The Alternative Trade Mandate Alliance, Press Release

No more business as usual: activists set out alternative trade agenda
Alternative Trade Mandate Alliance Launch, 26-27 June, Brussels

Fuelled by short-term interest and over-inflated financial markets, the current neo-liberal trade model is generating increasing inequality across Europe and the developing world. As outrage builds about the parlous state of our economies, a critical mass of European activists are pushing for a radical alternative to the EU trade agenda.

The way we trade is central to how our economies work: trade rules dictate who can run our public services and give companies sweeping rights (for example to take sovereign states to court) with no attendant responsibilities. Campaigners have been calling for years for trade justice but the European Union continues to pursue policies that are damaging to both people and planet. On the 26th June, a growing movement of European organisations will launch the Alternative Trade Mandate Alliance. Over the next two years, the Alliance will propose a complete overhaul of EU trade policy, tackling one of the key roots of the current crisis.

Dot Keet, a development analyst and long time trade activist in the continent of Africa, will speak at the launch. She said “Europe’s trade negotiations are undemocratic and the agreements are unjust. The current trade regime is fuelling the food, economic and climate crises facing Europe and the world. In that context, African and other countries cannot sign long-term agreements that set their policies in stone, because they can’t know in advance what policies they will need to deal with these looming problems. African civil society has a long history of mobilizing against the current unjust global trade regime, and the EU’s proposed free trade agreements (EPAs), but it is important that European civil society also grows stronger and makes their politicians see that they must look at alternative approaches to trade as well as to social and political, economic and environmental areas”.

John Hilary, Executive Director of UK NGO War On Want, who are members of the Alliance, said “The economic crisis of the last four years has shown all too clearly what can happen when markets are allowed to operate outside regulatory control. The time is ripe for an alternative trading model that is not driven by the EU’s current aggressive free market agenda. Challenging this agenda will need the kind of EU-wide mobilization that the Alliance are building.”

Delegates to the meeting will hear from trade activists from across Europe: Pauline Londeix from Act UP Paris, Ruth Bergan from the UK Trade Justice Movement, Marc Maes from Belgian NGO 11 11 11 and Kirsten Fiedler of the European-wide Digital Rights Campaign. There will also be contributions from Brussels-based Corporate Europe Observatory, Irish NGO Comhlamh and Germany’s Misereor. The meeting is part of an ambitious programme of Europe-wide consultations leading up to a powerful campaign for the 2014 European elections.

Notes for editors
Members of the press are welcome to attend, speakers will be available for interview before the event, please contact Nina Sachau or Tom Rottinghuis as below.

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Setting the Agenda: Launching the Alternative Trade Mandate Campaign - Two inspiring days of ideas and action with the Alternative Trade Mandate Alliance. Tuesday, June 26th and Wednesday, June 27th, at 11.11.11, Vlasfabriekstraat 11, Brussels