The Fair Trade movement urges the European Commission on World Fair Trade Day 2010 to move from words to action

7 May 2010 (Brussels) – As hundreds of thousands of citizens join in World Fair Trade Day celebrations, the Fair Trade movement calls on the European Commission to move from words to action. The EU institutions have made positive policy statements and communications on Fair Trade in the last year. Today, the Fair Trade movement calls for concrete results: Fair Trade and Fair Trade principles integrated across EU policies.

“We welcome the EU Institutions’ confirmation of Fair Trade’s role of in sustainable development and supporting marginalised producers and workers in the South. It is however time to move from words to action – and no better occasion than World Fair Trade Day when the eyes of the world are watching. We want to see a European Commission action plan to support Fair Trade at all levels, including specific measures to back up the EU’s inclusion of “fair trade” as one of its top objectives,” states Sergi Corbalán on behalf of the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO), Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) and the European Fair Trade Association EFTA.

World Fair Trade Day¹ (second Saturday of May every year) aims at promoting global awareness of Fair Trade and its impacts. It is supported by thousands of citizens, Fair Trade Organizations, social and environmental movements, producers and consumers all around the planet. The European Commission has not announced any actions for World Fair Trade Day or beyond, despite a number of policy documents released over the past year which highlight the EU support for Fair Trade.

On 5 May 2009 the European Commission issued a Communication² that recognised Fair Trade’s values and referenced the principles defined by the Fair Trade movement. On 1 December 2009, a new Treaty on European Union entered into force, stating that “sustainable development of the Earth, […] free and fair trade, eradication of poverty[…]”³ are key objectives in the EU relations with the wider world. On 11 February 2010 the EU Committee of the Regions adopted an Opinion⁴ calling on the local and regional authorities, EU Member States, the European Commission, and the Committee of the Regions, to join forces to adopt a European Strategy and action plan for Fair Trade for Local and Regional Authorities. The Council of Ministers and the European Commission also on 17 November 2009 and 21 April 2010 recognised Fair Trade as a best-practice tool for “Policy Coherence for Development”⁵ and a valuable initiative to work towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)⁶.

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¹ For further information see the World Fair Trade Day 2010 website
² ‘Contributing to Sustainable Development: The role of Fair Trade and non-governmental trade-related sustainability assurance schemes’ (COM(2009) 215 final), 5 May 2009, Communication by the European Commission
³ Treaty on European Union. Article 3.5, 1 December 2009
⁴ ‘Contributing to sustainable development: The role of Fair Trade and non-governmental trade-related sustainability schemes’ (RELEX-IV-026), 11 February 2010, Opinion of the Committee of the Regions
⁵ ‘Council Conclusions on Policy Coherence for Development’(16079/09), 17 November 2009, Council of the European Union
World Fair Trade Day is an initiative of the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO, www.wfto.com). In parallel, Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO, www.fairtrade.net) organises a Fair Trade breakfast campaign, where supporters in over 18 countries around the globe will celebrate World Fair Trade Day with a Fair Trade breakfast. 

Fair Trade offers better trading conditions to marginalised producers and workers in the South who are disadvantaged in conventional trade. Integrating the pillars of sustainable development (economic, environmental and social), it offers marginalized producers and workers a tool to alleviate poverty and improve their lives. Over a million and a half producers and workers throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America already benefit from the better deal that Fair Trade offers.

The Fair Trade Advocacy Office speaks out for Fair Trade and trade justice with the aim to improve trading conditions for the benefit of small and marginalised producers and poor workers in developing countries. Based in Brussels, the office coordinates the advocacy activities of the main Fair Trade Networks: Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International FLO, World Fair Trade Organisation WFTO, and European Fair Trade Association EFTA. These three networks bring together over 1.5 million Fair Trade producers from more than 60 countries, 20 labelling initiatives, hundreds of specialized Fair Trade importers, 3000 worldshops and more than 100,000 volunteers.

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7 For more information see www.fairtrade.net/events.html