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Statement

## **Stop KorUS FTA Right Now!**

Tuesday 5 December 2006, by [Korean Alliance Against Kor-US/EU FTAs](#) (Date first published: 22 October 2006).

The 4<sup>th</sup> round of talks on Korea-US FTA is being held from 23<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> October, in Jeju Island in South Korea. Just as we had warned, the FTA talks are being driven to an uneven negotiation behind doors, ignoring peoples' concerns and resistance. Clearly, the FTA is pushed not by peoples' will but by some officials in Rho administration, strongly supporting neoliberal "open-door" policies.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Korea accepted beef imports from the US, even though it knows that beef imported from the US is not free from the mad-cow disease. In terms of trade in goods, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade ordered on 18<sup>th</sup> April that the number of items to be excluded from offer and request list should be minimized, in order to "keep the momentum of KorUS FTA negotiation alive". It has also been exposed that the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy does not have any official documents regarding the KorUS FTA during July and December last year, showing its lack of preparation. As time goes by, it is getting clearer that the KorUS FTA was being hastily pushed without any preparation. However, the Korean government is still refusing to disclose the negotiation process and is mobilizing tremendous amount of money to propagate about the KorUS FTA and to disguise the truth.

In the meantime, the KorUS FTA talks, which started at an uneven playing ground, are getting even more out of balance.

According to a newspaper report, the US side categorized tariff-elimination of auto-related items into five steps: 'immediate/3-years/5-years/10-years/others' to force open the Korean automobile market, while showing little intention to open up their textile sector. Moreover, the US makes it clear that it doesn't have any intention to make any concessions issues that are in dispute. Therefore, we can only doubt whether the government can get any meaningful concessions in areas that are under dispute such as agriculture, textile, Gaesung Complex, pharmaceuticals pricing system and Intellectual Property Rights(IPR), as it had promised as "balanced benefits" for both Korea and US. The Korean government implied that it would open the agricultural market to the US, gave up issues regarding Gaesung Complex and resumed US beef imports. All this proves that the peoples' concerns that the FTA would be a catastrophe to Korean society rings true.

We specifically note the following points in this point in time, just before the 4<sup>th</sup> round of talks.

Firstly, we note a stronger push to enforce the KorUS FTA, under the logic that the Korea-US alliance should be intensified in face of North Korea's nuclear test. The KorUS FTA could devastate all Korean peoples' lives. Therefore, it should not be allowed that the FTA be pushed with political intentions. This merely proves once again that the FTA is being negotiated in the interests of the people but under political intentions of intensifying the Korea-US military alliance.

Secondly, the talks on Jeju Island are being held under the protection of a quasi-martial law. The government refuses to allow rallies and demonstrations saying that they are illegal. The government had promised that it would listen to peoples' opinion and guarantee the right to have rallies and demonstrations. It also promised to disclose the negotiation process as much as it could. But the

situation in Jeju shows that the government's promises were merely aimed at manipulating public opinion. Abusing state force with hedgehog, container boxes, and bulwark cement blocks threatens and oppresses the peoples' right to have rallies and demonstrations.

We will make our voices against KorUS FTA heard, peacefully but loudly in resistance to government's oppression. We will meet the masses and let people know the problems and devastating results of the FTA. We also deliver our deep concern to people all over the world. If the government continues to push the negotiation process using police forces, continues to use quasi-martial law in spite of all our efforts and warnings against the FTA, we make it clear that the government shall bear full responsibilities for any problems caused by police violence and brutality.

The KorUS FTA negotiations have entered into a critical point. Pushing the KorUS FTA is the road to collapse of peoples' lives. KorUS FTA is not the road to a bright future but a negotiation that will lead to death. We strongly demand that the government stop the KorUS FTA right now.

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