



# Stop the EU's corporate trade agenda

Seattle to Brussels Network, part of Our World is Not For Sale <http://www.s2bnetwork.org>

Statement of the Seattle to Brussels Network for the World Social Forum Global Day of Action  
26<sup>th</sup> January 2008

## ***No to Corporate Europe – Yes to Global Justice!***

As members of the Seattle to Brussels Network (S2B), we are calling for concerted efforts to roll back the strategy of the European Union called “*Global Europe: Competing in the World*”, the EU’s unfair bilateral trade agreements and corporate power. We also reject the false solution of unfair multilateralism and the EU’s proposals at the WTO, and a revival of the Doha Round in the exclusive premises of the World Economic Forum in Davos.

We, civil society activists engaged in a wide range of peoples’ movements and organisations in Europe express our opposition and resistance to the neoliberal trade and investment policies that the EU governments and European Commission are implementing in our countries and worldwide. Simultaneously, we are also building the alternatives.

### **Global Europe: Serving European corporations**

In 2006, the European Commission (EC) unveiled its new Communication entitled “*Global Europe: Competing in the World*” which outlines how the EU will pursue bilateral trade agreements with major emerging economies in order to secure new and profitable markets for EU companies. While pushing for even more business-friendly ‘domestic reforms’, the EU sets out an aggressive so-called ‘external competitiveness’ strategy. As the EU Trade Commissioner puts it: “*What do we mean by external aspects of competitiveness? We mean ensuring that competitive European companies, supported by the right internal policies, must be enabled to gain access to, and to operate securely in, world markets. That is our agenda.*”

The core elements of this strategy are:

- Access to resources (from agricultural commodities to energy)
- New and better market access for European products
- Rules securing European investments and intellectual property rights

In addition to the ongoing multilateral WTO negotiations, the EU seeks these objectives by negotiating bilateral free trade agreements with the so-called emerging economies such as India, South Korea, the ASEAN states, and also Central America and the Andean Region. Russia, the MERCOSUR countries and the Gulf Cooperation Council are also on the priority list of the EU. The goal of these bilateral or bi-regional free trade agreements is to open and deregulate developing country markets for European companies, to increase their access to natural resources, particularly to energy reserves, and to secure their profits by enforcing intellectual property rights and other trade defence mechanisms.

This strategy not only undermines regulation in target countries. It also clearly links EU internal deregulation to this agenda. It says, for example, that future directives on social, labour or environmental issues for instance, should not be threatening the global competitiveness of European corporations. In this way, Global Europe poses a serious threat to social justice, gender equality and sustainable development not only outside the EU, but also within. The erosion of workers’ rights, the worsening of the quality of jobs within the EU, the destruction of a sustainable model of farming is also intrinsically linked to the external EU trade agenda. With trade liberalisation across all sectors – agriculture, industry and services – the beneficiaries are a handful of corporations but millions lose their jobs.

### **Stop EPA campaign needed more than ever**

Recently we met in Lisbon from 7-9 December 2007 to express our opposition to the “Africa-EU Strategic Partnership” and the so-called “Economic Partnership Agreements” (EPAs). These unfair trade deals based on an ultra-liberal perspective, threaten the livelihoods of millions of farmers and workers of both the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) and European countries. We noted the

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historical and contemporary role of European governments and corporations in Africa, and stressed that Europe constitutes a direct source of threats and pressures on the peoples and the environment of Africa. During the last years ACP countries have been confronted with the reinforcement of policies through the EU's proposed EPAs such as trade liberalisation, the promotion of export-oriented economies, the liberalisation of capital markets, the promotion of foreign investment, and the privatisation of public services. These agreements are also motivated by the aspiration of the EU to secure or re-gain geo-political and economic influence in its former colonies.

In the last few months the EU and the EC have abused the expiration date of the Cotonou Treaty to apply pressure and push 20 ACP countries into signing very unfavourable "interim agreements". ACP Ministers, meeting in Brussels on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2007, have stated that the "European Union's mercantilist interests have taken precedence over the ACP's developmental and regional integration interests". The interim agreement on the liberalisation of goods trade have been rushed through in the last weeks on the basis of draft texts proposed by the EC that ACP negotiators have not been able to examine or amend properly. The result is devastating agreements, that contain onerous commitments on the side of the ACP countries and, among other things, do not offer adequate protection for Food Sovereignty and emergent industry. It is clear that the EC has deliberately crippled the interim agreements to maintain leverage to force the ACP countries to accept negotiations on the infamous liberalization of services and the 'Singapore issues' next year. The Stop EPA Campaign must continue to undo these interim agreements and ward off further damaging EU demands.

## **The EU's new external trade strategy is destroying our jobs, rights and environment**

EU policies based on so-called "competitiveness" and increasingly open and deregulated markets, have failed to deliver on sustainable development and social justice. Instead, tougher and tougher competition and trade liberalisation have led to more insecurity, precarity, deteriorating salaries and working conditions, deepening inequalities between countries, regions and between women and men. This strategy also puts under threat environmental and health regulations.

For poor countries, market opening means the collapse of farming and industry in the face of unfair competition from European corporations – threatening the livelihoods of millions. Rural communities, often still a majority of the population in the targeted countries, will be particularly harmed as cheap, processed and subsidized agricultural goods flood developing countries' markets. Farmers, and particularly small-scale women farmers, who simply cannot compete with powerful European agribusinesses, will be driven off their land.

Trade chiefs from the EU and the United States warned recently that tackling climate change should not become an excuse for throwing up new barriers to foreign trade. Trade Ministers, whose decisions are perpetuating unsustainable modes of production, consumption and trade, are directly responsible for climate change. Global warming shows the failure of a development model based on unfettered economic growth, the irrational exploitation of fossil fuels, over-production, over-consumption and trade liberalisation.

While the society has never been as conscious about the social and environmental crisis of the planet as today, the political class is still promoting "development-as-usual". Instead, we need a real paradigm shift.

## **We demand Climate Justice Now, with solutions including:**

- Reduced consumption in the EU
- Huge financial transfers from EU to the South based on historical responsibility and ecological debt in order to support adaptation and mitigation costs
- Financing provided by redirecting military budgets, innovative taxes and debt cancellation
- Leaving fossil fuels in the ground
- Investing in appropriate energy-efficiency and safe, clean and community-led renewable energy
- Rights-based resource conservation that enforces indigenous land rights and promotes peoples' sovereignty over energy, forests, land and water
- Sustainable family farming and peoples' food sovereignty

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## **The Lisbon Treaty: the wrong solution to an undemocratic and unsocial Europe**

We condemn the so-called EU Reform Treaty (Lisbon Treaty) which reinforces the power of the EC in matters of trade and development and further reduces the capacity of citizens to influence democratically its policies. The new treaty is deepening the neoliberal policies and the democratic deficit of the EU, perpetuating the power of transnational corporations and serving the interests of European capital, increasing the militarisation of Europe, strengthening "fortress Europe" and bringing no substantive protection to European citizens against the downward spiral in social and environmental standards.

The main substance of the antisocial character of the "Constitution" which was rejected in France and Holland, remains. The new Treaty will surely deepen the crisis of legitimacy. The Europe that is being built is a Europe of capital, that tries to defend the interests of its main economic and financial actors worldwide (entailing both alliances and tensions with the United States), guaranteeing also the same interests at home, over and above those of its peoples and the environment. And to do so, Europe needs a growing internal authoritarian structure, which will operate as a "fortress" for the migrants, based and coordinated on its reinforced nation states, and a "unified" and structured military might to project its economic and monetary-financial power worldwide.

We reject the externalization of borders policy of the European Union, the policy of detention, expulsion and deportation and the readmission agreements, the Frontex Program, which represents a huge investment in the militarization of borders control creating the basis for direct interventions in African countries and represents a real declaration of war against migrants.

## **Another vision for Europe: peace, sustainability, solidarity**

Our purpose is to construct a world based on the concepts of peace, participatory democracy, social justice, human rights, sustainability, food sovereignty and peoples' rights to self-determination.

We aim at creating spaces to link current struggles, emerging grassroots resistance movements and alternative visions, and articulating social movements, NGOs, women organisations, trade unions, human rights organisations, farmers, ecological and indigenous movements, migrant and refugee organisations towards joint action and reflection.

We are calling for joint strategies to halt current negotiations seeking to implement "Free" Trade Agreements (FTAs) between Europe and the rest of the world; and consolidating the struggles against European transnational corporations, and deepening the process of constructing alternatives, to reclaim the right to food, education, health and other basic services.

We commit ourselves to strengthen interregional solidarity and cooperation among our social movements and organisations from all over the world against corporate power and all unfair bilateral trade and investment agreements. We commit ourselves to joint resistance against neoliberal policies and to build people-centred alternatives.

## **In particular we continue to campaign together to**

- Stop the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)
- Stop the Global Europe Strategy
- Stop all bilateral trade agreements
- Suspend WTO negotiations and reconsider the multilateral trading system as a whole
- Support the Moratorium on Agrofuels and the fight against global warming and the energy crisis
- Achieve freedom of movement for all people

## **In order to dismantle the power of transnational corporations (TNCs), we aim to:**

- Strengthen resistance against the operations of TNCs violating human rights and playing a key role in the construction of the neoliberal global system
- Expose the legal-political system and dominant institutions that serve and protect the interests of TNCs, including the FTAs and Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITS) that allow transnational corporations to operate with impunity

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- Demand compliance to existing rules, the elimination of unfair laws, and progress on international regulations that respect the rights of people and the environment, with which TNCs and governments are required to comply
- Provide tools to enhance the strategies of communities, social movements and organisations confronting TNCs and promoting alternatives that strive to dismantle their presence and judge their crimes.

We will support policies in favour of solidarity, peace, the realisation of all human rights and the harmony between people and the planet.

## In the next months, we will use moments in the political calendar to link with the global justice movement:

- The Global Day of Action of the World Social Forum on 26 January 2008
- The UNCTAD XII meeting in Accra, Ghana (April 2008)
- The Action Week on Global Europe and the EU-FTAs in Brussels and different European countries (April 2008)
- The Peoples summit "Enlazando Alternativas 3" and the Permanent Peoples Tribunal Session on the occasion of the EU-LAC summit and the proposed "free trade zone" (Lima, Peru, 15-18 May 2008)
- The Migration WSF in Madrid (11-13 September 2008)
- The 5<sup>th</sup> European Social Forum in Malmö (17-21 September 2008)
- The campaigns calling for referendums on (or against) the Lisbon Treaty

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For more information and links: [www.s2bnetwork.org](http://www.s2bnetwork.org)

**Members of the Seattle to Brussels Network:** 11.11.11, Actionaid International, Action Solidarité Tiers Monde, Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network, AITEC, Anti-Globalisation Network UK, Attac Austria, Attac Belgium, Attac Denmark, Attac France, Attac Germany, Attac Hungary, Attac Norway, Attac Sweden, Attac Switzerland, Begegnungszentrum Gewaltlosigkeit Salzburg – Forum against WTO, Berne Declaration, Both Ends, Bundjugend / Young Friends of the Earth Germany, Bündnis für Eine Welt / ÖIE, Campagna per la Riforma Della Banca Mondiale, CCCOMC Paris, Central America Committee, Christian Aid, CNCD-11.11.11., Coordination Paysanne Européenne– European Farmers Coordination / La Vía Campesina Europe, Corporate Europe Observatory, Ecologistas en Acción, [Fair], Fédération Syndicale Unitaire (Education, Recherche et Culture), Finnish WTO Campaign, Food and Water Watch Europe, For Velferdsstaten / Campaign for the Welfare State, Forum SYD, Friends of the Earth Croatia / Green Action, Friends of the Earth Denmark / Noah, Friends of the Earth, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Friends of the Earth Europe, Friends of the Earth Finland, Friends of the Earth Germany / BUND, Friends of the Earth Hungary / MTVSZ, Friends of the Earth Latvia, Friends of the Earth Netherlands / Milieudéfensie, Friends of the Earth Norway Youth / Natur Og Ungdom, Friends of the Earth Slovakia / CEPA, Friends of the Earth Ukraine / Zelenyi Svti, Gatswatch Project, Global Roots, Greenpeace Germany, Greenpeace International, Institut pour la Relocalisation de l'Economie, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Initiative Colibri, International Forum, Les Amis de la Terre, Nature Trust Malta, New Economics Foundation, Norsk Bonde-Og Smabrukarlag, Oxfam Solidarity, People & Planet, ¡Prou OMC!, Rete Lilliput, SOMO – Center For Research on Multinational Corporations, Terra Nuova, The Corner House, The Development Fund, Third World Network, Transnational Institute, URFIG, Védegylet / Protect the Future, Vredeseilanden, War On Want, WEED – Weltwirtschaft, Ökologie & Entwicklung e.V., WIDE – Women In Development Europe, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Working Group against the MAI and Globalisation, World Development Movement.

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