

August 15, 2007

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500
The United States

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to you as U.S. Church representatives of MESA, a tri-national trade justice coalition of religious organizations in the United States, Mexico and Canada. As you meet together with Mexican President Felipe Calderon and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada in August, **we urge you and your fellow leaders to replace NAFTA with economic and trade relationships based on justice, and to reject the proposal to intensify NAFTA through the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP).**

NAFTA was the proto-type of a kind of trade liberalization – advanced further in CAFTA and other free trade agreements -- that is harmful to many people in the United States and around the world. We reject this existing model of trade liberalization. Our Mexican and Canadian colleagues, who share our desire for more humane trade across our borders, have written their own letters to President Felipe Calderon and Prime Minister Stephen Harper respectively.

Free trade's impact is especially harmful to those in developing countries struggling to overcome poverty. In Mexico and other developing countries, trade liberalization causes massive loss of rural livelihoods due to agri-business privatization and agricultural dumping. This has led to increases in hunger and food insecurity, as small-scale domestic producers are bankrupted and prices of imported food rise.

In addition, these free trade agreements result in rising medicine prices because overly restrictive intellectual property rules are limiting the availability of essential generic drugs. Free trade is also a threat to basic services such as access to water, health care and education. More generally, the existing approach to trade liberalization is closing off the policy space for governments to be able to protect and nurture their own domestic economies, safeguard the environment and pursue public health and safety objectives.

People throughout the United States have made known their own concerns about free trade, which include:

- the lack of democratic accountability and citizen participation in trade negotiations;
- job “outsourcing,” increased job insecurity and the transition to a service economy with lower wages and few benefits;
- a diminished ability by federal and state governments to make decisions regarding health, safety and environmental protections;

- a boomerang effect in the U.S. of increased migration from poorer countries into the U.S. and increased coca cultivation and drug trafficking in several countries, which our government has responded to with draconian and ineffective counter-measures rather than efforts to resolve the problems at their roots; and
- the threat of global instability due to persistent poverty and growing inequality in many parts of the world, which ill serves long-term U.S. national interests.

In our view, trade policy and trade agreements must be morally accountable and meet the requirements of justice. Human beings are created in the divine image, which gives rise to the inherent dignity of the human person as the basis of human rights. Because every human being bears the divine imprint, each one has the right to participate meaningfully in the policy decisions that impact their lives. Created in God's image, human beings are called to the care and keeping of creation for the benefit of all people, not just a privileged few. All people have a right to share equitably in creation's bounty. There is enough for everyone if we reject greed, share what we have and enact just public policies.

We also note that in Christ, God calls human beings into "right relationships" with God, among people and with all creation. Within the economic realm, a right relationship requires that public policies ensure that all persons have enough material resources for lives of dignity and sufficiency. Finally, our Scriptures tell us that God has a special concern for impoverished and vulnerable persons. This concern must be our priority as well. Public policies must be shaped and evaluated on the basis of whether they empower people who are struggling to overcome poverty and genuinely improve their lives.

We believe that international trade rightly formulated can genuinely benefit people in the United States and in developing countries. A wise and just trade policy would include the following elements:

- Ensure that trade agreements are formulated with full democratic accountability and citizen participation both in the United States and in the partner nation.
- Require (pre- and post-agreement) country impact evaluations to assess the effects of provisions in a proposed trade agreement on key issues such as poverty eradication, job growth, and food security.
- Fully respect the right of developing countries to safeguard their own domestic economies through the implementation of trade policies, barriers, regulations and mechanisms, which promote and provide adequate protection for their own small-holder farmers, vulnerable workers, local businesses and domestic manufacturers.
- Exclude provisions that require the liberalization or deregulation of essential public services, such as water, health care and education.
- Reject intellectual property rights restrictions which make it more difficult for people in developing countries to have affordable access to essential medicines.

Together with our Mexican and Canadian colleagues, we believe that there is a community of interest among the majority of people in the U.S. and the majority of people in the global South. We are not pitted against each other, nor should we benefit economically at the expense of each other. Rather, we are united in opposing the existing trade agenda and in calling for wise and just economic and trade policies.

Mr. President, we urge you and your fellow leaders to take a long-term view of North American interests in a more secure and stable world where poverty and inequality are

decreasing. Rather than formulating trade policies narrowly based on commercial corporate interests, seek policies that generate broad-based development. Rather than “troubling our own house” by policies that harm working Americans and increase global instability, we appeal to you to listen to the voices of the poor and work for a better world for us all, lest we, our children and grandchildren “inherit the wind” (Proverbs 11:29).

Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Yours truly,



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