

To the attention of Commissioner Mr Maroš Šefčovič

European Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security; Interinstitutional Relations and Transparency

Dear Commissioner Šefčovič,

A bit more than a year ago, during your confirmation hearing at the European Parliament, you rightly highlighted that “today's international trade environment is marked by stark competition over disruptive new technologies, and the weaponisation of economic dependencies” and that “given this seismic shift” one of your priorities would have been “deepening our alliances”. This became even more needed since the second Trump mandate, with the USA emerging less as a reliable EU trading partner and more as a systemic rival challenging Europe's industrial base and regulatory sovereignty.

Strong bilateral and biregional alliances are now more needed than ever. In this context, we, European and international CSOs, consider that for this goal to be achieved, the following conditions must be respected, and credible and beneficial alternatives must be offered to our trading partners:

1. Strengthen the environment – human development – trade nexus, ensuring a win-win for people and the planet

Trade and investment should be tools to achieve social and environmental goals, moving beyond extractivism toward a fairer, sustainable partnership with strong labour, human rights, and environmental commitments. This requires rigorous impact assessments, effective due diligence, and economic benefits that support formal economies, social protection, decent work with a gender perspective, and fair prices for smallholders to enable sustainable, ecosystem-friendly practices. All trade and investment agreements and partnerships shall include binding commitments aligned with ILO conventions, the Paris Agreement, and international human rights law. This must include: non-regression on environmental, labour and human rights standards; sector-specific rules for high-risk clean supply chains (mining, hydrogen, renewable technologies); obligations to uphold Indigenous Peoples' rights, including FPIC; enforceable monitoring and accountability mechanisms, including remedies and sanctions.

2. Foster equitable technology transfer and sustainable, low-emission industrial development

Trade agreements should ensure equitable access to green technologies and support skills development in both regions, as part of a just transition. This includes strategic partnerships on research, innovation, and technology transfer in renewable energy, decarbonized industries, and circular economy solutions, with limits on EU raw material consumption. New agreements should not contain references to fossil fuel-based projects, highly polluting production processes, or extractive or manufacturing projects that contribute to deforestation, biodiversity loss, and environmental pollution. Cooperation should build sustainable local value chains, strengthen technological and energy sovereignty, and align investments, like the Global Gateway, with local needs and community-led initiatives.

3. Guarantee inclusive participation and rights protection in trade and investment governance

Trade Unions and Civil society organisations must be involved from the start of any trade and investment agreements including new type of agreements such as the Clean Trade and Investment

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Partnerships. Independent, inclusive, transparent, and well-resourced mechanisms for participation, including Domestic Advisory Groups (DAGs) with consultative, monitoring, and enforcement powers should be established ensuring an inclusive governance. Rights of affected communities must be guaranteed, decision-making should be transparent, and investments must prioritize local democratic decision-making and allow communities to set development priorities reflecting their social, environmental, and cultural needs. Strong, continuous involvement of the European Parliament and partner-country parliaments shall be ensured.

Ahead of the EU-CELAC Summit in Santa Marta (Colombia) last year, a group of more than 40 civil society organisations developed and signed a “[Declaration for a Bi-Regional Partnership Centred on a Just Transition](#)”. While the declaration specifically addresses the EU-Latin America partnership, its principles and approaches can serve as an exemplary model for other regions seeking to establish resilient, mutually beneficial and just bi-regional trade relations.

We are confident that the adoption of such an approach from the Commission would reinforce the EU’s global leadership on sustainability and human rights, while promoting mutual economic resilience and shared prosperity worldwide.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet you to better discuss the points presented and share further insights into how civil society’s demands can support Europe’s economic, environmental and social ambitions.

Thank you for your attention and we look forward for further engagement and collaboration on these important matters.

Sincerely,

CAN Europe

COSPE

FOS

Foundation Max van der Stoel (FMS)

ISVI IFSI vzw

Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL)

La Coordinadora de Organizaciones para el Desarrollo

Olof Palme International Center (OPC)

Pax Christi

Prodiversa

Progetto Sud

SOLIDAR

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Transparency**

The International Office for Human Rights Action on Colombia (OIDHACO)

We Social Movements (WSM)