

Subject: Review of the free trade agreement between the EU and Colombia, Peru and Ecuador.

To the Presidency of the Council of the European Union,

As you are aware, the EU trade agreement with Colombia, Peru and Ecuador was signed on 26 June 2012, ratified by Colombia on 18 July 2013 and provisionally entered into force on 1 August 2013 for Colombia.

Since then, ratification by both the parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region and the parliament of the Walloon Region in Belgium has been pending. The Walloon Region gave its approval at the end of 2018 and at the end of 2023 the parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region also approved it. At the moment it is still pending ratification by the Wallonia-Brussels federation, which rejected it in the first reading. However, the opinion of the Council of State is still pending so that the text can be approved in the second reading, which would make the treaty fully ratified by Belgium, the last country to do so.

Civil society organisations and international bodies in their annual reports, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), have been denouncing the continuous abuses and violations of human rights in Colombia during the years of implementation of the FTA.

On the other hand, the Truth Commission of the Final Peace Agreement in Colombia, an independent body in charge of investigating and clarifying the events that took place during the Colombian armed conflict, concludes in its final report thatⁱ that: at least 6,402 civilians were killed by the army to falsely pass them off as "guerrillas killed in combat"ⁱⁱ. 121,768 civilians were victims of enforced disappearance.ⁱⁱⁱ 8,273,562 victims of forced displacement by 31 May 2022^{iv} and more than 8 million hectares have been dispossessed or abandoned as a result of the widespread violence up to 2013.^v More than 34 killed and more than 100 visually impaired young protesters victims of police violence on 21 April 2021.^{vi}

Colombia is named as the most dangerous country to be an environmental defender according to data from organisations such as Global Witness.^{vii} and Somos Defensores^{viii}

The pressure of mining companies, extensive cattle ranching, agribusiness and monocultures not only threatens the country's biodiversity, but also the people who defend it.

The fact that the human rights clause of the agreement has not been activated during all these years, despite the fact that it has been in full force since the beginning of its provisional application, and despite the numerous proofs and denunciations of massive and systematic human rights violations in Colombia, calls into question the monitoring function of the FTA. The lack of participation of civil society in the mechanisms for monitoring respect for human and labour rights has led civil society organisations to call on:

- That the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union implement Resolution A-803/3 - 2023/2024 of the Brussels Parliament, urging the European Commission to initiate the review process of the EU-Colombia Trade Agreement.

- That the revision of the agreement facilitates and specifies the mechanisms for the participation of civil society organisations in the monitoring and verification of compliance with the clauses.
- That the revision includes effective mechanisms to guarantee the protection of the environment and biodiversity and incorporates the objectives of the fight against climate change.
- That the trade agreement effectively guarantees the participation of human rights organisations and trade unions in the monitoring mechanisms of the agreement.

Signed :

Comité pour le respect des droits humains "Daniel Gillard"

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ⁱ Informe final de la Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad y la No repetición.

ⁱⁱ HALLAZGOS Y RECOMENDACIONES – Informe final, CEV, pag. 131

ⁱⁱⁱ HALLAZGOS Y RECOMENDACIONES – Informe final, CEV, pag. 137

^{iv} HALLAZGOS Y RECOMENDACIONES – Informe final, CEV, pag. 169

^v HALLAZGOS Y RECOMENDACIONES – Informe final, CEV, pag. 175

^{vi} Colombia : Graves abus policiers à l'encontre de manifestants - HRW

<https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2021/06/09/colombie-graves-abus-policiers-lencontre-de-manifestants>

^{vii} <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/almost-2000-land-and-environmental-defenders-killed-between-2012-and-2022-protecting-planet/>

^{viii} <https://somosdefensores.org/informes-anuales/>