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Globalisation

No to the FTAA! Another Americas is possible!

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In mid April, the leaders of 34 American countries met in Quebec City to discuss the pursuance of the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Meanwhile, the Second People's Summit of the Americas, sponsored by trade unions and NGOs, was also meeting and issued the following declaration:

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/ftaa1-2.jpg>]

Quebec City - Summit leaders carve up the Americas

WE, the delegates of the Second People's Summit of the Americas, declare our opposition to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) project concocted secretly by the 34 Heads of State and government hand in hand with the American Business Forum. Who are we? We are the Hemispheric Social Alliance, the voices of the unions, popular and environmental organisations, women's groups, human rights organisations, international solidarity groups, indigenous, peasant and student associations and church groups.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/ftaa2-3.jpg>]

Quebec City - 30,000 protesters march outside

We have come from every corner of the Americas to make our voices heard. We reject this project of liberalised trade and investment, deregulation and privatisation. This neo-liberal project is racist and sexist and destructive of the environment. We propose to build new ways of continental integration based on democracy, human rights, equality, solidarity, pluralism and respect for the environment.

BROKEN PROMISES: Since the 1994 Miami Summit, the Heads of State and government have committed themselves to reinforce democracy and human rights, to support education and to reduce poverty in the Americas. For seven years nothing has been done. The only issue that has moved forward, taking advantage of deficit in democracy, is the negotiation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

This is not the first time that presidents and Heads of State have promised a better world. This is not the first time that the people of the Americas have been told to wait for the fruits of free trade to come. This is not the first time that we are forced to take note that the Heads of State have broken their promises. The FTAA project is a charter of investors' rights and freedoms, sanctions the primacy of capital over labour, transforms life and the world into merchandise, negates human rights, sabotages democracy and undermines state sovereignty.

THE ASYMMETRIC AMERICAS: Indeed, we live in an Americas marked by intolerable inequalities and unjustifiable political and economic asymmetries. Half of the population of 800 million, of whom almost 500 million are Latin American, live in poverty. The south has a debt of \$792 billion US to the north, resulting in a debt servicing of \$123 billion US in 1999 alone. Capital, technologies and patents are concentrated in the North. Canada and the United States hold 80% of the economic might. Many new jobs are in the informal sector, where labour rights are constantly flouted. Free trade agreements aggravate inequalities between the rich and the poor, between men and women, between countries of the north and countries of the south, and destroy the ecological links between human beings and the environment. 20% of the world population consumes 80% of the natural resources of the planet. These free trade agreements prioritise exports at the expense of the needs of local communities.

We are witnessing the consolidation of economic and legal corporate power at the expense of popular sovereignty. Free trade agreements favour the commodification of public goods and the planet (water, genetic heritage, etc.). The neo-liberal logic reduces the citizen to a mere consumer and ultimately to a product. It favours short term gains without considering the social and environmental cost of goods and services. Under the pressure of large

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agribusinesses and dumping policies, free trade agreements threaten local small-scale agriculture, mostly performed by women, putting food security in danger. Free trade agreements encourage the systematic privatisation of public goods such as health, education and social programs along with of Structural Adjustment Programs in the South and budget cuts in the North.

These agreements rely on women to take up the collective tasks now abandoned by the state. Free trade agreements foster the marginalisation of indigenous people and the appropriation and subsequent marketing of their knowledge. Free trade agreements lead to an increasing feminisation of poverty and an exacerbation of existing inequalities between men and women. For example, women get paid less, work in hard and often degrading conditions without union rights, undertake unpaid and unrecognised work for the family and community, suffer the commodification of their bodies - now the third most lucrative trafficking after drugs and arms, and are subjected to increased domestic violence and violation of their fundamental rights. Free trade agreements are accompanied by the militarisation of entire societies through schemes such as Plan Colombia and are also related to arms trafficking. There is no possible fair agreement in such a context.

WHAT WE WANT: We want to build bridges between the peoples of the Americas, draw on the pluralism of our histories and our cultures and to strengthen each other in the exercising of a representative and participatory democracy. We want to share the same passion for an absolute respect of human rights and the same commitment to have these rights respected. We want to live together a true equality between men and women, to take care of all our children and to share the wealth fairly and in solidarity.

We want complete respect for workers rights, trade union rights and collective bargaining. We want to ensure the primacy of human rights and collectives rights as defined in international instruments over commercial agreements. We want states that promote the common good and that are able to intervene actively to ensure the respect of rights. We want states to strengthen democracy, to ensure the production and distribution of wealth, to guarantee universal and free access to quality public education, and to health care particularly concerning women's' reproductive rights. We want states to eliminate violence against women and children and to ensure respect for the environment on behalf of the current and future generations.

We want socially productive and ecologically responsible investment. The rules applied across the continent should encourage foreign investors who will guarantee the creation of quality jobs, sustainable production and economic stability, while blocking speculative investments. We want fair trade. We welcome the conclusions of the deliberations of the different forums in the People's Summit. These reflections will be integrated into the Alternatives for the Americas document. We call upon the peoples of the Americas to intensify their mobilisation to fight the FTAA project and to build other integration alternatives based on democracy, social justice and sustainable development.

April 19, 2001