

June 11, 2009

Prime Minister Stephen Harper  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa K1A 0A2 CANADA

President Barack Obama  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500 USA

President Felipe Calderón  
Residencia Oficial De Los Pinos  
Puerta Norte, Colonia San Miguel Chapultepec  
Delegación Miguel Hidalgo  
C P 11850, MEXICO, D.F.

Dear Prime Minister Harper and Presidents Obama and Calderón:

Fifteen years since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) entered into effect, it has become obvious that many of the promised benefits of the agreement have not come to be. As Members of our Parliaments and Congress in Canada, Mexico and the U.S., we ask you, on behalf of our constituents as well as civil society organizations, to consider a new, people-centered fair trade model; we wish to ensure fair trade with quality-of-life for our peoples and environmental protection as first principles of the Americas. We must reshape trade agreements in North America to ensure rising standards of living for our peoples. Unfortunately, NAFTA has aggravated poverty across the continent. It is clear that NAFTA is not working for the vast majority of inhabitants of North America. It has failed on the bottom line. As lawmakers in our respective chambers, we have voiced concerns about NAFTA promoting a "race to the bottom" rather than equitable development in all three countries.

The soaring cost of living in each of our countries, the millions of uprooted Mexican farmers who were left without land, strained border infrastructure contributing to illegal narcotics and weapons trafficking, a soaring number of undocumented workers, and the washed out manufacturing communities in Canada and the U.S. are symptoms of a flawed trade policy whose goal was not to enrich the lives of our peoples, but mere economic gain for few. In the United States, Mexico and Canada, income inequality has grown dramatically in the almost fifteen years since the free trade agenda took effect. In Canada, families are worse off today than they were when the first agreement was implemented in 1989. More and more Canadians work harder without being able to keep up. Almost 600,000 more manufacturing jobs have been lost in Canada since 2002 with increasing hardships in softwood lumber communities and elsewhere in Canada. NAFTA has sucked good American jobs away, destroyed the Mexican countryside, deepened our immigration crisis, wiped out the Mexican and middle and small business classes, not brought about promised investments in infrastructure, and hammered communities across the region. It's time for Mexico, Canada, and the United States to work together to change this flawed trade model. It is indispensable that lawmakers from all three North American partner countries work together to design an alternative paradigm that takes into account each nation's sovereignty, environmental protection, economic competitiveness, migration, farmers' organizations and labour rights within a rule of law. We must work hand in hand with civil society organizations to launch a progressive approach that considers the well-being of human beings regardless of income as the *raison d'être* of public policy.

Lawmakers in our respective nations launched a Task Force in March 2008 to help push for renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). We have advanced to all three governments to conduct open reviews of NAFTA's effects on people, communities and regions. The Task Force on Renegotiating NAFTA has the support of our respective political parties. As Members of the Task Force, we undertook to promote within our respective legislatures the renegotiation of NAFTA.

The objectives of the Task Force include transforming NAFTA in order to achieve a fair trade policy. This fair trade model is designed to safeguard the sovereignty of the three countries, and includes enforceable measures for the protection of workers and the environment, and allows for our three governments to regulate mutual concerns in the public interest. The Mexican Senate is looking forward to host this Trinational Task Force in the near future.


It is imperative that we now recognize that trade is not an end unto itself, but a means to sustainable development.

In order to bring more widespread prosperity and development to our continent, we must construct a fair trade model not only according to an economic logic, but also based on ethical principles and standards. This extends to more areas than simply labour or environmental provisions which, while important, neglect key areas such as rule of law, human rights, sustainable human development, and poverty eradication. As lawmakers, we would like to work with you and your administrations to develop such a model which would respect the democratic rights of people and their environments above markets and involve the meaningful participation of all of those affected by trade.

It is believed that the development of our progressive fair trade model will contribute to sustainable development. We must remain firm on our commitments to govern in the public interest rather than merely the corporate interest by offering better trading conditions to and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers, in Mexico, Canada and the U.S. Our three nations are working together to build better trading partnerships that support the principles of social justice, environmental sustainability, and human rights. We also want to work with civil society actors, farmers' organizations and labour unions in all three countries as we continue to develop a fair trade model that will ensure prosperity for all.

As our three nations continue our conversations about the future of our trade relationships, please consider us willing partners in the development of fair trade across our continent.

Sincerely,



Senador Antonio Mejía Haro (Presidente del Grupo de Trabajo Encargado de Evaluar los Impactos del TLCAN sobre el Sector Agropecuario)

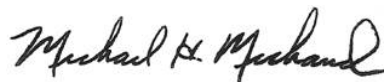
Senator Antonio Mejía Haro is the President of the Working group in charge of evaluating the impacts of NAFTA on the farming sector



Peter Julian, Member of Parliament (Burnaby-New Westminster) and International Trade Critic for the New Democratic Party of Canada (NDP)



Marcy Kaptur, Democratic Member of the United States House of Representatives (D-Ohio)



Mike Michaud, Democratic Member of the United States House of Representatives (D-Maine)



Yeidckol Polevnsky, Mexican Senator with the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and Vice-President of the Mexican Senate



Víctor Suárez, former Mexican legislator, and Founder and Executive Director of the National Association of Rural Commercialization Enterprises (ANEC) in Mexico.