



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sierra Club Remains Strongly Opposed to U.S.-Colombia Trade Deal

Washington, DC - The Sierra Club issued this statement in response to the Obama Administration's endorsement of the "Colombian Action Plan Related to Labor Rights," an agreement that now clears the way for the U.S.- Colombia trade deal to move forward to Congress.

The rapid expansion of Colombia's palm oil production is causing both environmental harm and human rights abuses. Clearing land for palm oil plantations results in large scale deforestation and an increase in carbon pollution as well as violence towards and displacement of indigenous people. The employment conditions in the palm oil industry are brutal and unpredictable and Colombia remains the most deadly nation in which to advocate for better working conditions.

Statement of Michael Brune, Sierra Club Executive Director:

"The Sierra Club remains deeply concerned about the U.S.-Colombia free trade agreement, and we continue to be strongly opposed to this flawed policy.

"The plan endorsed yesterday by the Administration falls far short of President Obama's promise of a 'smart, fair and strong' trade policy and does not achieve the goal of fair and safe working conditions for Colombian workers.

"Trade done the right way can foster development and economic growth while protecting workers and the environment here and abroad. While the action plan includes some important steps in the right direction, the emphasis seems wrongly placed on moving a plan through before the end of the year - not on ensuring meaningful and lasting progress in Colombia.

"The action plan does little to address the underlying conditions that lead to violence in Colombia, including conflicts over mineral wealth, natural resources and biodiversity. Workers rights, human rights and environmental rights are inextricably linked in industries ranging from mining to palm oil to flowers in Colombia.

"We need to see concrete improvements in Colombia before Congress takes up this deeply-flawed trade agreement."

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