FTAO Statement

EU Trade Commissioner reveals plans for Fair Trade

28 January 2015 (Brussels) – The European office of the city of Gothenburg organized on the 27 of January an event about the local and regional support to Fair Trade and its links with the EU trade agenda.

Cecilia Malmström was invited to present the “Fair Trade agenda” of the new Commission during her mandate as Trade Commissioner. Malmström acknowledged that Fair Trade is increasingly popular in the European Union and that the EU supports Fair Trade because “it delivers actual results”. Furthermore, she sees the need for the EU to “look beyond a narrow definition of trade policy to address issues of trade fairness”.

Bernd Lange, who chairs the International Trade Committee of the European Parliament and served as a host of the event, welcomed the participants and introduced the longstanding European Parliament’s support to Fair Trade by this European institution. He referred to the current EU efforts to upgrade social and ecological standards with partner countries. Karin Pleijel, the vice mayor of the city of Gothenburg, explained the various commitments that her city has taken in the area of Fair Trade, especially by raising awareness among citizens and encouraging local establishments to source more Fair Trade products and enlarge the Fair Trade offer of the city. She emphasized the importance of public procurement “in order to push the market into a fair direction”. A regional perspective was brought by Hans-Christoph Boppel from North Rhine-Westphalia. He showcased the different ways in which Fair Trade is supported: through the financing of civil society initiatives on Fair Trade, but also by stimulating Fair Trade businesses in the whole region, for example the city of Dortmund hosts the biggest Fair Trade show in Germany. He also referred to the importance of setting up a regional procurement strategy based on values. At the end of his speech he called on the EU to adopt a “European capital for Fair Trade” award that would encourage cities in Europe to go further in their Fair Trade commitments.
Sergi Corbalán, Executive Director of the Fair Trade Advocacy Office gave concrete examples of how the EU could support Fair Trade in practice. On behalf of the Fair Trade movement, he asked the Commission to regard Fair Trade as a concept, an economic development strategy, rather than a certification. He furthermore invited Commissioner Malmström to become the Fair Trade ambassador during her mandate and promote concrete actions in favor of Fair Trade, for instance taking advantage of the European Year for Development throughout 2015.

The Commissioner, who declared to be “very encouraged that Goteborg and so many other regions, cities and towns across Europe are actively engaged in the promotion of fair trade” listened very attentively to the interventions and took note of the different proposals. In her words, the event was very timely because the Commission is defining its priorities on trade for her mandate, as well as shaping the trade contribution to the future development framework, for which Fair Trade could be used as a benchmark.

A pdf version of this FTAO statement can be found here.

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The Fair Trade Advocacy Office (FTAO) speaks out on behalf of the Fair Trade movement for Fair Trade and Trade Justice with the aim to improve the livelihoods of marginalised producers and workers in the South. The FTAO is a joint initiative of Fairtrade International, the European Fair Trade Association and the World Fair Trade Organization-Europe. Through these three networks the FTAO represents an estimate of 2.5 million Fair Trade producers and workers from 70 countries, 24 labelling initiatives, over 500 specialised Fair Trade importers, 4,000 World Shops and more than 100,000 volunteers.

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