



CIVIL SOCIETY LETTER TO PRESIDENT-ELECT OBAMA REGARDING NAFTA

December 15, 2008

Dear President-Elect Barack Obama,

We wish to congratulate you on your recent electoral victory.

Throughout the electoral campaign we, the undersigned, followed with great interest your repeated commitments to *fair* trade and the renegotiation of poorly designed trade agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

After the election we visited your web site and were pleased to see the quote: “Obama and Biden believe that NAFTA and its potential were oversold to the American people. They will work with the leaders of Canada and Mexico to fix NAFTA so that it works for American workers.” It also states that you “will use trade agreements to spread good labor and environmental standards around the world and stand firm against agreements like the Central American Free Trade Agreement that fail to live up to those important benchmarks.”.

We think this is a good start at revisiting U.S. trade policy, but feel that other areas must be addressed. We firmly believe that future agreements between our countries must work for the people of every country. Hence, a new model for trade that supports widely recognized international development, human rights and environmental goals is greatly needed.

Additionally, in light of deepening food crisis, we strongly urge you to include a thorough reassessment of agricultural market and trade deregulation that has unleashed damaging price volatility which threatens food security in all countries, but which poses the greatest threat to the poorest citizens in developing countries who are the most susceptible to food price spikes. Agricultural trade deregulation has allowed multinational agribusiness cartels to dump commodities into local markets, forcing farmers to migrate from the countryside to urban centers and north across the border. Therefore, renegotiating the Agricultural chapter on NAFTA with the full participation of small and family farmers' associations would be a tremendous step forward.

In 2008, we launched a policy proposal entitled “**NAFTA Must be Renegotiated; A Proposal from North America Civil Society Networks**” prepared jointly by Canadian, Mexican and U.S. organizations that calls for a revision and renegotiation of NAFTA so as to establish economic relations based on social justice within a paradigm of sustainable development.” In this proposal, we synthesize ten priorities for the renegotiation of NAFTA based on our work of many years, namely: agriculture, energy, foreign investment, financial services, the role of the State in the provision of services, employment, migration, environment, intellectual property rights and dispute settlement provisions.



To this end, we urge you to consider the **Trade Reform, Accountability, Development, Employment (TRADE Act)** as a starting point for a new dialogue on developing an alternative fair trade model based on a democratic, participatory and transparent process that puts enhancing human rights and equitable development ahead of the current approach of trade for trade's sake that puts corporate profits of a few above human rights, public health, the environment and prosperous local communities. The TRADE Act was introduced earlier this year by Sen. Sherrod Brown, Rep. Mike Michaud and eighty of their Congressional and Senate colleagues who worked closely with a broad range of civil society constituencies who provided input for this important legislation.

Finally, we have also worked closely with our allies in Canada and Mexico for a halt to the undemocratic and corporate - led **Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP)**, **because it excludes Congressional oversight, lacks any consultation with civil society, it leads to further deregulation that benefits only corporations and has led to an increase of militarization and violation of civil liberties.** We support the statement you made earlier this year that: "Starting my first year in office, I will convene annual meetings with Mr. Calderon and the prime minister of Canada. Unlike similar summits under President Bush, these will be conducted with a level of transparency that represents the close ties among our three countries. We will seek the active and open involvement of citizens, labor, the private sector and non-governmental organizations in setting the agenda and making progress."

Please count on us to work with you to create a new model for economic, political and social relations in the North American region that will have implications for the United States and the entire Americas ' hemisphere.

Sincerely,

Across the Americas
Agribusiness Accountability Initiative
Alliance for Democracy
Americas Policy Program
Association for the Sovereignty of Colombia (ASOCOL)
California Food and Justice Coalition
Carolina Interfaith Task Force on Central America
Center of Concern
Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America
Connie Hogarth Center for Social Action
Cumberland Countians for Peace & Justice
Democratic Socialists of America (DSA)
Ecumenical Committee of US Church Personnel in Nicaragua
Equal Exchange
Family Farm Defenders
Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy
Friends of the Earth U.S.
Global Exchange
Grassroots International
Holy Cross International/ Justice Office
Howard County Friends of Latin America



Hudson Valley Community Coalition
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Institute for Policy Studies, Global Economy Project
International Labor Rights Forum
INTERCONNECT
Jobs with Justice of East Tennessee
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement Massachusetts Chapter
Lancaster Coalition for Peace and Justice
Liberty Tree Foundation for the Democratic Revolution
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Movement for Peace in Colombia
National Catholic Rural Life Conference
National Family Farm Coalition
National Lawyers Guild
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility, United Church of Christ
NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Nicaragua Network
NY Citizens Trade Coalition
NYC Mennonite Immigration Program
Orange County Peace and Justice Coalition
Pesticide Action Network North America
Philipstown for Democracy
Quixote Center
Rockland Immigration Coalition in New City NY
Rural Coalition
Solidarity Committee of the Capital District
The Oakland Institute
Trade Justice NY Metro
U.S. Labor Education in the Americas Project (USLEAP)
U. S. Nicaragua Friendship Committee
United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 1500
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
Washington Office on Latin America
Witness for Peace
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, U.S. Section
World Hunger Year (WHY)

(Some Sources for drafting this document)

<http://www.barackobama.com/issues/economy/>

Barack Obama "I Will Repair Our Relationship with Mexico ". The Dallas Morning News, November 10, 2008. http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/dn/opinion/viewpoints/stories/DN-obama_20edi.ART.State.Edition1.464da8e.html

"NAFTA Must be Renegotiated; A Proposal from North America Civil Society Networks" <http://art-us.org/node/334>.

House version of TRADE Act: <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/C?c110:./temp/~c110ZM3OdH>.