

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE EXCHANGE OF OFFERS TO ESTABLISH A BI-REGIONAL ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND MERCOSUR

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[SOUTHERN CONE TRADE UNION COORDINATING BODY]

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ETUC)

The general secretaries and other representatives of CCSCS and ETUC met in Sao Paulo on April 26th and agreed to approach the authorities of the European Union and Mercosur jointly ahead of the forthcoming interchange of offers for access to markets with regard to goods, services, investments and public contracts so as to make headway on a Bi-regional Association Agreement by and between the *Mercado Común del Sur* (Mercosur) [Common Market of the South] and the European Union (EU).

ETUC and CCSCS wish to reiterate to the authorities of both blocs the proposals which they have tabled over the last few years and at the same time demand that, in this new round, the negotiations should be more transparent than they were in the past, and that truthful information will be disseminated to citizens.

We are in particular opposed to these negotiations glossing over the proposal to achieve a mere free trade treaty, with a meagre coating of good intentions through minor chapters on political dialogue and cooperation. We believe that free trade is not the policy to take the world out of the current international economic crisis and are striving to strengthen our economies and peoples. The workers in Mercosur and the EU believe that this is the only way that the world economy in general and our countries in particular will be able to embark on economic development, create new, decent jobs, augment our real wages, and improve our living conditions.

The trade union movements in Europe and the Southern Cone have repeatedly come out in favour of a balanced and fair agreement that would strengthen political, economic and cultural ties between the two regions, and would boost human rights, decent employment, sustainable development and democratic values.

ETUC and CCSCS are calling for disclosure of the content of the offers to access the markets as a matter of urgency, whilst demanding real and effective consultation on the part of the negotiating teams with members of civil society, in particular the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the *Foro Consultivo Económico y Social* (FCES) [Economic and Social Consultative Forum] of Mercosur. We also demand that the trade union movement of the two regions, represented by CCSCS and ETUC, be heard during the negotiating sessions, to protect the interests of workers in both regions.

We recall that certain agreements in principle were reached in the previous round of negotiations, which should be confirmed and improved:

- i) The inclusion of a section referring to the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and to decent work in particular;
- ii) The creation of a Joint Consultative Committee, composed of EESC and FCES;
- iii) The recognition of a ‘Labour Forum’ (within the framework of a possible future agreement) dedicated to the specific themes of the world of work.

On the other hand, we wish to reiterate the validity and topicality of most of the points contained in our proposal for a Chapter on ‘social and labour issues’, which was presented to the negotiating committee.

ETUC and CCSCS continue to defend the demands of workers as well as the general principle that relations between the EU and Mercosur contribute to building more economically balanced development models, greater cohesion, and social justice with guaranteed respect for the environment.

We will issue a broader declaration in the near future in which we will itemise the proposals and demands that we are submitting to the negotiating parties.

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European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

Montevideo and Brussels, 10 May 2016