



Valdis Dombrovskis

Executive Vice-President, Commissioner for Trade

Josep Borrell Fontelles

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President

11th October 2021, Brussels

Concern on the impacts of European transnational corporations in Mexico and the negotiation of the EU-Mexico Free trade agreement

Dear Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis,
Dear High Representative Borrell,

At the occasion of the launch of the [report](#) “*Transnational Corporations and Free Trade in Mexico. Caravan on the Social and Environmental Impacts (#ToxiTourMexico)*” on 11th October 2021, co-published by The Left in the European Parliament, we would like to express our deep concern regarding **the EU trade and investment policies**.

The report documents how over the last thirty years, much of Mexico’s territory has been subjected to the development of industrial corridors with extensive agribusiness and high-risk and extractive industries. These are no monitoring of their impact on the health of local people. They have become what V. M. Toledo, Mexico’s former Minister of the Environment, has described as “**environmental hells**”.

Members of the European Parliament and others elected representatives participated in the “*Caravan on the social and environmental impacts of transnational corporations and free trade in Mexico*”, in December 2019, and engaging directly with near fifty organizations of affected peoples in Mexico.

The international observers were able to see a small proportion of the real **social and environmental devastation** caused by transnational corporations, including European ones, in this country. They saw evidence of the extent to which most industrialized regions of the country are affected by systematic air, water and soil pollution, compounded by unbridled urbanization and the proliferation of landfill sites for highly toxic waste. This has led to a **health and environmental emergency**, in which the numbers of people dying due to diseases likely to be associated with corporate operations in different sectors are overwhelming. The Caravan also found that the development of the industrial corridors has taken place against the backdrop of violent land grabs, depriving them of their means of economic, social and cultural subsistence.

In regard to the political impact of the work done by the local organisations, the Mexican government have responded positively to the Caravan’s initial findings and are collaborating with affected communities since 2020 in order to develop programmes in the Environmental and Health Emergency Regions.

However, the European Union needs also to take action. Indeed, European companies were present in practically all the regions the Caravan visited. Among its conclusions, the report states that **governments of European countries** provide public support and funding for the international operations of companies in the form of insurance, credit and technical assistance, **with no control or guarantee that environmental and human rights standards will be respected.**

There is a fear that the **renegotiation of the free trade agreement between the European Union and Mexico, will reforce the corporations' power still further and could hamper the implementation of policies committed to human rights in Mexico.** Worth to mention that other several potentially negative impacts the agreement will have on human rights and the environment have been pointed out by former research reports in the past*.

Therefore, we fully support the following recommendations of the report:

1. The European Union should draw up regulations to allow people affected by the environmental and social impacts of the operations of European transnational corporations to take their case to courts that protect the human rights of the individuals and communities affected and oblige the corporations to comply with strict environmental, health and human rights protection standards.
2. The European Union should establish a binding legal framework, including administrative, civil and criminal sanctions, to oblige European companies to respect human rights and the environment in all of their global supply chains.
3. The European Union should pressure the Mexican government to oblige all industrial corporations operating in Mexico to abide by harm prevention, protection, punishment and reparations standards that are at least equal to those in place in the European Union itself.
4. The European Union should develop effective verification mechanisms to identify corrupt practices by European corporations in third countries.
5. The European Commission and the European Parliament should foster direct dialogue with Mexican civil society organizations regarding respect for human rights and protection for the most vulnerable groups of people.
6. Instead of working to maintain a system of voluntary standards for corporations, the European Commission should actively support the negotiation of a legally binding instrument or treaty in the UN Human Rights Council to oblige transnational corporations to respect human rights at every stage of their global supply chains, including civil and criminal sanctions should they fail to do so.
7. The European Parliament should conduct an audit of the social and environmental impacts produced in Mexico by the EU-Mexico Global Agreement signed twenty years ago, with the participation of Mexican and European civil society groups. It should also refuse to ratify the new agreement between the European Union and Mexico.

* See:

- Report on the EU-Mexico agreement (2021): [German](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#)
- On ISDS cases in Mexico: <https://isds-americalatina.org/perfiles-de-paises/mexico/>
- Press Release: "[EU-Mexico agreement: Serious concerns for European civil society](#)" (2020)
- Report [Unmasked: Corporate rights in the renewed Mexico-EU FTA](#)

8. The European Union should put an end to all bilateral and regional trade agreements that consolidate a trade and investment regime which shields European capital from liability for human rights violations and damage to the environment outside the EU.
9. The European Commission and the European Parliament should meet their international commitments and strictly implement the guarantee that toxic chemicals banned in the European Union will not be produced for export, as stipulated in the Communication “*Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability. Towards a Toxic-Free Environment*” (COM 2020, 667 final, 14 October 2020, page 24).

We expect the European Commission to seriously acknowledge the recommendations mentioned above and **take action in order to stop the European public and private complicity with the social and environmental devastation in Mexico.**

Sincerely yours,

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MEP Maria ARENA
MEP Manon AUBRY
MEP Malin BJORK
MEP José GUSMÃO
MEP Dietmar KÖSTER
MEP Marisa MATIAS
MEP Manu PINEDA
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MEP Eugenia RODRÍGUEZ PALOP
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