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Iran (September 23, 2008)

Policy Statement on Iran (September 23, 2008)

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) calls for robust U.S. diplomacy throughout the Middle East to resolve conflicts and reduce tensions, including direct, serious and sustained negotiations with Iran. CMEP views with deep concern the possible development by Iran of a nuclear weapon and Iran's ongoing support for Hezbollah and Hamas. As a coalition representing a wide variety of American Christians, we deplore the anti-Israel statements of Iranian President Ahmadinejad.

To address the current impasse, the United States should pursue a comprehensive diplomatic strategy vis-à-vis Iran, together with international partners, that maximizes non-military options to avoid escalation and strengthens global and regional nuclear nonproliferation efforts, including bolstering support for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Such a strategy must include economic and diplomatic incentives and should recognize that, while sanctions – carefully targeted not to impact vulnerable civilians and constantly evaluated for effectiveness – are preferable to the use of force, they are not a replacement for diplomacy.

CMEP opposes any pre-emptive military action against Iran, as well as provocative rhetoric or measures that increase the threat of confrontation between the U.S. and Iran. Military conflict with Iran would likely spark a dangerous regional crisis and would further marginalize moderating forces within Iran.

The vigor of the human rights discourse and vibrancy of civil society in Iran, even under formidable pressure from authorities, is promising and can be best furthered by diplomatic openings with Iran. CMEP supports efforts to build relationships and understanding between the people of Iran and America, including promoting more people-to-people exchanges among religious leaders and civil society.

CMEP remains committed to supporting vigorous U.S. diplomacy to resolve the Israeli-Arab conflict and views diplomatic engagement with Iran as integral to fostering regional peace, security and stability.