

**Statement by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Coordinadora de Centrales Sindicales del Cono Sur (CCSCS) regarding the possible conclusion of negotiations on the EU-MERCOSUR Association Agreement**

**7 November 2024**

The ETUC and the Coordinator of Trade Unions of the Southern Cone (CCSCS) reiterate our rejection of the EU-MERCOSUR Association Agreement as it stands today, given the current political situation, the continued opacity in recent rounds of negotiations, as well as the absence of mechanisms to preserve workers' rights, their jobs, productive diversification and sustainable development.

As we stated in April of this year, the Agreement must guarantee transparency and democratic legitimacy. The mention of the ILO Conventions is a necessary but not sufficient condition to be able to follow up, evaluate and monitor the implementation and impact of the agreement on work, productivity and labour rights throughout the traceability of regional and global value chains.

The Trade and Sustainable Development chapter, which addresses labour and environmental rights, is weak due to its non-binding nature and the monitoring mechanism of the DAG (Domestic Advisory Groups), which does not guarantee the representation of the actors involved and dilutes the demands of the real actors in social dialogue, as defined by the ILO.

Since the beginning of the negotiations in 1999, we have requested that the civil society mechanism to audit the agreement be a Joint Monitoring Committee, made up of the EESC – European Economic and Social Committee and the FCES – Mercosur Economic and Social Consultative Forum. However, there is insistence on an advisory committee that is not in line with the density and strength of the social partners in the EU and Mercosur.

The ETUC and the CCSCS have requested binding labour clauses in the MERCOSUR agreement, including sanctions, taking into account the ILO recommendations and the role of trade unions in monitoring and implementation. We will continue to push for a chapter on trade and sustainable development that prioritizes employment, workers' rights, gender equality, environmental preservation, and is binding on the entire Association Agreement. To this end, we call for the integration and expansion of the tripartite participation of States, Employers and Unions in the Labor Forum that we created in 2021 for this purpose.

Likewise, and according to the public and official statements, which foresee the conclusion and signature of the agreement at the end of this year, appear in contradiction with the Argentine government policy that has rejected the 2030 Agenda, the Pact of the Future and the commitments to mitigate and adapt to climate change. All this in a framework of increasing curtailment of labour rights, health rights, and even harassment of public freedoms.

The agreement would be signed within the framework of the G20 meeting under the presidency of Brazil, where Argentina has refused to sign commitments related to gender equality. It is worrying that the EU, historical founder of much of the human rights framework, signs an agreement with countries where civic spaces and fundamental freedoms are clearly restricted and where the quality of democracy is declining day by day.

Finally, we reiterate our opposition to split the agreement, which aims to accelerate the free trade part and ignores the political and cooperation part, which would allow for a comprehensive partnership aimed at environmentally friendly reindustrialization and the preservation of natural resources, in line with the commitment to common but differentiated responsibilities.

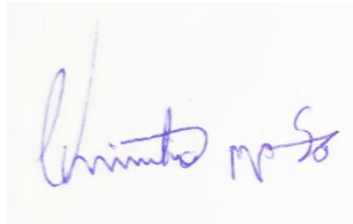
We express the need for a more in-depth debate on the Agreement, transparency of its content, tripartite monitoring mechanisms in line with the tradition of the ILO and the bodies of both blocs for labour and production issues, as well as impact studies that identify the benefits and disadvantages of an association agreement of such magnitude.

The unions and workers of the European Union and MERCOSUR are committed to social justice, decent work, climate change and the negotiation of association agreements that are beneficial to the peoples of both regions. We expect the same from governments.

Sincerely,



Esther Lynch  
ETUC General Secretary



Quintino Marqués Severo  
CCSCS President