

Rt. Hon Alistair Darling MP
Secretary of State for Trade & Industry
Department of Trade and Industry
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

19 October 2006

Re: Support for Bolivia's negotiating position in upcoming EU-CAN Association Agreement

We are writing as members of the UK Trade Justice Movement to express our support for Bolivia's negotiating positions for the upcoming EU-CAN Association Agreement and to urge the UK to press the European Community to accept Bolivia's positions as a basis for negotiating an agreement founded on principles of trade justice and environmental sustainability.

We believe that the Bolivian Government's proposals start where all trade agreements should begin which is looking at how trade can end poverty and be done in a way that does not damage the environment. They reflect a determination to build more just and equitable relations and solidarity among the peoples of Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe.

While regional trade agreements should not substitute for fair multilateral trade rules, the hiatus at the WTO means other approaches to trade policy-making are being explored. We believe the Bolivian government proposal offers a concrete way forward that is consistent with the pursuit of social justice both in Europe and in Central America.

We therefore call on you to negotiate a treaty that embraces Bolivia's positions but in particular its demands that:

- An association agreement should accept the economic asymmetry between the EU and the countries within CAN and therefore apply unequal rules to unequal realities in order to benefit the peoples of Andean nations.
- Human, social and environmental rights must come before the rights of trans-national corporations and before intellectual property rights.
- Aid and cooperation should be focused on tackling the structural causes of dependency and not tied to conditionalities that undermine countries' democracy and sovereignty.
- Basic services as well as energy resources, food and land ownership are key to achieving social justice and cannot simply be treated as "tradeable" commodities. Public services must be strengthened rather than liberalised and privatised.

- Peoples of Latin America and their governments have the full right to protect their internal markets, regulate foreign investment according to national laws, as well as to defend and implement initiatives to support small-scale producers and local or national industries.

We also share Bolivia's view that civil society organizations in both Latin America and the European Union should be involved actively in the construction of an Association Agreement.

We are concerned that the European Union's current approach to bilateral and regional agreements undermines these core principles for sustainable development. We would therefore welcome your response to Bolivia's proposals before the guidelines for negotiations are agreed.

We also suggest a meeting with you to discuss these proposals and to discuss possibilities for civil society involvement in the construction of this Association Agreement.

We look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

Glen Tarman
Co-ordinator, Trade Justice Movement

On behalf of:

ActionAid
CAFOD
Christian Aid
Friends of the Earth
Oxfam
Tearfund
War on Want
World Development Movement

CC: Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for International Development