

# Week of strategy and action against European FTAs

April 2008 – Brussels and European capitals

## CONCEPT NOTE

### Rationale

Since the end of the 90s, the European Union has pursued a multi-dimensional strategy for its trade agenda: while pursuing multilateral negotiations, the EU has also pushed for the negotiation of bi-lateral/bi-regional agreements (covert FTAs under the name of Association Agreements and Economic Partnership Agreements-EPAs) with specific countries (Mexico, Chile South Africa) and regions in Latin America and Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) countries.

However, by 2006, the EU decided to launch the most aggressive trade and investment agenda so far and identified free trade agreements as the main framework to achieve the sweeping levels of liberalisation. This strategy is elaborated in detail in the EC Communication *Global Europe: Competing in the World*. This new far-reaching, TNC-serving European strategy, marks a new phase in EU trade policy. The EU Trade Commissioner Mandelson has expressed it more clearly than anyone: the agenda of the EU at home and abroad aims at "Getting rid of all barriers that hinder the operations of companies and making sure all regulations are minimally trade distorting". Furthermore, commenting on the external aspects of competitiveness, Mandelson also says "we mean ensuring that competitive European companies, supported by the right internal policies, must be enabled to gain access to, and to operate securely in world markets. That is our agenda".

Since then, the EU has launched (and moved at dramatic speed) or is in process of launching negotiations with: the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Central America Region, Andean Community of Nations (CAN), South Korea and India. Also, the MERCOSUR region (where the EU-MERCOSUR FTA has been stalled for some time), the Euro-Med Free Trade Zone and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), as well as the creation of a Free Trade Area with the US and Canada have been identified as key targets. Throughout 2007, the Commission has pursued a strong arm mode of negotiation on the EPAs with ACP countries.

Even though each negotiation has its particularities, an analysis of the negotiating mandates, the levels of liberalisation requests and key targeted sectors by the EU as well as the EC tactics of negotiation shows that the similarities are many. Since the beginning of these negotiations social movements and NGOs both from the regions of the South as well as from Europe have been strategizing, questioning, and in many cases openly opposing, the content and the mode of negotiations of the Association agreements and other forms involving free trade formulae. From Mexico to Chile, and from Africa to the Caribbean, initiatives towards the negotiations started separately one from the other. Now, as the EU strategy is seen as systemic we see that it is necessary to converge our efforts, strategies and mobilization.

How can we strengthen and improve our strategies of resistance and make our campaigns more effective? How can we link local and sectoral struggles to global campaigns and demonstrate more effectively the impacts of Global Europe and FTAs on the life and livelihoods of people?

## Objectives

This week of joint resistance and development of strategies aims at bringing together the networks, movements and organisations from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and North America, that are in one way or another involved in the resistance to EU trade and investment strategy in general and EU-FTAs or US/Canada FTAs in particular.

The overall objective is to take stock of the state of play of the EU trade offensive, project its impacts in the South and in Europe and develop appropriate strategies for future campaigning. We will also assess how governments in the South (e.g ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint) embrace this framework and articulate a strategy that is consistent and complementary to the EU strategy.

The week will be built around different activities:

- 2 day Strategy Meeting
- European Parliament Public Hearing
- Mobilisation/rally
- Press Conferences
- Lobby Tour (European member states)
- Debate Forum with Trade Commissioner Mandelson

The specific objectives of the week will be:

### *International strategy session (2 days)*

- Gain a deep understanding of the effects of the EU trade and investment strategy both in the Global South as well as in Europe;
- Learn about the specificities, commonalities and state-of-the-art of the different EU FTAs currently being negotiated;
- Exchange the different campaign strategies being used by the movements and organisations in the South as well as in Europe to fight the EU FTAs;
- Learn from the experience of LAC, Korean and North American movements fighting the US FTAs
- Develop common strategies (including media strategy) and a common Plan of Action (including common days of Action) for 2008-2010.

**Note:** To make this strategy meeting fruitful – each network/campaign needs to prepare beforehand an assessment of the campaign strategies so far. Besides a review of *Global Europe*, we can also ask for prepared input on specific issues e.g (investment, IPRs, public procurement, social clause, labour issues, gender, trade & biodiversity, climate change, agrofuels, services, transparency & CS participation).

### *European Parliament Public Hearing*

This will be the main Public Forum in Brussels during the week of mobilisation with main target audience to be MEPs, trade Unionists, academe, and media.

The specific objectives are:

- Mobilise the participation of some key sections of Trade Unions (Brussels and from Member States);
- Raise awareness and debate among MEPs of the concerns and resistance of civil society organisations and social movements (in the South and in Europe) to EU FTAs;
- Highlight the voices of CSOs and social movements and indicate their vigilance during the negotiations;
- Mobilise support for the upcoming campaigns.

#### *Lobby Tour*

In the South and in Europe, specific governments play an important role in the negotiations and this lobby tour will target selected countries in the EU. The specific objectives are:

- Reach key policy makers (ministries and parliamentarians) in the EU institutions (including Commissioner Mandelson) and selected countries (Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, France, Spain, UK, countries of EU Presidency 2008-2009...) that can be put under pressure and made aware of the concerns of social movements and civil societies and later raise the issues in the Council of the EU;
- Present an informed and rigorous analysis at public fora on the effects of the different agreements in developing countries and in Europe;
- Link with the different social actors and sectors affected by the impacts of Global Europe (e.g small farmers, food sellers, public service workers etc)

#### *Mobilisation/Rally*

The aim of this activity is to give visibility to the resistance against EU-FTAs at the heart of Brussels. For this it will be necessary to link with Belgium-based movements and S2B members as well as with the Belgian Social Forum.

Proposals have also been made to hold simultaneous mobilisation in FTA target countries/regions in the South and in Europe. (this is still under discussion)

#### *Media and Press Conferences*

One of the main bulwarks of support for the Global Europe policy is the mainstream media. It will be very important to develop a targeted approach to selected media in Brussels and in Member States (especially local and regional media more open to cover issues not carried in the national media). Specific objectives are:

- Work towards the building up a robust and well argued critique on the Global Europe strategy, particularly as regards trade policy;
- Profile the voices of resistance to the EU-FTAs and to challenge and counter the spin of the EU Commission on Global Europe and on FTA negotiations;
- Mobilise the media in Brussels and in Member States on the impacts of EU-FTAs and on the resistance of civil society.

Note: This Media work needs to be given the highest priority – let's try to pool our combined expertise and start the build up as soon as possible with trying to mobilise more sympathetic journalists and place articles and features in key media.

#### **Proposal for Sequence of Activities:**

**Note: This Week's Schedule doesn't yet place the Rally – this will depend on the type of activity and the venue...perhaps Tuesday April 8, morning. Also**

**the Press Conference/s is not included – this could be considered on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> at the end of the Public Forum?**

- MONDAY April 7th: Cross-network exchange – state of play of European FTAs, update/assessment of current campaigns and update on specific topics related to European FTAs
- TUESDAY April 8th (morning): Individual FTA strategizing in simultaneous WGs
- TUESDAY April 8th (afternoon): Cross-network strategizing – build up a new joined-up campaign against European FTAs (Part 1)
- WEDNESDAY April 9th (morning): Public Hearing in the EP
- WEDNESDAY April 9th (afternoon): Cross-network strategizing – build up a new joint campaign against European FTAs including e media strategy (Part 2)
- THURSDAY 10th & FRIDAY 11th: Lobby meetings and speakers tours in Brussels and other European capitals. This can also extend to Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th where suitable.  
Debate Forum with Mandelson – on one of the Evenings – (tbc).

**Working Group towards realising Strategy Week**

A Working Group has now been set up to follow through on planning and implementation.

**Networks and Organisations participating:**

Seattle to Brussels Network (S2B) members  
Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA)  
Africa Trade Network (ATN)  
Korean Alliance against EU FTAs (KoA)  
Korean Congress of Trade Unions (KCTU)  
Asia-Europe People's Forum network (AEPF-EU ASEAN FTA)  
Enlazando Alternativas (Bi-regional network Europe, Latin America and Caribbean)  
Transnational Institute (TNI)  
Focus on the Global South  
FDCL  
Ecologistas en Acción  
War on Want  
WEED  
WIDE  
Both ENDS  
SOMO  
World Development Movement (WDM)  
Friends of the Earth EWNI  
Friends of the Earth Europe  
Friends of the Earth International  
Oxfam Solidarity Belgium  
Terra Nuova  
Campagna per la Reforma della Banca Mondiale  
FAIR  
Mani Tese  
IATP  
Attac Austria  
La Via Campesina  
Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO)  
11.11.11