
Solidarity with workers in Colombia
Letter to the EU Trade Commissioner
November 2009

TUC calls on EU to suspend Colombia trade talks

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber has written to the current EU trade commissioner Baroness Ashton (soon to take up her new role as High Representative for Foreign Relations) calling on her to abandon trade talks with Colombia because of its appalling human rights record.

The TUC and others will take part in the launch of a new campaign against the EU-Colombia bilateral trade agreement on 9 December in the European Parliament.

Dear Cathy

European Commission trade negotiations with Colombia

You will recall that we met on 6 July to discuss the TUC's concerns with the European Commission's trade negotiations with Colombia. You asked us to provide you with a list of concerns with the Colombian government's implementation of its human rights obligations. Please find attached a report detailing such concerns, and demonstrating that, despite the claims of the Uribe administration, the Colombian state is failing in its duty to protect its citizens.

You suggested that engaging in trade negotiations gave you the opportunity to raise these concerns with the Colombian government in a constructive manner. But you already have considerable scope to raise those concerns through the GSP+ procedures and have chosen not to do so – I have seen nothing to explain why a Free Trade Agreement will make any difference to your record so far.

As the report makes clear, the Uribe administration is so far from fulfilling its fundamental human right duties and the situation is so bad that concluding the current trade deal with Colombia would only be interpreted as endorsing this worrying state of affairs, especially given the comparatively small volumes of trade between the EU and Colombia. This conclusion is also shared by the three Colombian trade union confederations.

I urge the European Commission not to conclude this agreement with Colombian. I appreciate the political difficulties you face in taking this course. One possible measure would be to suspend the trade talks pending the outcome of an

investigation into Colombia's human rights record under GSP+. I would urge you to give this option serious consideration.

[More information.](#)