

Alliance

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for Responsible Trade

A National Coalition for Just and Sustainable Trade Policies

Amb. Robert Zoellick
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20508

9 September 2004

Dear Ambassador Zoellick,

We are writing to you as members of U.S. labor, environmental, human rights, religious, family farm, women's, development and other civil society organizations concerned about U.S. trade policy in the Americas. We especially question your intent to complete rapid negotiations between the United States and Colombia, Ecuador and Peru (and potentially with Bolivia) for a free trade agreement by February 2005.

We strongly urge you to suspend these negotiations. We make this demand for the following reasons:

- The negotiations to date have been conducted in secret, with no negotiating texts available for public comment and virtually no consultations with civil societies in the countries involved in the talks. Few Americans have any idea that the U.S. government is currently negotiating an Andean trade agreement. We believe it is imperative in this election year and beyond, that the U.S. public understand the issues before them in order to judge wisely the future course of trade for the United States in this region.
- While USTR has indicated that it hopes to complete the Andean negotiations before Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) might expire in 2005, there is no reason to "fast track" this agreement without broad participation and meaningful dialogue with the U.S. public. It does not make sense to rush the Andean talks to meet an artificial deadline like February 2005 since TPA is not a prerequisite for submitting trade agreements to Congress, and Congress has approved trade agreements negotiated without TPA in the past.
- Furthermore, it seems unwise to complete the negotiations for an agreement that could change considerably in the coming year. Trade policy is a subject of heated debate in Congress and in the current election. Our trade policies should reflect the outcomes of this important debate, not be rushed through prematurely to avoid it.
- All indications are that this agreement is being negotiated along the lines of NAFTA, the U.S.-Chile Free Trade Agreement and the U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement, all of which contain provisions on investment, intellectual-property rights, agriculture, services, labor and environment that have proven to be disastrous for the majority of the populations involved. In the case of NAFTA, ten years of experience has led to stagnant or falling wages, job losses, and threats to environmental and other public-interest laws in

Mexico, the United States and Canada. We oppose the extension of this failed model to other countries.

- We are especially concerned that the extension of the NAFTA model to the Andean region would undermine small-scale farmers and other producers, thus forcing more people into the production of illegal crops in order to survive and exacerbating existing political and economic tensions in the Andean region.

For these reasons, we urge you to suspend the U.S.-Andean FTA negotiations and review the real impacts of existing trade agreements on the economies, environments and societies involved. Such an assessment will enable people in the United States and the Andean region to engage in informed discussions on a more just and sustainable model for trade and development.

Sincerely,

50 Years Is Enough: U.S. Network for Global Economic Justice
ActionAid International USA
AFL-CIO
Alliance for Responsible Trade
Amazon Watch
American Corn Growers Association
American Friends Service Committee
Campaign for Labor Rights
Center of Concern
Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America
Church World Service
Citizens Trade Campaign
Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Columban Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Office
Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES)
Cumberland Countians for Peace & Justice, Tennessee
Dakota Resource Council
Development GAP
Ecumenical Program on Central America & the Caribbean (EPICA)
Essential Action
Friends of the Earth-United States
Global Exchange
Indiana Alliance for Democracy
Indiana Fair Trade Coalition
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Institute for Policy Studies, Global Economy Project
InterReligious Task Force on Central America, Cleveland Ohio
Justice and Witness Ministries, United Church of Christ USA
Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Council - OFM English Speaking Conference
(OFM-ESC-JPIC)

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mexico Solidarity Network
Missouri Rural Crisis Center
National Family Farm Coalition
Nicaragua Network
Obed Watershed Association, Pleasant, Tennessee
Public Citizen
Quixote Center/Quest for Peace
Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural
Sierra Club
Sisters of the Holy Cross - Congregation Justice Committee, Notre Dame, Indiana
Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean, Fellowship of Reconciliation
Texas Fair Trade Coalition
United Auto Workers
United Church of Christ Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility
U.S./Labor Education in the Americas Project
Utica/Central New York Citizens in Action
Washington Office on Latin America
Western Organization of Resource Councils
Wisconsin Fair Trade Campaign
Witness for Peace

cc: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives