

NEW SENATE CLIMATE BILL WELCOMED, GREATER INVESTMENTS IN THE RESILIENCE OF THE HARDEST HIT NEEDED NOW

Washington, DC - In reaction to today's release of the "American Power Act" by Senators John Kerry (D-MA) and Joe Lieberman (I-CT), Raymond C. Offenheiser, president of international humanitarian organization Oxfam America, made the following statement:

"We are pleased to see the release of comprehensive climate and energy legislation today by Senators Kerry and Lieberman, and we commend them for their tireless efforts to move forward on such an urgent issue.

"The bill's inclusion of a program to build the resilience of those hardest hit by climate impacts around the world and to promote global security is vital. However, we are deeply disappointed that the funding is inadequate and is not set to begin until 2019. As the bill moves forward, it is crucial for international adaptation programs to receive the necessary resources now, as well as down the road.

"Climate change is already taking its toll on poor and vulnerable communities around the world and adequate investments for climate resilience and adaptation are needed today. The number of people likely to be affected by climate-related disasters each year will increase by 50% by 2015, to over 375 million. That's more than the entire population of the United States.

"In the words of President Obama, 'any effort that fails to help the poorest nations both adapt to the problems that climate change have already wrought and help them travel a path of clean development simply will not work.'

"Moreover, a bill that includes resources for the world's poor to tackle the climate challenge is more likely to garner the momentum and public support from the wide array of constituents needed to pass it.

"The rest of the world is watching to see whether the United States will join in global efforts to combat the climate crisis. But American legislation must invest more in adaptation and low carbon development to deliver on the international stage.

"Such investments are not only morally imperative, they are also cost effective. Preparing for climate-related disasters before they strike prevents greater costs in the future – as much as seven times greater. Given the human toll of climate change and the global instability it can bring, such investments are also crucial to our national security.

"Investments in international adaptation will also expand opportunities for American businesses and workers to meet the growing demand for adaptation-related technologies and services, as well as protect the supply chains of many major US businesses, from coffee to apparel companies.

"We urge Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to work with other Senators to build on this discussion draft and urgently deliver a climate change bill that reduces emissions, creates jobs, protects our national security and invests in the resilience of poor communities on the front lines of climate change."