



STATEMENT

The strategy for a Competitive Europe: The true objective of the EU-CAN Agreement

On 29-30 May 2007, the 9th EU-CAN Joint Committee meeting will take place in La Paz, Bolivia to launch negotiations for an association agreement between the EU and the Community of Andean Nations (CAN). The association agreements consider three main areas: political dialogue, co-operation and trade.

In this framework it is worth highlighting from the Joint Communiqué of the EU-CAN Ministerial Meeting on 19 April in Santo Domingo:

- The acknowledgment that human sustainable development and eradication of poverty should be the objective that underpin the relation between both regions;
- The consideration of the opportunity, within the framework of the specialised dialogue on drugs, to study new possibilities for a multilateral approach for co-operation in the fight against drugs.

In spite of the importance of these public statements made in Santo Domingo, these do not manage to clear away the concerns of the signatories of this statement on the future negotiations: **Friends of the Earth Europe, Grupo Sur and Oxfam International; the Latin-American network ALOP; the Belgian platforms: Centre National de Coopération au Développement-11.11.11 and Flemish Coalition for North-South Co-operation 11.11.11; the Belgian organisation FOS and the French Secours Catholique-Caritas France.**

Although the EU has repeatedly stated that strengthening the regional integration process and contributing to human sustainable development are the main motivations for the negotiations, the reality is quite different. The

true motivation has to do with implementing the EU strategy ***“Global Europe: Competing in the World”***.

This is the reason why the EU negotiating mandate recently approved aims for a ‘WTO+’ agreement (it goes beyond the commitments reached at the WTO) including the so-called ‘Singapore Issues’: **investment, competition, transparency in public procurement and trade facilitation**, as well as **services and intellectual property**, even though this will go against the stated objectives in relation to achieving human sustainable development and in spite of Bolivia’s government lack of agreement with the proposal.

It also raises concerns among civil society the fact that the Joint Communiqué from Santo Domingo makes no reference to civil society and to the importance of its participation in developing the relations between both regions and in the negotiation process of the Agreement.

The organisations signing this statement request from the EU member states to give special consideration to the present situation of the rule of law in Colombia, a country suffering its worst institutional crisis in the last decades. As it has been reflected by the media, an important part of the establishment in Colombia – politicians, military, businessmen, livestock farmers, etc.- at all levels, local, regional and national – promoted the setting up of paramilitary groups, responsible of serious crimes against humanity. Considering that Colombia will chair the CAN in the coming semester, recently a group of MEPs in the European Parliament gave their voice of alert and requested from the EC to *“freeze”* the launch of the negotiations.

In these circumstances, the European Union is facing the risk of negotiating with important sectors of Colombian society, such as politicians and businessmen, who might appear being responsible for some of the most tragic episodes of human right violations in the country. It would not be understandable for European citizens that the Agreement to be negotiated is not respectful of the European standards for democracy and human rights, key pillars of its common foreign policy.

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