

Declaration of parliamentarians, congressmen, and legislators of Colombia, Ecuador,  
Peru, and Boliva before the Andean Free Trade Agreement

The free trade agreement sacrifices national interests

*It has been more than one year and more than eleven rounds of negotiations for the U.S.-Andean Free Trade Agreement (FTA), a process that has affirmed the uncompromising nature of the United States before extremely sensitive issues pertaining to the economies of our countries, and has demonstrated the lack of resolve of the Andean state negotiators. For these reasons, the parliamentarians of Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia signed below alert our communities of the grave danger that threatens us.*

We cannot sacrifice our countries' future development, particularly affecting the most poor, and seriously limiting our states' capacity to fulfill an adequate regulating and redistributing role that contributes to eliminate inequality gaps and injustices that presently exist in our nations.

If it is true that economic international relations can contribute positively to the better development of countries, it is also true that these relations can have negative effects, especially if they aren't founded on agreements based in equality, that recognize existing asymmetries, that implement proper compensation mechanisms, and that find reciprocal benefit, stemming from the diligent respect for national sovereignty.

These agreements should not impede the protection and development of the states' respective internal markets, as these are the irreplaceable base for national progress and for the healthy process of integration among nations.

The FTA is much more than a trade agreement: it is a political and economic long-term commitment that would define our plan for development.

The strictly commercial interest of the United States in our region is secondary, opposite the geopolitical interests that the US has in our region. Issues like anti-narcotic politics, national security, and access to important energy reserves, petroleum, water sources, and the biogenetic resources of the Andean and Amazonian zones are of greater interest for the United States.

Our countries cannot lose the sovereign capacity to define our own model for development, nor can we lose responsibility over our own security, regional stability, environmental sustainability, and process of regional integration, if all we get in return is the ability for some of our products to enter the US market.

By means of the FTA, the United States intends to consolidate the so-called Washington Consensus, exceed the agreements of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and deepen

the neo-liberal reforms, which will worsen the conditions of underdevelopment and poverty in our nations.

What is clear up to now is that the FTA involves an increase in import subsidies, which will ruin important industrial and agricultural sectors, debase workers' salaries and rights, and hike up the taxes for the working class, while at the same time reducing taxes for monopolies and transnational companies.

The FTA will do harm to development, public health, and food security in the Andean countries. We cannot accept those desires of the United States that restrict our ability to protect the agricultural and industrial sectors of our states, especially given the massive subsidies that sustain their producers.

Public services (banking, health, telecommunications, education, etc) will be pushed aside by U.S. monopolies.

Intellectual property rights will become stricter, thereby fortifying the privileges of transnational pharmaceuticals, and prices for medicine and agricultural chemicals will rise.

The FTA will seize all the biogenetic resources and the traditional indigenous knowledge and practices of our communities.

The national judicial system will be lost through the establishment of the trade agreement's dispute settlement mechanism.

Our countries should guarantee the promotion of strategic and sensitive sectors for our communities, just as we should guarantee the promotion and protection of our cultural diversity.

Citizens of Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia: the reasons are numerous and well-founded for heightening civil resistance in each country for the defense of our national and regional interests and the rejection of the US-Andean FTA.

We should increase efforts to coordinate opposition to the agreement. Count on us as parliamentarians to play the consequently democratic and patriotic role in the fight for the defense of national interests that will drive a suitable integration based on strong national development.

Cartagena. September 22, 2005.

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CARTAGENA, September 21, 2005.

\*Note: This declaration was translated by Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch.