an agricultural transformation that improves the resilience of rural livelihoods and minimizes the scale of any future crisis. It means climate-smart crop production, livestock rearing, fish farming and forest maintenance practices that enable all people to have year-round access to the nutrition they need.''

Kanayo F. Nwanze, president of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), stressed that building resilience in farming and herding communities required a long-term commitment. ''But time—as we can see from the devastating situation in the Horn of Africa—is running out,'' he told delegates at the meeting in Rome.

The challenge of seeking to avoid future food insecurity crises in the Horn of Africa is daunting. Conflict has severely hampered development and relief efforts in Somalia, and affects the mobility of pastoralists and their livestock, which is key to food security in the region.

But disaster risk reduction is increasingly seen as a humanitarian imperative, crucial to battling poverty and achieving sustainable development.

''Building resilience of farming and herding communities in East Africa requires a long-term, sustained commitment on the part of the region's governments and the international donor community,'' said Kevin Cleaver, IFAD's associate vice-president.

''The rains will fail. But let us not fail, too.''

KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE PRESS CONFERENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, time is up. It is time for the administration to quit stalling and make a decision on the Keystone XL pipeline project, the pipeline that comes from our friends in Canada from Alberta all the way down to my congressional district in southeast Texas, to the refineries in Port Arthur, Texas.

The House has done its job this week by passing a bill to move this decision along. Now it's the Senate's turn to pass this bill so that the administration finally makes a decision on the Keystone XL project that will create thousands of American jobs and decrease our dependence on unfriendly nations for energy.

I commend my friend from Nebraska (Mr. TERRY) for passing this legislation and being the spearhead of this legislation.

All that has to happen is the State Department has to make a decision and the administration has to support that decision one way or the other. It's been 3 years for the administration to make a decision, yes or no, on the XL pipeline. It's time to fish or cut bait. Pick a horse and ride it. The administration must make a decision.

And this should be, to me, an easy choice for this administration. Either they can force Americans to continue to rely on unfriendly foreign countries for our energy, like Venezuela and the Middle Eastern dictators, by depriving Americans of a reliable source of oil at a time when gas prices are around $4, or they can work with our friends in the north to supply over 1.4 million barrels of oil per day.

Pipelines are the proven and safe, efficient source of energy. Best of all, this project creates thousands of jobs at a time when unemployment in this country is 9.2 percent. And it is climbing. I would think this job-creating, shovel-ready project—which my liberal friends always talk about—would be something they would support and the administration would support.

As the administration continues to stonewall our own domestic production, we must safely and immediately look for ways to meet energy needs.

The country needs energy. It needs jobs. This project provides both. What's the holdup, Mr. President?

For every barrel of oil shipped a thousand miles, less than one teaspoon of liquid is lost from a pipeline. Transporting goods by pipeline has the lowest carbon footprint as compared with other transportation modes. Crude oil has to get to America some way. It either comes by barge or truck or rail or marine, and pipelines historically are the safest way to transport crude oil.

Attacking a pipeline on environmental grounds seems to be absurd to me. Pipelines have been the most cost-effective and environmentally sound way to transport oil and natural gas. A medium-sized pipeline, which is about 150,000 barrels a day, requires operating more than 750 trucks or a 75-car train every day to transport the same amount of crude oil.

Transporting oil through a pipeline is far safer than using transportation by oil tankers. When an oil tanker has a major oil spill, millions of barrels of oil can be spilled in a matter of a few minutes, a few hours, or just a few days.

Nearly half a million miles of natural gas and crude oil pipelines are in the United States—500,000 miles of pipeline. Over half of these are in the State of Texas alone—270,000 miles of pipeline. And about one-third of all of the Nation's pipelines, I understand, go through the energy capital of the world, my district in southeast Texas.

If we don't use the crude oil from Canada in this pipeline, the Canadians could very easily, instead of having a north-to-south pipeline, have a pipeline east-to-west and pipe it to the west coast, and then ship it to our good buddies, the Chinese, who want to buy it.

You know, America's energy plan seems to be twofold: send money to Brazil and let the Brazilians drill off their coast, and we'll buy their crude oil; and the second part is, make sure we use those cute little curly CFL light bulbs. And that's it.

It's time that we take care of ourselves. This is a good project for America, American jobs, and a way to get crude oil into the United States. It's time for the White House to make a decision.

And that's just the way it is.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair.

DEBT CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. With one simple vote last December, Congress precipitated the so-called debt crisis. We voted to extend all of the Bush tax cuts at a cost of $4 trillion over 10 years. I voted ''no.''

So now, the debate comes down to what's more important to the American people—Social Security or tax cuts; Medicare or tax cuts; jobs or tax cuts. That's what this debate is all about right now—preserving tax cuts, particularly tax cuts for the wealthy and the largest multinational corporations in this country.

Some are still trying to drag Social Security into this debate. Social Security did not cause one penny of this debt. In fact, Social Security is the largest owner of Federal debt in the world. They're the largest investor in Federal debt. Social Security did not cause this problem. Yes, long term, starting in 2037, Social Security is projected to only be able to pay 73 to 75 percent of benefits. We can solve that simply. Ask all Americans to pay the same percent of their income into Social Security.

Today, if you earn over $106,800, you pay a lower percentage of your income into Social Security. Lift that cap. You could lower the tax for everybody. All those who earn less than $106,800, they'd get a little tax cut. Everybody who earns more than $106,800 would pay the same percent of their income in taxes as those who earn less. That's fair. It solves Social Security's problems forever.

Then there are others who say well, it's Medicare. Medicare is the thing we've got to kill. The Ryan plan, the Republican plan: kill Medicare. Turn it into a voucher program. That's their solution there. Future seniors would have a subsidy to go to a government-sponsored exchange to buy private health insurance, and the voucher would be far less than the cost of health insurance. We don't need to kill Medicare to save it or to preserve the tax cuts.

Medicare, we could do away with the Bush-Republican unpaid-for prescription-drug benefit that subsidizes the pharmaceutical and insurance industries and instead say Medicare, we'll negotiate lower drug prices for all people on that program and give them an at-cost benefit. That saves $20 billion a year.

We could reform the way we buy durable medical equipment and save another $20 billion a year. And then we could move on to paying doctors for

good results rather than volume, saving tens of billions more.

Yes, we can fix Medicare. We don't need to destroy it to perpetuate tax cuts.

And then tax cuts create jobs. That's the reason we have to maintain the tax cuts, according to the Republicans. Tax cuts create jobs. Well, we're in the 11th year of the Bush tax cuts, the third year of the Obama tax cuts that supposedly are creating jobs. Well, where are the jobs? In fact, we just had a really good demonstration of this last week.

Last Friday, all taxes on airline tickets expired. Now, Republicans said, well, that will get passed on to the consumers. No. Most of the airlines are keeping the money. That's another issue. But did those tax cuts create jobs? No. Actually so far they've cost us 94,000 jobs—4,000 Federal employees. Now, they hate Federal employees, so that doesn't matter to them. But 90,000 private-sector construction jobs. Building of critical security and safety projects on airports all across the country has ground to a halt because they stopped us from continuing to collect that fee, that tax on people who use the system.

So tax cuts actually have destroyed 94,000 jobs. But they have profited a number of the airlines. One major airline, $4 million extra a day because, guess what, they raised their ticket prices to capture that money. They didn't refund it. A couple like Alaska have refunded it, but most of the airlines, no.

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So we're putting a lie to a lot of their policies here, and the biggest core part of their policy is trickle-down economics. It failed in the Reagan years and it's failing again now.

Give billionaires, the job-creators, tax cuts, and they'll create jobs for us little people. Well, guess what; no. Maybe they hired another pool boy or someone else on the yacht. There are a few jobs there. They're now hiring private jets to fly their kids to camp in Maine. Yes, there's a job there, but not the jobs that 18 million American people need.

If we restore the taxes on airline tickets, we would put 90,000 construction workers, private sector workers back to work, and 4,000 government employees. And if we fully fund our transportation needs in this country, we could put another 2.7 to 3.5 million people to work.

No, they want to cut investment in transportation and infrastructure. Bridges are failing. They're falling down. The roads are potholed. Transit systems are decrepit, and the Republican answer is: Give people back their money and cut spending on those wasteful things like mass transit, bridges, and highways.

And, oh, by the way, under their plan, we lose another 600,000 private sector jobs on top of the 20 percent unemployment in construction.

It's time to get real around here. Put America back to work. If Americans were working, that would solve one-quarter of the deficit problem. Stop the tax cut mayhem.

OPEN LETTER TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BROOKS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROOKS. Mr. Speaker, I have voted to raise the debt ceiling where the bill makes America's financial condition better, not worse.

In my judgment, both the Reid and Boehner plans fail to adequately address unsustainable deficits that threaten America with insolvency and bankruptcy. Both plans push the debt ceiling issue to 2012 or 2013, at which time a financially weaker America will confront a worse debt ceiling crisis. Both plans simply are not up to the seriousness of the financial challenges America faces.

Washington must put 2012 election considerations aside and put America's interests first and foremost, now. Congress and the White House can and must do better, now. America deserves better, now. And quite frankly, we have no choice but to do better, now.

Years of spending binges by the Federal Government have come home to roost. America's debt exceeds $14 trillion. America has suffered 3 consecutive years of trillion-dollar deficits and faces trillion-dollar deficits into the foreseeable future. Annual deficits and accumulated debt force America to confront two major financial threats, both with one common cause: unsustainable budget deficits.

In the short term, America faces a debt ceiling crisis. If the debt ceiling is not raised, economic hardship will ensue, unemployment rates will rise, and America's gross domestic product will decline. Over a longer term, however, America faces a larger, more serious debt crisis. If trillion-dollar deficits continue to run rampant, America's insolvency and bankruptcy is certain, which risks America's national defense capabilities, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, NASA, and everything else that the government provides.

The question is not whether Congress will raise the debt ceiling; the question is when and how. I have already voted to raise the debt ceiling $2.4 trillion as part of the Cut, Cap, and Balance bill. We're cutting FY12 expenditures by a modest $111 billion in the context of a $1.5 trillion deficit, capping Federal Government expenditures within historically justifiable 18 to 24 percent ranges, and passing a balanced budget constitutional amendment that protects future generations of Americans from the financial mess we now face.

I am prepared to vote to raise the debt ceiling again, so long as Congress substantively addresses our underlying deficit problem while protecting our fragile economy and jobs market. As best I can with the limited and changing information available, I have examined both the Boehner and Reid plans. While they differ in many respects, they also share common concepts:

Neither plan purports to immediately raise taxes. Neither plan cuts spending in FY 2012 or 2013 by as much as 5 percent of this year's $1.5 trillion deficit. Neither plan eliminates annual trillion-dollar deficits in the foreseeable future. Both plans raise the debt ceiling by at least $1 trillion and as much as $2.7 trillion. Both plans kick the can down the road and force America to revisit the debt ceiling crisis in either 2012 or 2013, at which time America's debt burden will be much higher and America will be that much weaker. Neither plan heeds Standard and Poor's or Moody's credit downgrade warnings. Neither plan cuts America's short- or long-term deficits enough to minimize the risk of downgrade in America's credit rating, a downgrade that will drive up America's debt service cost and cut funding for all other Federal Government programs. To make matters worse, if America's interest rates go up, State and local private interest rates are likely to also go up, thereby hurting Americans at all levels.

There is only one reliable solution that I can discern that protects America from both financial threats: a debt ceiling increase coupled with a balanced budget constitutional amendment that is phased in over a 5-year period of time.

In as much as constitutional amendments often take years to pass, time that America does not have, the first step must be to raise the debt ceiling when Congress passes a substantive balanced budget constitutional amendment. If the Senate and House concur, this can be done in as little as a week.

The second step, equally important, raises the rest of the debt ceiling when the States ratify the proposed balanced budget amendment, thus giving States a needed incentive to ratify the balanced budget amendment in less than 1 year.

This approach solves both financial threats.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I pray that Washington has the strength to do what it must before it is too late. America is on the verge of a downward spiral. We must act now, and we must act in substantive ways.

DEBT CEILING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL) for 5 minutes.

Mr. NEAL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about our current fiscal situation and how we got to where we are today. The thought that America would default on its obligations is unimaginable.

This afternoon, we're going to begin a debate on Speaker BOEHNER's debt