

**CONO SUR TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS COORDINATOR (CCSCS)
EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ETUC)**

**JOINT STATEMENT ON THE MEETING HELD IN BRUSSELS BY THE TRADE UNION
REPRESENTATION WITH THE EU AND MERCOSUR NEGOTIATORS**

In light of the negotiations that have been in progress since the exchange of offers made on 11 May 2016, within the framework of the Bi-regional Negotiations Committee (CNB), to establish a Bi-regional Association between the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) and the European Union (EU), the representatives of the trade union movement have raised our main concerns and demands on repeated counts with the authorities of both blocks, in order to ensure that the negotiations result in a genuine association agreement that will strengthen political, social, economic and cultural relations between the two regions, and that will promote respect for human rights, decent employment, decent jobs, sustainable development and democratic values.

Specifically, on many occasions we have called for the need to be immediately informed of the content of the offers and chapters that are being negotiated, so that the greatest possible transparency is afforded to the productive stakeholders involved, towards whom we have undertaken to respect the confidentiality clauses of the agreement. In particular, on 20 March 2017, the representatives of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Cono Sur Trade Union Organisations Coordinator (CCSCS) held an initial meeting with the lead negotiators of both blocks at the Argentinian Chancellery, as part of the CNB Round of Negotiations, at which they urgently undertook to send the information requested by the organised labour movement concerning the aforesaid offers of market access.

On 7 September 2017, the EU and Mercosur trade union representatives held a second meeting with the lead negotiators in Brussels. At this meeting, we protested the failure to fulfil the information commitments to the trade union movement promised in Buenos Aires, and we raised several concerns about the negotiations, which have been accelerated in recent months in order to reach an agreement by December of this year within the framework of the XI Ministerial Conference of the WTO that will be held in Buenos Aires.

Firstly, we repeat our concerns about the total lack of transparency and the opaqueness with which the negotiations have been conducted to date. Likewise, we specifically wish to be taken into account as fundamental productive stakeholders, since in some countries the business sectors have been consulted and have been given information about the offers and chapters under negotiation, which has not been the case for workers.

Secondly, we repeat our request for such information to be provided to us, so that we have first-hand knowledge of the content of the market access offers and the wording of the various chapters under negotiation. This is the only way that the organised labour movement can have an accurate opinion on the agreement, as it concerns our interests. As it is a Bi-regional Agreement, we want the information to be given in this context, irrespective of the possibility of establishing national dialogue in each of the countries.

Thirdly, we emphatically request that we be invited to the remainder of the negotiations as fundamental productive stakeholders, and that we be involved in the monitoring and follow-up of a future bi-regional association agreement. To this end, we have put various participation options on the table, such as the creation of a “joint monitoring committee” for the negotiations, the setting up of a Domestic Advisory Group (DAG) and/or the inclusion of a “Labour Forum” in the context of the agreement, on the topics of work and employment. We have emphasised that the effectiveness of the Domestic Advisory Groups in the Agreements already in force in other regions and countries has been significantly reduced due to lack of representation and financial resources, and would therefore not be desirable in the case of EU-Mercosur unless these problems can be overcome.

Fourthly, we have consulted with the lead negotiators for both the EU and Mercosur about producing analyses of the economic, social, labour and environmental impacts, among others, being carried out as part of the negotiations. The EU informed us that it had begun work on a Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) for the agreement in June of this year, and that an initial report will be produced in October, but will not be completed until next year. The lack of response from Mercosur leads us to think that there is no impact analysis of the agreement. It is extremely worrying that an agreement of such importance is being signed without an impact analysis on the economy and quality of life of the population.

Fifthly, we are submitting some specific concerns relating to the areas and chapters being negotiated, which we consider extremely important to social interest in general and workers in particular. The main points for each of the chapters are summarised below:

- i. Public Services: we have been assured that public services (specifically the health and education sectors) are not included among the issues being negotiated.
- ii. Social-labour matters: we have been informed that there will not be a specific chapter on this matter, only a series of clauses within the “business and sustainable development” chapter and others on trade union rights in the political chapter. We insist on the importance of including decent employment and all the ILO agreements on this matter.
- iii. Energy: only access to low-cost tariffs that reflect actual costs is being negotiated.
- iv. Public procurement: there was a general reference to the fact that its deregulation and liberalisation is being negotiated, without any additional details.
- v. State controlled companies: it was noted that this is one of the most delicate topics of the negotiations, and that the EU is seeking the establishment of minimum standards in this respect.
- vi. Investment: The negotiators emphatically stated that investment issues would be excluded from the negotiations between the two blocks.
- vii. Intellectual property: it was stated that multiple clauses referring to patents, copyright and geographical indications, among other things, would be negotiated.
- viii. Trade and development: in the case of employment clauses, it was stated that a “best efforts” approach was being articulated, but that no binding clauses or possible sanctions were anticipated for situations of non-compliance.

In brief, we have been provided with information that is both incredibly one-sided and incomplete. The bi-regional trade union movement continues to demand a real, effective consultation by the negotiating teams with the trade unions on employment issues, especially with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Mercosur Social and Economic Consultative Forum (FCES) at an institutional level.

To conclude, we reiterate and reaffirm our position expressed in the “Declaration on the Negotiations between the European Union and Mercosur”, dated 3 June 2016, and in the “Joint Statement on the Position of Workers regarding the Negotiations to establish a Bi-regional Association between Mercosur and the European Union”, dated 20 March 2017, which states the vision and position of the trade union movement in both regions on the content and form of the negotiations between the two blocks.

The ETUC and the CCSCS will continue to defend the labour demands and the principle that the relations between the European Union and Mercosur should contribute to the development of more economically balanced development models, with greater cohesion and social justice and guaranteed respect for the environment.

As it has on several other occasions, the organised trade union movement will rise to the occasion. We hope the same is true of our governments.

Brussels, 11 September 2017