

UNITED FEDERATION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS (CUT)

CUT Statement on the Colombian Action Plan Related to Labor Rights

Various declarations by government officials, and by the Colombian president himself, invite the labor movement to establish a labor agreement that accepts the content of the Colombian Action Plan Related to Labor Rights, worked out between Presidents Juan Manuel Santos and Barack Obama, in the long and troubled road toward ratification of the FTA, which will obviously cause greater unemployment and poverty for Colombians and will increase our already critical economic dependence on the superpower.

In response to such an offer we reaffirm our rejection of FTAs and our refusal to collaborate with the Colombian government to meet or appear to meet the humiliating conditions imposed by economic powers. The reasons for this decision are based on the daily experiences of Colombian workers from across the country: the degradation of working and living conditions, the anti-union practices and legislation that prevail in Colombia, the violence against union members, human rights defenders and union leaders. These go hand in hand with the application of neoliberal policies, the violation of national sovereignty and the recolonization of the country.

Our permanent demands against the privatization and reduction of the State and its consequent massacres of workers, against the elimination of the State's social obligations, against third party labor arrangements implemented by the State and welcomed by business interests, the attacks on labor rights and pensions, the destruction of industrial and agricultural production and the resulting unemployment, none of these problems can be solved with pronouncements of good intentions. This government has shown that it will not only maintain the economic policies but further entrench them, as the content of the National Development Plan, the Legislative Agenda and the routine anti-union behavior by national and foreign companies show. The national legislation not only conflicts with the agreements of the International Labor Organization (ILO), it also undermines recognition of workers' most basic rights and is constantly fine tuned to further disenfranchise workers.

On August 24, 2011 we presented a Petition of Demands, approved by our Executive Committee and our National Board, that includes the problems faced by workers and an invitation to negotiate effective solutions to these concerns in the National Consultation Commission on Labor and Wage Policies, but the government and the employer representatives have not addressed the matter. Instead, there was no agreement in the negotiation of an increase in the minimum wage; the public employees' petition of demands was not resolved; workers and employees who dare to form a union or join an existing one are fired, as happened recently in the Colsubsidio case; foreign companies don't allow unions or collective bargaining agreements; the public hospital network along with the Health Insurance Companies (EPSs) and Health Service Institutions (IPSs) are champions in circumventing unions through the use of Worker Cooperatives (CTAs), as are the slave drivers of the sugar mills, the palm plantations and the flower growers; the multinational oil and mining companies use contractors, employment agencies and

outsourcing to enslave workers, and the government does nothing. There has been no resolution to the continuing impunity for crimes against labor and social leaders. Now we are being pressured to express satisfaction with the announcements of dialog and forthcoming solutions; yet, barely 20 days ago when we reiterated at the National Consultation Commission meeting of April 13 our willingness to negotiate the Petition of Demands presented on August 24, 2010, government and management were unresponsive.

Our reservations against the latest official pronouncements are rooted in the fraud represented by the much-publicized 1994 Social Pact and the 2006 Tri-Partite Accord, which in the end resulted merely in statements of the issues involved in a show of disrespect towards the Labor Federations and the union movement.

The CUT will maintain its resolute willingness to dialog and we will continue to present our demands to the National Consultation Commission on Labor and Wage Policies. We remain firmly committed to finding effective solutions to the problems afflicting workers, either through substantial modifications to the current regressive legislation, incorporating ILO principles into the Colombian constitution, or by way of new administrative and labor relations regulations that are subject to verification and obligatory compliance by government and management.

We will not sign on to any commitment or document designed to indicate any support for the Free Trade Agreement on our part. On the contrary, we will continue to campaign against it and to coordinate with the international labor movement to defeat it and to promote fair trade and integration between nations on an equal footing.

We wish to communicate our special gratitude to our brothers and sisters of the United States AFL-CIO for their support and solidarity in our struggle against the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

Approved by the National Executive Committee on May 5, 2011.

Tarsicio Mora Godoy, President Domingo Tovar Arrieta, General Secretary

WORKING FOR THE UNITY OF COLOMBIAN TRADE UNIONS
Calle 35 No. 7-25 P.9 PBX y FAX 3237550-3237950 Bogotá, D. C. –Colombia
Email: cut@cut.org.co – secretariageneral@cut.org.co