EU leaders congratulate 1,000 Fair Trade Towns while the European Commission re-thinks EU policies

3rd June 2011 (Brussels) – European Union leaders have spoken out for Fair Trade and congratulated the Fair Trade Towns movement as it reaches its 1000th Fair Trade Town. On Saturday 4 June 2011 Spain’s capital city Madrid joins the UK Prime Minister David Cameron’s constituency Witney, amongst others, in reaching the status of the 1000th Fair Trade Town world wide, most of them in the EU. On this festive occasion the Fair Trade movement calls on the European Commission to reflect the EU citizens’ views in its upcoming legislative and policy proposals.

Mr Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament, said: “Let me (...) congratulate you on the Fair Trade Towns campaign with almost 1000 Fair Trade Towns worldwide involved, the majority being in the EU. This is a perfect example of good cooperation between local authorities, NGOs, volunteers and consumers, all in support of Fair Trade (...) Fair Trade is not about charity: it is about making trade work for development, in particular marginalized producers and workers in the South”.

Mr Staffan Nilsson, President of the European Economic and Social Committee, said: “I would (...) like to congratulate the community of Fair Trade Towns campaign connecting over one thousand local communities, and showing an excellent example of good cooperation between different actors all supporting Fair Trade. (...) Fair Trade has shown to be an important and effective contributor to poverty reduction, socially and economically empowering small scale producers.”

Ms Mercedes Bresso, President of the Committee of the Regions, said: “I am extremely happy to see that today 1000 cities, many of them members of the CoR (Committee of the Regions), are part of the Fair Trade movement. (...) The CoR is delighted with the development of Fair Trade and the growing readiness of Europe’s municipalities and regions to introduce environmental and social criteria into public procurement. This readiness is all the more important in the current financial and economic crisis”.

► Full texts of the congratulatory statements and photos available from: www.fairtrade-advocacy.org (See section FTAO publications / press releases).

The Fair Trade Towns movement¹ started when the people in the small English market town of Garstang declared their community the world’s first Fair Trade Town at a public meeting in April 2000. This has grown to a worldwide movement that will reach 1000 on Saturday 4 June, most of them in the European Union. At 14h local time, the following municipalities will jointly declare as Fair Trade Towns: Kumamoto (Japan, the first Fair Trade Town in Asia), Greenwich (Connecticut, USA), Herne (Germany), Delft (The Netherlands), Kontich and Bilzen (Belgium), Madrid (Spain), Rutherglen and Cambuslang (Scotland, UK), as well as Witney (England, UK, constituency of Mr David Cameron, UK Prime Minister).

Mr David Cameron, as Member of Parliament for Witney (England, UK) congratulated the Fair Trade Town campaign in his constituency: “I am a big supporter of the Fairtrade Foundation – it is through trade we can help people to pull themselves out of poverty and ensure farmers and other producers get a fair price for their produce. Therefore, I am delighted that Witney has gained Fairtrade status and very proud that it is the 1000th international Fairtrade town. I look forward to visiting a fair-trade market in the near future.”

¹ This people’s movement is now present in 22 countries across five continents, campaigning for Fair Trade in the fields, on the high streets in local schools, community groups and businesses. For more information on the Fair Trade Towns campaign and the goals that a municipality must meet to qualify and keep the status of Fair Trade Town: www.fairtradetowns.org.
The large number of Fair Trade Towns in the European Union reflects the increasing support of EU citizens and elected officials to Fair Trade. The sale of Fairtrade-certified products continued to report strong growth in 2010, with leading EU Member States being UK (40%, to £1.17bn), Germany (27%, to 340 million EUR) and Netherlands (37% - to 119.4 million EUR)\(^2\). As stated by the conclusions of a recent European Commission opinion poll “Europeans cannot be considered passive consumers: social and ethical concerns are among their criteria when buying a product or a service. This may need to be factored into decision-making relating to future trade policy priorities”\(^3\).

The European Commission is expected to issue a number of EU policy and legislative proposals before the end of 2011 on trade and development, sustainable consumption and public procurement. The EU current policies and legislation date back from before the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. Article 3 of the new EU Treaty lays down that free and fair trade, sustainable development and poverty reduction are objectives of the European Union in its relations with the wider world.

The EU Institutions have already recognised the added value of Fair Trade in contributing to sustainable development. “The European Commission should now put in place a well-coordinated policy environment that enables consumers and public authorities across the EU, as well as marginalised producers and workers in the South, to choose Fair Trade”, stated Sergi Corbalán, Executive Director of the Fair Trade Advocacy Office.

To mark the 1000th Fair Trade Town, a large number of individuals, organisations and Fair Trade Towns have signed up to a statement calling on G-20 leaders to ‘Make Trade Fair’, ahead of the G-20 Agricultural Ministers meeting to be held in Paris on 22-23 June 2011. The statement\(^5\) calls for action to ensure the current food system and agricultural trade flows contribute to, rather than hinder, sustainable agriculture and food security, in the South and in the North. This statement comes at an appropriate time also for the EU decision-making process as the EU Commissioners for Trade (Mr Karel De Gucht) and Development (Mr Andris Piebalgs) are expected to issue a joint policy EC proposal on trade and development before the end of 2011.

The Fair Trade movement has repeatedly argued that trade will not work for development unless the EU trade and development policies go further than the “business as usual” trade negotiations and development aid. “We call on the European Commission to look at the real practices of how International Trade is conducted, and put in place EU policies to encourage companies and consumers to make trade work for development”, said Sergi Corbalán.

The Fair Trade Advocacy Office speaks out for Fair Trade and trade justice with the aim to improve the livelihoods of marginalised producers and workers - especially in the South. The office is a joint initiative of Fairtrade International, the European Fair Trade Association (EFTA) and the World Fair Trade Organization-Europe (WFTO-Europe). These networks bring together over 2 million Fair Trade producers from more than 60 countries, 20 labelling initiatives, hundreds of specialized Fair Trade importers, 3,000 world shops and more than 100,000 volunteers. More information under: www.fairtrade-advocacy.org

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\(^2\) For more data on Fair Trade sales by Fair Trade Organizations and of Fairtrade-certified products see: [www.wfto.com](http://www.wfto.com), [www.fairtrade.net](http://www.fairtrade.net) and [www.fairtrade-advocacy.org](http://www.fairtrade-advocacy.org)


\(^4\) See EU policy documents on Fair Trade under: [www.fairtrade-advocacy.org](http://www.fairtrade-advocacy.org)

\(^5\) The statement, supporting messages and photographs will be shared on behalf of the 1,000-strong movement with the participants of the Agricultural Ministers at the G20 meeting to be held in Paris on 22 – 23 June 2011. The ‘Make Trade Fair’ policy statement can be viewed on the International Fair Trade Towns website [www.fairtradetowns.org](http://www.fairtradetowns.org) where representatives from Fair Trade Towns and organisations and individuals can sign up in support of the statement.