



Brussels, June 25th 2008

Mrs Benita Ferrero-Waldner
 Commissioner for External Relations and
 European Neighbourhood Policy
 European Commission

Mr Mandelson
 Commissioner for Trade
 European Commission

RE.: Recommendations ahead of the EU-CAN Association Agreement fourth round of negotiations

Mrs Ferrero-Waldner, Mr Mandelson

Between July 7th and 11th, a meeting will take place in Brussels between the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) and the European Union (EU) negotiators, in order to advance the negotiations of an Association Agreement (AA) between the two regions. The organisations that subscribe to this letter, members of the EU-CAN Network, Grupo Sur and other European organisations, wish to express the following concerns and recommendations.

The EU and the CAN have been negotiating this AA since September 2007. In spite of the glaring political, social and economic differences between the four countries of CAN, until the present, its members have managed to protect their common interests and make advance towards regional integration. Given the variety of options put forward by the four Andean countries, we need to take into account all of their proposals, including those of Bolivia and Ecuador, which promote “another architecture” for the agreement. According to the latter, asymmetries should be considered through a Special and Differential Treatment (SDT), always with an eye to the Andean regional integration.

During the 5th Summit of European, Latin American and Caribbean Heads of State in Lima a few weeks ago, the European Commission (EC) pressured Bolivia and Ecuador to accept a “Free Trade Agreement” (FTA), under the EU conditions, or, otherwise, to step out of the negotiations. On May 27th, in the European Parliament, the EC advocated the idea of a negotiation at “various speeds and with a variable geometry”, but this with Bolivia and Ecuador out of the Trade Pillar negotiations, being present only in the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Pillars. In this case, the EU would be signing up a Trade Agreement only with Peru and Colombia as CAN representatives, and the trade proposals from Bolivia and Ecuador would disappear from the agreement. At a later stage, if these two countries want to be part of the trade agreement, they will have to accept the conditions already negotiated and signed up between the EU and Colombia and Peru. The EC delegation for Ecuador and Colombia recently made similar proposals.

As European civil society organisations, we are surprised and indeed worried about these direct and indirect pressures. Through this strategy, the EU would be in fact negotiating two bilateral agreements with Peru and Colombia, while presenting this as if it were a regional agreement. The result of this procedure would be a serious weakening of CAN as such, which could eventually lead

to its disintegration. For this reason, we could say that, at present, the European politics in the AA negotiations goes against the Andean regional integration.

Let us remember that the EU has stated at all times that the negotiation of an AA with the CAN is product of its political will to pursue the strengthening of the Andean regional integration and to promote sustainable development. The current strategy of the EU will lead to opposite results to those which the EU has stated in order to justify the ongoing negotiations with the CAN, and therefore, it would be contrary, incoherent and inconsistent with the original positions of the EU.

We ask from the EU:

- To respect all the proposals of the Andean governments and the agreement mechanisms of CAN;
- For the AA to be an instrument to strengthen a genuine Andean regional integration, which makes the most from the complementarities between its countries and which looks for a genuine consensus born out of the proposals of their people;
- To maintain its will to negotiate and sign up an AA between the two blocks instead of starting bilateral negotiations, thus not reproducing the mistakes which happened during the EPA's negotiations with the ACP countries;
- To insist on the importance of creating mechanisms of civil society and indigenous peoples participation in the negotiations, both in Europe as well as in the Andean region.

Kind regards,

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CCFD, France

CNCD, Belgium

FIAN Sverige, Sweden

Foro Rural Mundial, Spain

FOS, Belgium

Friends of the Earth Europe

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KWIA, Belgium

LASC, Ireland

Latinamerikagrupperna/Solidaridad Suecia-America Latina, Sweden

Oxfam International

Secours Catholique – Caritas France, France

SOS Faim, Belgium

VECO, Belgium

War on Want, England

Grupo Sur: network conformed by NGOs from Belgium, Spain, France, Greece, Luxemburg and Italy.

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