

To the European Parliament: Do Not Vote for the EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Colombia and Peru

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Dear Members of the European Parliament,

In the forthcoming weeks, you will have the opportunity to vote on the EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Colombia and Peru. We, the workers and trade unions of the European Union and Latin America, reiterate our opposition to this FTA.

Furthermore, we call on the members of the EP's international trade committee to ensure that the EP's strong demand for a binding action plan on human rights, labour law and environmental protection is respected, as agreed in June 2012. To date, neither the EU nor the governments of Colombia and Peru have put forward a plan, let alone one that satisfies the benchmarks clearly established in the resolution.

The violation of fundamental rights remains a fact of life for many Colombian workers. The adoption of the US-Colombia Labour Action Plan, linked to the US-Colombia FTA, required some important legal and administrative changes, but unfortunately did not require proof of progress in practice before the implementation of the agreement. Thus, the reality on the ground for Colombian workers remains wholly unacceptable. Union leaders and activists continue to be assassinated, threatened, and intimidated, and perpetrators continue to enjoy almost complete impunity despite the widespread and intense international attention. Labour laws continue to be violated. Many workers throughout the economy still find themselves working under sham employment relationships, from cooperatives to newly-created schemes, despite changes in legislation and a promise to make this a priority area for labour inspection. Similarly, workers find themselves labouring under employer imposed pacts meant to weaken or eliminate the union. As a result, workers face a major obstacle to the exercise of freedom of association. This, together with the continued violence, has led to a continued decline in unionization in Colombia.

We note too that trade unionists in Peru also face hurdles in law and in practice to the free exercise of their rights. Anti-union dismissals, the disregard for collective agreements and bargaining rights, and union busting in the private sector continued to be common practices. Workers in agribusiness, who are most frequently subcontracted and temporary workers, are among the worst treated.

This reality shows the importance of legally binding commitments to improve labour and human rights. However, these are absent from the FTA and its Sustainable Development Chapter, which is not subject to a meaningful dispute settlement procedure, as provided for the commercial provisions of the FTA.

The international trade union movement is united in this call for a vote against the FTA. To do otherwise would disregard the appalling human rights record in Colombia and continued labour

violations in Peru and would damage the EU's reputation as a leading force in the promotion of human rights and basic freedoms.

Yours sincerely,

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Peter Waldorff, General Secretary of Public Services International and Chair of the Council of Global Unions
