



Trade for well-being, not just for profit

A shared Quaker statement on TTIP and free trade agreements

As Quaker organisations in Europe and the United States working for peace and justice, we call on governments to ensure that trade contributes to a more equal, economically just and sustainable world.

Our shared faith and commitment to equality, truth, integrity, simplicity and peace impel us to seek economic relationships that reflect our fundamental human equality. We also believe that humankind has a responsibility to cherish and protect the Earth, not exploit its resources indiscriminately.

In recent months, through the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sustainable Development Goals, the international community has committed to build a more equitable and sustainable future. We are concerned that some aspects of the global trade system are working counter to our vision, and these global commitments. The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), and its opaque negotiations, exemplify our concerns. Although this statement focusses on TTIP, many of these concerns also apply to other trade agreements such as the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Properly regulated trade can benefit everyone by contributing to well-being and by strengthening relationships and understanding between different countries and cultures. However trade, like all economic relationships, is a tool, not an end in itself. The success of any trade agreement can not only be measured in economic terms; a truly successful trade deal will benefit the whole of society and the environment.

We are alarmed that in its current form TTIP threatens to increase further humanity's negative impact on the natural environment. Any economic growth based on unsustainable practices is likely to be short-lived. Now more than ever, our actions must be directed by the long-term priority to protect the planet, living sustainably within natural boundaries.

It is imperative that all governments affected by TTIP are free to implement responsible policies, regulations and public services in the interests of the common good. Any provisions, such as the proposed Investor to State Dispute Settlement mechanism or Investment Court System, that give investors privileged rights to

challenge social, environmental, health or other legislation, not open to 'ordinary' citizens, are fundamentally antidemocratic in nature and therefore unacceptable.

TTIP will have a global impact, affecting developed and developing countries alike. Yet only the governments of the United States and the European Union have a voice in its negotiation. It is vital to ensure that trade agreements do not force developing countries into a one-size-fits-all model of development. Trade can be a positive tool for sustainable global development, but only if all affected parties – states and civil society – are able to input into the process for setting trade rules.

Truth and transparency are the only way to ensure real accountability. The lack of public access to details of the TTIP negotiations is of profound concern. In our experience secrecy can lead to deceit and the abuse of power. It is imperative that trade negotiations are transparent and negotiating parties seek meaningful input from across the broad spectrum of civil society throughout the negotiation process.

Instead of continuing down the path exemplified by the current TTIP negotiations, we urge our governments to work towards a different kind of trading system; a system which positively re-regulates globalisation, is open to public scrutiny, contributes to fairly shared prosperity, and has a positive impact on the environment.

We recognise that transforming the system will not be simple. As Quakers we know that human beings can live together co-operatively and peacefully if enabled by the right economic structures, and we are committed to play our part in building a more just and sustainable economic system. However, perhaps now more than ever, the world needs visionary leadership. We urge our governments to have the courage to take the bold and radical steps necessary for such a transformation.

American Friends Service Committee
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Quaker Council for European Affairs
Quaker Peace & Social Witness
Quaker United Nations Office

May 2016