



August 7, 2009

President Barack Obama  
Prime Minister Stephen Harper  
Presidente Felipe Calderón

Dear President Obama, President Calderón and Prime Minister Harper,

As you prepare to meet in Guadalajara, Mexico, it is time to honor your word, listen to your people and renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

President Barack Obama promised in his campaign that during his administration, meetings with the leaders of Mexico and Canada would be “transparent” and would involve “citizens, labor, the private sector and non-governmental organizations in setting the agenda and making progress.” (Barack Obama, February 2008). Despite this promise, not only did the definition of this summit’s agenda not include civil society, it has yet to even be made public.

As a group of Mexican, Canadian and U.S. networks representing hundreds of civil and social organizations, we have decided to alternatively participate in this summit, reflecting upon the actions that need to be taken to rethink the future of North America. We demand respect for our right to demonstrate and to express our ideas, and we hope that these will be listened to and considered in the decisions you make that involve our nations.

We are addressing you to demand a comprehensive review and revamp of relations between our countries, a complete renegotiation of the North America Free Trade Agreement, and the abolishment of the non transparent and corporate led Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP).

It is time to take seriously what the current crisis is teaching us. The neoliberal paradigm, which was the foundation of NAFTA and the SPP, has failed; governments have not met their goals for economic growth, much less the goals of prosperity for the majority. The evidence lies in the half million Mexicans that are forced to migrate to the United States every year and find a border wall as a response. Today, in this time of crisis, even the most fervent promoters of the neoliberal paradigm recognize the weaknesses that have driven it to failure and now turn to the State to be rescued. Moreover, this model demands an unlimited exploitation of natural resources that threatens the very life of our planet.

It is time for President Obama to keep the promises that he made to his voters. Both during his campaign and as President, he promised to renegotiate NAFTA. In this first summit, he must begin to fulfill that promise. In the same way, President Calderon must fulfill the commitment signed by his predecessor in the “Agrarian National Agreement” and renegotiate said treaty. Prime Minister Harper must respond to the same renegotiation demands of a growing number of citizens and organizations from his country and the Subcommittee of Parliament that called for renegotiation of the Investment chapter.

It is time that you listen to your people. Surveys in our three countries indicate that the majority agrees that it is necessary to renegotiate NAFTA. You should respond to the proposals that have been presented to you for a complete overhaul of North American relations. It is urgent to begin creating relations of equity and support to achieve true national development in each country—development that is environmentally sustainable while capable of generating sufficient, well-paid and dignified jobs; fairly distributing wealth; guaranteeing food security and sovereignty; and ensuring the economic, social, labor, and environmental rights of all people, particularly women and indigenous people.

It is also time to reconsider the security strategy for the region. Agreements to date in this area form part of the U.S. strategy to insert Mexico and Canada into its security perimeter and under the authority of the United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM). Mexico and Canada must not become subordinate to the U.S. war on so-called terrorism. Canada must withdraw from bilateral agreements that allow the U.S. military force to penetrate their borders in case of a civil emergency. Mexico should not continue to be the one to sacrifice lives in combating the trafficking of drugs destined for the U.S. The Mexican government must guarantee that the war against drug trafficking not be used as an excuse to militarize the country. The U.S. should not only accept its co-responsibility in the problem of drug trafficking, but must also ensure that its financial, logistical and intelligence support not cover up the abuses of the Mexican military and the growing violation of human rights, nor criminalize legitimate social protest.

We demand that all negotiations on the SPP stop and replace it with agreements discussed by the legislative bodies and civil society in a public and comprehensive manner. Governments must not continue to negotiate and come to agreements apart from their legislative bodies and behind their people’s backs.

Farm, labor, indigenous, women’s, environmental, and human rights organizations, together with a growing group of legislators from all three countries, exhort the leaders of our three countries to listen to your people and to start comprehensively rethinking North American relations so as to better serve the common interests of the majority.

We also take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the summit to express our solidarity with the Honduran people and to demand that all three leaders withdraw all political, material and military support to the coup government. General and ambiguous declarations about democracy are not enough. It is necessary to act on the agreements of the Organization of American States (OAS), the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and other international bodies to unconditionally restore



the constitutional president Manuel Zelaya. President Arias' proposal is not viable, given that forming a coalition government would in fact recognize the coup government. Starting with the restoration of President Zelaya's constitutional rule, governments and international bodies must collaborate to build conditions for free and democratic elections in November.

We hope that this summit does not turn its back on the people once more. It is time to keep promises and build a new era of relations in North America and throughout the Americas—an era of true democracy, development, respect and promotion of all human rights for all people.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Responsible Trade (ART) – United States

Common Frontiers (CF) – Canada

Quebec Network on Continental Integration (RQIC) – Quebec

Mexican Action Network on Free Trade (RMALC) – Mexico

*(These four North American civil society networks are all members of the Hemispheric Social Alliance.)*