

**STATEMENT ON PROPOSED U.S.-COLOMBIA ACTION PLAN AGREEMENT  
FOR FREE TRADE AGREEMENT**

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**For Immediate Release:**

**April 6, 2011**

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The information provided by the White House so far today outlines a series of actions the Colombian government must take by July 30<sup>th</sup>. While we welcome these initiatives, we are particularly concerned that we will not have time to determine whether they have been fully carried out - let alone resulted in a dramatic decrease of violence against unionists, increased ability by Colombian workers to exercise their rights to organize and bargain collectively, and a breaking of the culture of impunity that has so characterized justice and the rule of law in Colombia. If the goal is to eliminate anti-worker violence and other human rights violations, results matter.

We recognize that President Obama is the first president to place a spotlight on violence targeting trade unionists in Colombia and long-standing abuses of basic labor rights. We also recognize that President Santos has been responsive to considering these important matters. This is the first time any trade agreement has taken labor rights so seriously.

But the reason for this newfound concern is clear: No other nation in the world is as notorious as Colombia for murders, violence and threats targeting trade unionists. The violence, threats and rights abuses take place within a perilous landscape of human rights abuses that affect broad sectors of Colombia's people, especially in rural areas. These include human rights defenders; journalists; Afro-Colombian and Indigenous leaders; land rights, victims' rights, religious and other community-based leaders - all of whom have experienced dramatic increases in threats over the past nine months, and many of whom have seen dramatic increases in murders of their leaders around the country.

We stand by the concerns and recommendations we provided to President Obama on March 17<sup>th</sup>. While we wait to see the details, the Action Plan thus far does not appear to meet those concerns. When so many lives are at stake, we do not believe this is a matter to be rushed to Congress until we are able to determine, including through consultation with the targets of violence and human rights violations in Colombia, whether genuine and lasting change has taken place on the ground - not just on paper, but in the reality that so adversely affects so many Colombians every single day.