

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 ✠
1225 Otis Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017 • Tel: 202.635.2757 x 134 • Fax: 202.832.9494 • Email: iwg@coc.org

The Interfaith Working Group on Trade and Investment offers the following statement as a guideline toward what we envision is necessary in order to make the current trade model more fair and just. We encourage you to read our alternative policies document, "[Trade as if People and the Earth Mattered: a working document on alternatives](#)". We offer these suggestions as part of the debate over the future directions of international trade.

Elements for Fair and Just Trade Policies

International trade can be one engine of economic progress for developing countries. But the United States and developing countries alike need *fair and just trade* agreements that are genuinely shaped to meet the goals of sustainable development and poverty reduction.

In this statement *Elements for Fair and Just Trade Policies*, the undersigned members of the Interfaith Working Group on Trade and Investment (IWG) -- a coalition of religious and faith-based organizations, many of whom have members living and working with the poorest communities in Africa, Asia and Latin America – enumerate the key elements we believe must be part of a new framework for U.S. trade policy.

Accompanying this endorsed statement is a reflection document entitled *Trade As If People and Earth Matter: A Working Document on Alternatives*, with more detailed recommendations proposed by the Interfaith Working Group itself. This document seeks to contribute to the emerging dialogue on a new framework for trade that holds the promise of promoting just and sustainable development in the countries and areas where it is most needed.

Trade policies and agreements must put people first! They should further genuine social and economic development for our neighbors around the world while preserving and creating good jobs here at home. They must support -- not hinder – governments in adopting policies to protect public health and the natural environment. Trade policies must strike a balance between creating a predictable structure for international trade and preserving the policy space necessary for governments to foster and secure economic, social and human development for all their citizens.

A new trade framework should include the following key elements:

- Ensure that trade agreements are formulated with full democratic accountability and citizen participation both in the United States and U.S. trading partners.
- Require (pre and post) country impact evaluations to assess the effects of provisions in trade agreement on key issues such as poverty eradication, job growth, food security and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.
- Respect the right of peoples and nations to democratically determine their own agricultural and food policies.

- Fully respect the right of developing countries to safeguard and nurture their own domestic economies and the livelihoods of their people through the implementation of trade policies, regulations and mechanisms which promote and protect their own small-holder farmers, urban workers, and domestic manufacturers.
- Prioritize long-term ecological sustainability and the stability of the climate, and protect and conserve the richness and diversity of the natural world.
- Exclude provisions that require the liberalization or deregulation of essential public services, such as water, health care and education.
- Reject intellectual property rights restrictions which make it more difficult for people in developing countries to have access to affordable essential medicines, as well as intellectual property provisions involving patents on seeds and other life-forms.
- Exclude the undemocratic provisions known as “investor-state” law suits, in which international investors are able to sue host governments in unelected international tribunals over actual or potential loss of future corporate profits resulting from democratically enacted domestic policies and regulations.

Crafting trade policies that will foster the wellbeing of our global neighbors and the natural environment will also improve American’s well-being. We call on the new President and Congress to look to long-term U.S. interests in a more secure, stable and just world, in which poverty and inequality are declining and all people have the resources needed for lives of dignity, sufficiency and community participation.

Signatories as of July 1, 2008:

American Friends Service Committee
 Agricultural Missions
 Center of Concern
 Church of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office
 Church World Service
 Columban Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Office
 Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)
 Holy Cross International Justice Office
 Justice and Witness Ministries United Church of Christ
 Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
 Medical Mission Sisters, Alliance for Justice
 Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
 NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
 PLANT (Partners for the Land and Agricultural Needs of Traditional Peoples)
 Presbyterian Church (USA), Washington Office
 Quixote Center
 Saint John's Abbey
 Sisters of Notre Dame Justice and Peace Network
 United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
 Witness for Peace