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## **Three Strikes, Is FTAA NAFTA-Expansion Out?**

### ***Latest Meeting to Revive Free Trade Area of the Americas Collapses in Buenos Aires; Late-April Puebla Negotiations Canceled; 2005 Deadline in Jeopardy***

*Statement by Lori Wallach, Director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch*

This is the third “save-the-Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) emergency meeting” that has collapsed since the Miami FTAA Ministerial, which itself narrowly escaped a full public implosion.

Three strikes and the FTAA is out: Ten years of NAFTA's negative real-life effects have made it politically impossible for most countries to sign up for an FTAA-NAFTA expansion.

It's time to bury the failed NAFTA model, pull the plug on the comatose FTAA and start over with rules aimed at pulling up wages and environmental and consumer standards in the hemisphere.

Given the deep deadlock between blocs of countries with opposing views of what an FTAA should be, it is amazing that the Bush administration still insists that the FTAA is alive. Clearly the Bush administration view of the FTAA as a full NAFTA expansion has been rejected. And as support drops among the U.S. public for trade policies like the FTAA, which promote a race to the bottom in living standards and the environment, it becomes increasingly clear that U.S. negotiators are not representing the American people.

*Background: Trade negotiators from nine countries of the proposed 34-nation FTAA met in Buenos Aires on March 31 and April 1. The goal of this meeting was to resolve several key deadlocks and build consensus about a common set of FTAA obligations that countries could approve at a planned April Vice Ministerial Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) scheduled for Puebla, Mexico. They did not succeed. This meeting's implosion follows the collapse of an early February 2004 TNC meeting in Puebla and an early March meeting in Buenos Aires (which was called to undo the February TNC deadlock). Both meetings ended with acrimony and without agreement. Now, for the third time in a row, this week's “save-the-FTAA summit” has collapsed. The next scheduled FTAA TNC, which had been planned for late April, has been canceled, with the earliest possible rescheduling being in six weeks. This dramatic development makes it all but impossible even for a scaled-back FTAA to be completed by the Jan. 1, 2005, deadline. Civil society opponents of FTAA, including some 3,000 people protesting the FTAA summit in Buenos Aires, have long demanded that FTAA talks be terminated.*

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