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DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4904

May 9, 1996

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Mr. Charles Bowsher
Comptroller General
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Bowsher,

The 1996 World Food Summit, organized by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, will be held this November in Rome, Italy. World food security, the primary focus of this Summit, is of great concern to us, particularly with respect to Africa. The implications of food crises within African countries extend beyond providing humanitarian food assistance to the impact on national defense decisions. Food crises in Somalia and Rwanda in recent years have ultimately involved U.S. military forces. In fact, underlying food-related issues have caused problems in many of the world's most troubled countries.

As you may be aware, there is growing concern that current global economic conditions are conducive to a global food crisis. Grain prices have risen sharply as global food surpluses are declining. Meanwhile population continues to grow, increasing demand for grains and cereals. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) required member countries to reduce both their export subsidies for agricultural products as well as their domestic agricultural support policies. The impact of increased global competition and the higher food prices GATT brings may place the most pressure on food deficit countries. Furthermore, the recently enacted 1996 Farm Bill will likely reduce U.S. grain reserves as government production and price controls are reduced.

In light of the importance of food security to the United States it is critical that the United States be fully prepared to participate actively in the World Food Summit.

We are requesting that GAO monitor the U.S. preparation for the Summit and provide us with an analysis of that preparation. Specifically we would like your review to address:

- the agencies involved in the interagency planning process and their relative involvement in preparation;
- whether the interagency process will result in a balanced representation of U.S. interests at the Summit;
- the extent to which the interagency group is involving Private Voluntary Organizations in the preparation process;

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- the status of the U.S. planning process and future time line;
- U.S. objectives for the Summit and how they were developed;
 - whether those objectives recognize the importance of food security to internal conflicts;
 - whether those objectives are achievable under current global conditions;

Furthermore, we would like your review to address the following broader issues associated with U.S. preparation for the Food Security Summit:

- the extent to which the United States continues to play a lead role in food aid and in the promotion of food security;
- the effect of the Uruguay Round of GATT and the FAIR Act of 1996 on food deficit countries and the impact of these policies on U.S. objectives for the Summit;
- whether U.S. objectives for food security and the November Summit are consistent with the notion that food security is a development issue;
- the extent to which current U.S. food assistance and agricultural policies further or hinder global food security

Please identify and address any other issues associated with U.S. preparation for the Summit which you believe are appropriate and within the scope of this request. We would also appreciate periodic briefings on the status of U.S. preparation for the Summit and a written report provided to us in late summer.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Nancy Landon Kassebaum
United States Senator



Russell D. Feingold
United States Senator