

Lima, March 28, 2007

Esteemed Congressman Charles Rangel
Representative of the 15th District of New York
Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee
U.S. Congress
Washington, D.C.

Esteemed Congressman Rangel:

In first place, allow me to congratulate you on your elevation to the chairmanship of the House Ways and Means Committee.

We are very pleased with your leadership on and concern for the issue of Social Security. We congratulate you on your efforts to keep the U.S. social security system from being privatized. You and your party have defended an alternative program, and that is of hope for workers and their families, especially for those who are of retirement age. This valiant effort demonstrates your commitment to the promotion of social justice and economic opportunities for all people, without discrimination.

In this respect, allow me to recall some recent words of Pope Benedict XVI, in his last Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*:

We cannot remain passive before certain processes of globalization which not infrequently increase the gap between the rich and the poor worldwide. We must denounce those who squander the earth's riches, provoking inequalities that cry out to heaven (cf. Jas 5:4)... The Lord Jesus, the bread of eternal life, spurs us to be mindful of the situations of extreme poverty in which a great part of humanity still lives: these are situations for which human beings bear a clear and disquieting responsibility... This challenges humanity's conscience... The food of truth demands that we denounce inhumane situations in which people starve to death because of injustice and exploitation, and it gives us renewed strength and courage to work tirelessly in the service of the civilization of love. (SC 90)

I would like to express our preoccupation for the possible privatization of our country's social security system; in particular, by means of a little-known provision that has been included in the FTA negotiated between the U.S. and Peruvian authorities and which has been circulated by workers in our country through their newsletter.

On page 10 of Annex II, the FTA reads "Peru reserves the right to adopt or maintain any measure with respect to ... the following services to the extent that they are social services established or maintained for a public purpose: income security and insurance, social security, social welfare, public education, public training, health, and childcare."

Although an important part of our social security system is privatized, the current public system still provides a minimum social floor of a basic retirement for hundreds of thousands of workers, something we are very interested in preserving.

We would be very much in your debt if, when you consider the U.S.-Peru FTA, you take into account the negative effects that this provision could occasion on our poorest populations, for whom we as the Church have a special concern and pastoral preoccupation.

We are sure of your attention to this matter and await your kind response. We pray that God blesses you and your family for the important mission for which he has entrusted you.

In Christ and Brotherly Love,

Monseigneur Pedro R. Barreto Jimeno, S.J.
Archbishop of Huancayo (Peru)
President of the Episcopal Social Action Commission (CEAS)