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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

June 27, 2008

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. President:

As you prepare for the upcoming G8 Summit, I urge that you make the current global food crisis a priority for discussion with our allies. Nearly forty countries have undernourished populations of twenty percent or more according to the Food and Agricultural Organization. It is troubling that 850 million people are hungry globally, of which 170 million are children. Their malnourishment during critical periods of development will have profound effects on their future and that of their communities.

It is expected that the food crisis will endure a number of years and could have lasting effects. A situation of such long duration threatens to reverse any positive trends in the alleviation of poverty and improvements in health. Social unrest, riots, and demonstrations in more than a dozen countries in response to food price spikes threaten national and regional stability and complicate development efforts.

The global nature of the crisis requires a concerted international response and action plan for future crises. The upcoming G8 Summit is a timely opportunity to reach agreements on how the international donor community should manage global emergencies. More importantly, the Summit should be used to lay the foundation for adopting and implementing policies that ensure global food security for all nations.

The cause of the current spike in food prices is a complex web of factors, some that have developed recently – a rapid increase in oil prices, droughts in some key exporting countries, and a weak U.S. dollar. Other factors have long been present -- a significant under-investment in agricultural productivity and rural economies in the developing world, increased demand in emerging economies, an irrational avoidance of genetically modified crops that could markedly help poor small scale farmers to increase their yields, and a global trading system that too often inhibits the movement of food and the ability of farmers in poor nations to market their crops globally.

The international community must take steps to reverse these factors and progress can be made if the United States and other G8 nations provide leadership. The enclosed memo outlines my ideas toward this goal.

I hope you will lead this effort and thereby contribute to the legacies of your Administration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Richard G. Lugar". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "R".

Richard G. Lugar
United States Senator