

Korean Alliance against Korea-EU FTA

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September 17, 2007

To Mr. Ignacio Ignacio-Bercero, EU Chief Negotiator for Korea-EU FTA

Greetings from the Korean Alliance against Korea-EU FTA.

We are a coalition made up of over 300 organizations, including trade unions, farmers' groups, and NGOs. As a representative of Korean people's civil society, we feel that it is our duty to inform you of several concerns related to Korea-EU Free Trade Agreement, which are shared by a large section of the Korean population. We sincerely hope that you, as Chief Negotiator, will consider these views seriously.

First, we wish to note the undemocratic nature in which all FTA negotiations are carried out, in particular the lack of effort on the part of the South Korean Administration to solicit the opinions of interested parties and the Korean public. (The South Korean Administration is currently negotiating six FTAs.) As it was the case with the Korea-U.S. FTA, the negotiations for the Korea-EU FTA are taking place without proper and necessary discussion, hearings, or public debates with concerned groups.

In addition, the South Korean Administration has moved forward with the Korea-EU FTA negotiations process in a closed and secretive manner; information related to important points of contention and matters requiring the consent of the Korean people have not been made public. Moreover, the secretive process of FTA negotiations is undermining the National Assembly to question and monitor the proceedings. It is understandably not possible to make public all information related to the FTA. However, it can surely be said that information concerning FTA issues are of great public interest and require the understanding at all levels of society. The negotiation process must be made transparent, and concerned citizens and lawmakers must be sufficiently consulted. The South Korean government has not upheld these principles.

Second, the Korea-US FTA seriously endangers the Korean people's access to healthcare and pharmaceuticals. We believe that trade between the two countries can and must be processed fairly. However, we are very concerned about the way in which public systems and policies of one country have come under discussion at the current negotiations. For example, by demanding the expansion of intellectual property rights, the health care system is being severely limited. Guaranteeing people's access to necessary pharmaceuticals at an affordable price is a constitutional responsibility of the state and Administration. However, the Korea-EU FTA negotiations stand to undermine this ability and people's right to access, through clauses on 'patent extension,' and 'data exclusivity.' We would like to emphasize that this is not consistent with the FTA principle of 'promoting the mutual benefit of the people of both countries.'

Third, we are concerned that the Korea-EU FTA will make the lives of Korean farmers and the sustainable development of South Korea's farming communities much more difficult. When South

Korea's agriculture was first opened as a result of the WTO Uruguay Rounds, Korea's farmers suffered greatly. The situation has now reached the point that the future of Korea's agriculture as whole is in question. Given the current conditions, we face the prospects of the disappearance of South Korean agriculture if our market is further opened through the Korea-EU FTA. Domestic agriculture is necessary for sustainable development and food security. For this reason, countries around the world have agricultural subsidy policies. In fact, EU has world's strongest subsidy policies. We would like to also point out that in South Korea, farming communities play the part of preserving our history, culture and the rural environment and ecosystems. If these communities are destroyed, the resultant influx from the countryside to the cities will seriously exacerbate already increasing urban poverty, and underemployment. We must emphasize that the Korea-EU FTA is inviting the destruction of agriculture and agricultural life and with it, numerous social problems.

Fourth, the Korea-EU FTA is predicted to violate the government's constitutional duty to protect public services and, therefore, public interest. The governments of both countries have stated that public services such as water will not be directly included in the negotiations. However, by limiting government procurement domains, this FTA exposes essential public services such as water, electricity, railroad, gas, and postal service to precarious market forces.

We are concerned that the FTA will seriously restrict the right of common people to access high-quality public services.

Finally, we are compelled to point out that Korea's FTA negotiations are taking place amidst severe suppression of trade unions and civil society groups who voice concerns about free trade agreements. The South Korean Administration has declared all activities of the Korean Alliance as illegal. Numerous people have been arrested. The people's rights to organize and oppose state policies have been taken away. In order to hastily conclude FTA negotiations, the Korean Administration has forsaken its responsibility to protect constitutional rights.

We hope you and EU DG Trade will consider, with all seriousness, the concerns of the Korean people which are laid out above. We hope that this will make you reconsider whether the Korea-EU FTA does in fact present a desirable direction for the promotion of fair trade and economic relations between Korea and EU.

Sincerely,

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