

# ***INTERFAITH WORKING GROUP ON TRADE AND INVESTMENT***

*A WASHINGTON-BASED WORKING GROUP WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM A RANGE OF FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS COMMITTED TO ASSERTING A STRONGER PRESENCE OF COMMUNITIES OF FAITH IN PUBLIC POLICY DISCUSSIONS ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INVESTMENT.*  
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Dear Member of Congress,

The Interfaith Working Group (IWG) on Trade and Investment includes religious denominational offices and faith-based organizations working in the U.S. and abroad. We represent a broad coalition, and we bring the wisdom of our traditions to bear on decisions concerning U.S. trade policy. As the work of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress begins to take shape, we want to share our concerns regarding trade policy with you.

The IWG is particularly focused on the effects of U.S. trade policy on impoverished people in our trading partner countries. Our international partners in Latin America, Africa, and Asia tell us that trade liberalization in its present form has caused tremendous harm to impoverished communities around the world.

In coming months, you will likely have the opportunity to consider the pending trade agreements with South Korea, Panama, and Colombia. Moreover, the Obama Administration is currently negotiating a Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement that will include Pacific-rim nations. As you engage these and other trade-related discussions, we hope that you will take the following priorities into consideration:

**Trade should not undermine rural livelihoods.** While farming is a way of life for many of the world's poor, trade in agriculture is dominated by multinational corporations that control and distort the market. Import deregulation has been especially devastating for local agriculture.

- We believe that trade agreements should permit countries full flexibility to determine food policy and protect small-holder farmers from dumping and import surges.
- Tools such as tariffs, quotas, strong anti-trust regulations, and public support for farm inputs and food reserve programs have an important role to play in ensuring stability in food prices and agricultural incomes.

**Trade should empower countries to regulate investment in order to facilitate development.**

Developing countries should not be deprived of the ability to ensure that the benefits of trade are widely shared. So-called "investor-state" processes included in trade agreements grant foreign corporations greater rights than national businesses through access to tribunals that can overrule government decisions. This often leads to the dismantling of environmental, public health, or safety protections.

- We believe that investor-state processes should be excluded from all trade agreements.
- Governments should remain free to utilize performance requirements (such as local content requirements, local hiring minimums, etc.) to achieve development goals.

**Trade should not impede access to medicines in poor countries.** Nearly two billion people lack regular access to medicines in developing countries, and one contributing factor is the high price of monopolized medicines. Intellectual property provisions in trade agreements can restrict generic competition, leading to medicine prices that are unaffordable for most people.

- Trade agreements should look to the World Trade Organization’s Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) as the maximum standard of intellectual property protection required, and should build in flexibilities to support public health in developing countries.

**Trade agreements should be formulated with full democratic accountability and citizen participation.** Under “fast track” Trade Promotion Authority, Congressional involvement is limited, and public input is restricted. The result is that global trade rules are driven by narrow commercial interests. Fast track authority last expired in 2007.

- We urge you to oppose any legislation that would reinstate this antidemocratic mechanism. Full public participation is needed to create a moral and legal framework for trade agreements.

Our hope is to help shape an approach to U.S. trade policy that complements rather than hinders international development efforts. Trade agreements must strike a balance between creating a predictable structure for international trade and preserving the policy space necessary for governments to foster economic, social and human development for all their citizens. **A framework for a new way forward for trade can be found in the TRADE Act**, introduced in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress by Sen. Sherrod Brown and Rep. Michael Michaud.

We affirm the importance of international trade in an interdependent world. Our concern is for the character and quality of these trade relationships. NAFTA and CAFTA have demonstrated that the current trade model hurts people living on the economic edge in both the U.S. and developing countries. It is time to make a change. It is time to place trade in the service of the common good for people here and abroad.

We are more than happy to make our member groups available as a resource. Please contact us through David Golemboski at 202-347-9797, ext. 212 or [dgolemboski@networklobby.org](mailto:dgolemboski@networklobby.org), or Martin Shupack at 202-481-6934 or [mshupack@churchworldservice.org](mailto:mshupack@churchworldservice.org).

Sincerely,

*The following members of the Interfaith Working Group on Trade and Investment:*

Center of Concern  
 Church World Service  
 Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach  
 Conference of Major Superiors of Men  
 Holy Cross International Justice Office  
 Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
 Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
 Medical Mission Sisters, Alliance for Justice  
 Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office  
 Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Justice Peace/Integrity of Creation Office  
 NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby  
 PLANT (Partners for the Land & Agricultural Needs of Traditional Peoples)  
 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Office of Public Witness  
 Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Justice and Peace Office  
 United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
 United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society  
 Witness for Peace