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May 26, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Clinton
United States Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madame Secretary:

I am writing to express great concern regarding the complex emergency in Pakistan which has great implications to our national interests. President Obama has announced that the United States has great respect for the Pakistani people. As such, a stable democratic, prosperous Pakistan is considered vital to our interests. His administration faces one of the most complicated yet important foreign policy challenges - development of an effective U.S. policy towards Pakistan.

As you are aware, more than 2.5 million people have been displaced from the Swat valley area of Pakistan since early April 2009. This is the largest internal displacement of people in Pakistan's history, and the second largest in the world behind Rwanda. The movement of people in such massive numbers has not taken place since the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

I appreciate President Obama's administration for taking a proactive role in providing humanitarian aid to the internally displaced people (IDP) in Pakistan. The recent announcement to provide \$110 million in additional humanitarian aid is the beginning of a new era of friendship and trust between the governments and people of Pakistan and the United States. As you have rightly indicated, providing this assistance is not only the right thing to do, but it is essential to the United States and global security by winning the hearts and minds of people of Pakistan. Although this funding is a significant first step, it is only a fraction of what is required to repatriate the IDPs to their homes and reestablish some degree of normalcy in their lives.

The United Nations has warned of a long-term humanitarian crisis and has called for massive aid for the refugees. While all efforts must be made for the safe and early return of the IDP's to their homes, the United States along with the International Community must provide the needed assistance for them. While it is encouraging to know that the International Community plans to match the United States assistance, we must realize that the magnitude of the need is far greater than its pledge. I urge you to immediately increase your appeal of help to the International

Community from the current \$500 million to \$1 billion in humanitarian aid to provide immediate assistance to the IDP's from Swat. Our success in lending support of this magnitude equates to a small pledge of approximately \$400 per IDP. The people of Pakistan have shown their resolve and now it is up to the world to demonstrate its support towards them.

Also of great concern is the impression that the Pakistani people have about the United States' interest. I applaud your recognition of the fact that United States policy in the South Asia region in the past was incoherent at best. We must work to dispel the image the Pakistanis have about our country. The time has come to establish a long-term consistent policy to close the "trust deficit" in our relationship by making investments in Pakistan's future. We must also deploy a new strategic communications strategy that could visibly improve the United States image in Pakistan.

I believe that the United States needs to take immediate action which translates into goodwill in the eyes of the Pakistanis. Providing more humanitarian aid, investing in infrastructure development projects (i.e. electrical power plants, road construction and railway improvement, water cleansing plants), and bilateral trade are effective ways to accomplish this goal by directly impacting people's lives. It is imperative to focus on projects with a tangible outcome that improve the well-being of Pakistanis. We should also look at other ways to build people to people relationships, such as cross institutional building and cultural exchanges. The Pakistanis are putting faith into democratic movements; now we must learn how to relate to them and build their confidence in our ability to deliver on promises. Let us seize this moment by delivering the President Obama's promise of "hope" to the people of Pakistan.

I appreciate your efforts in addressing these matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elijah E. Cummings". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "E".

Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress