revenue generating mechanisms. While we have not endorsed specific mechanisms, among those which can be considered are removing subsidies from the biggest polluters in the fossil fuel industries, using Special Drawing Rights, taxing the shipping and aviation industries to better take responsibility for the costs of their emissions, and taxing financial speculation via a Financial Transactions Tax in order to mitigate this destructive misallocation of capital and free it up for a number of essential investments, including in clean energy technology and in adaptation.

If this new funding is to be used effectively, it is critically important to establish a new global climate fund to channel such resources. We urge the U.S. in Cancun to support an independent global climate fund under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that will ensure transparency and accountability and allow affected communities direct access to funding and participation at all levels of decision making.

Deep concern over climate change and its impacts is not limited to one interest group, religion or business sector. Together we call on you to announce in Cancun your plan to meet the urgent needs of poor people worldwide, at home and abroad, who will bear the disproportionate burden of the consequences of the developed world's emissions.

Sincerely,

Rev. Richard Cizik,
President, New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good

John Fullerton,
Founder of Capital Institute & former Managing Director of JPMorgan

Rabbi David Saperstein,
Director & Counsel, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

China Urged To Increase Pressure on North Korea

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"We can't help but be a bit concerned that we've seen shortcomings on the naval and land side," Bruce Klingner, former deputy division chief for the CIA, told POLITICO. "But what other shortcomings are there?"

Klingner, now a senior fellow at The Heritage Foundation, said there might now be pressure on South Korea to expand its defense budget even more, increase its capability and revise its rules of engagement.

Meanwhile, there's more diplomatic pressure on China to lean on North Korea to change its behavior. Beijing has grown frustrated with North Korea, but there's a limit as to how far it will go in demanding that Pyongyang change its ways.

Cables released by the Guardian newspaper in the United Kingdom from WikiLeaks reveal that Beijing continues to lean toward a Korean reunification with Seoul in charge, but it is uncertain how fast it would want to see reunification.

"If this were to happen again, I don't think it's inconceivable that the South might retaliate."

— Paul Stares
Council on Foreign Relations

Earlier, this week, Beijing signaled it would like to restart the so-called six-party talks for China, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Russia and the United States as a way to calm the waters after the North's latest provocation. But the White House and others quickly denounced that proposal.

White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said stabilizing the region couldn't come "through a series of PR activities," adding that dialogue is futile until Pyongyang understands its recent behavior is inappropriate and demonstrates it is serious about "denuclearization."

So far, the United States has been able to extract limited help from China, according to Bonnie Glaser, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. She told POLITICO that whatever China does, it may not resemble Western diplomacy, escalating warnings privately but often driven by other motivations.

"The Chinese don't necessarily use pressure in the same way as Western countries do," she said. "They can be quite creative when they want to be."

Still, there are other signs that the White House is focused on diplomacy when it comes to North Korea as it works to eliminate any nuclear capability it may possess.

On Tuesday, former President Jimmy Carter met at the White House with National Security Adviser Tom Donilon — and briefly with President Barack Obama — for discussions believed to draw on Carter's expertise on North Korea. The former president brokered a special pardon, leading to the August release of an American who had been jailed in the communist country since January.