

TACD

TRANS ATLANTIC DIALOGUE TRANSATLANTIQUE
CONSUMER DIALOGUE DES CONSOMMATEURS

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June 23, 2004

US-EU SUMMIT PUTS BUSINESS CEOs AHEAD OF CONSUMER GROUPS REPRESENTATIVES OF 65 CONSUMER ORGANIZATIONS BOYCOTT ONE-SIDED MEETING AT DROMOLAND CASTLE

In a different kind of globalization protest, a coalition of 65 consumer groups in Europe and America today decided to boycott a meeting with senior officials at the 2004 EU-U.S. Summit in Ireland on June 25th in protest at the exclusion of consumers from a meeting between Summit leaders (President Bush, Prime Minister Ahern, and President Prodi) and the transatlantic business community.

The Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue (TACD) has been the voice of the consumer interest in the Transatlantic Economic Partnership trade policy discussions since 1998. The group had planned to discuss with senior U.S. and EU trade officials its recommendations urging action to reduce childhood obesity, protect air travelers' privacy and regulate tens of thousands of potentially dangerous industrial chemicals that now escape close scrutiny.

TACD leaders decided to boycott the summit on learning that business representatives (TABD) were invited to present their recommendations directly to the Presidents of the U.S., EU and European Commission, but consumers' groups were denied a similar meeting. Parity is a cornerstone of participation in the Transatlantic Economic Partnership and TACD objected to this unprecedented denial of equal access. The governments violated their own written policies, which call for equal access for the transatlantic Business and Consumer Dialogues that feed recommendations into EU-U.S. policy-making.

Therefore, in the face of this disregard of a significant U.S.-EU policy, the TACD will decline to accept second class status for consumers. It has sent its recommendations in writing, but has refused to attend a scheduled meeting with government trade officials.

Rhoda Karpatkin, President Emeritus of the US Consumers Union, said, "The decision to give business CEOs direct access to the Presidents, but to bar consumer groups organized to make recommendations within the U.S.-EU dialogue, reinforces the concerns of the many citizens who have protested that trade summits are designed only to advance business interests, not to benefit or protect consumers."

Meanwhile, Jim Murray, Director of the European Consumers Organisation (BEUC), commented that "this is a blatant disregard for the standards of equal access to business and consumer representatives that U.S. and EU leaders themselves drafted and signed up to at the EU-U.S. Summit in December 1999."

Editors Note: The full TACD Summit Statement can be found at www.tacd.org/docs/?id=255. Summit resolutions on REACH chemicals policy <http://www.tacd.org/cgi-bin/db.cgi?page=view&config=admin/docs.cfg&id=252> Summit resolution on airline passenger safety: <http://www.tacd.org/cgi-bin/db.cgi?page=view&config=admin/docs.cfg&id=254> TACD consists of EU and U.S. consumer organizations that develop joint consumer policy recommendations for the EU and U.S. in an effort to promote the consumer interest in transatlantic policymaking. TACD's network of 65 EU and U.S. national consumer organizations has a direct paid-up membership of some 20 million consumers. For more information, please visit www.tacd.org.

TACD

TRANS ATLANTIC DIALOGUE CONSUMER DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE TRANSATLANTIQUE DES CONSOMMATEURS

Dermot Gallagher
Secretary General
Irish Department of Foreign Affairs
Dublin, Ireland

Alan P. Larson
Under Secretary for Economic, Business, and
Agricultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC, U.S.A.

Fernando Valenzuela
Deputy Director-General
DG External Relations of the European Commission
Brussels, Belgium

June 23, 2004

Dear Sirs

In light of the recent decision of the U.S. and EU Governments not to give equal status to the two Transatlantic Dialogues at the June 25-26 EU-U.S. Summit in Ireland, TACD has decided not to attend the Summit, and instead submit our comments in writing (see attached).

In accordance with our role of making recommendations to the EU and U.S., TACD submitted 3 sets of recommendations, the full results of an online survey, and a letter to the EU Council of Ministers, as well as holding dialogue with governments at our 6th Annual Meeting, in the first four months of 2004. Last week we submitted two more resolutions along with a Statement to the Summit. We submitted our Summit Statement just prior to the Summit, as we have done for every EU-U.S. Summit that has taken place since TACD was established in 1998, and were not invited to do anything different.

While TACD has fulfilled its role, the governments have violated the principle of parity between Dialogues to which they had been committed, and had respected, since 1999. The principle that “access to leaders and ministers at summits should be provided on a regular and equitable basis” is stated within the 1999 EU-U.S. declaration on the Principles for government relations with the Transatlantic Dialogues (established under Chapter IV of the New Transatlantic Agenda).

The decision to give business leaders direct access to the Summit Leaders, but to bar consumer groups organized to make recommendations within the U.S.-EU dialogue, reinforces the concerns of the many citizens who have protested that trade summits are designed only to advance business interests, not to benefit or protect consumers.

We urge the governments of the EU and U.S. to fully respect the Principles which they themselves drafted and signed at the December 1999 EU-U.S. Summit, and look forward to more equitable treatment in the future.

Yours sincerely
Ben Wallis, TACD Coordinator (On behalf of the TACD Steering Committee)

Annex:

TACD Steering Committee :

Anna Bartolini, Italian member of the EU Consumer Committee
Benedicte Federspiel, Chief Consultant, Forbrugerrådet (Danish Consumer Council)
Jean Ann Fox, Director, Consumer Protection, Consumer Federation of America
Rhoda Karpatkin, President Emeritus, Consumers' Union
Felix Cohen, General Director, Consumentenbond (Dutch Consumers Association)
Ed Mierzwinski, Director, Consumer Program, Public Interest Research Group
Jim Murray, Director, BEUC (European Consumers Organisation)
Lori Wallach, Director, Global Trade Watch, Public Citizen

Principles for government relations with the Transatlantic Dialogues established under the aegis of Chapter IV of the New Transatlantic Agenda :

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/us/summit_wash_12_99/principles_ch_4.htm

TACD's constituency:

TACD represents the demand side of the two biggest economic blocks in the world, the 735 million U.S. and EU consumers. Its network of 65 EU and U.S. national consumer organisations has a direct paid-up membership of some 20 million consumers. The 16 countries from which TACD draws its current membership are Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Recent recommendations submitted to the EU and U.S. :

January 2004

Unsolicited Commercial Email - <http://www.tacd.org/docs/?id=224>

Results of online survey on Unsolicited Commercial Email - <http://www.tacd.org/docs/?id=225>

Food Advertising and Marketing to Children - <http://www.tacd.org/docs/?id=220>

March 2004

Letter to Article 133 Committee regarding consideration of "necessity tests" -

<http://www.tacd.org/docs/?id=248>

April 2004

Adoption of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet and Public Health -

<http://www.tacd.org/docs/?id=250>

June 2004

REACH – EU Chemicals Policy - <http://www.tacd.org/docs/?id=253>

Passenger Name Records - <http://www.tacd.org/docs/?id=254>

Statement to the June 2004 EU-U.S. Summit – <http://www.tacd.org/docs/?id=255>