

Brazil, 25<sup>th</sup>, February 2021

**Front of Brazilian Civil Society Organizations  
against the Mercosur-European Union Agreement**

Open letter: The Mercosur-European Union Agreement blocks the future of Brazil!

To:

Mr. António Costa, President of the Council of the European Union  
Mr. Ignacio Ybáñez, Ambassador of the European Union in Brazil  
Mr. Luís Faro Ramos, Ambassador of the Portuguese Republic in Brazil

Your Excellencies,

On assuming the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Portugal defined three fundamental priorities for its mandate, summarized by the motto "Time to act: for a fair, green and digital recovery". Among these concerns is the ratification of the Association Agreement between Mercosur and the European Union - the subject of this letter.

**We understand that this Agreement, besides contributing to an escalation of human rights and socio-environmental violations, could block Brazil's development. Therefore, we appeal to the good sense of the international community to prevent its ratification as it is currently structured.**

It should be noted that Brazilian civil society is well versed in international trade issues. Our mobilization in relation to this agenda is not new. We have actively participated in all of the discussion rounds related to the installation and the functioning of the World Trade Organization (WTO). In the same way, we have successfully intervened in the negotiations aimed at the construction of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Then, as now, we offered resistance to the materialization of a proposal for the trade liberalization that we consider to be harmful to our society.

With this document, we bring to your attention some manifestations contrary to the signature and ratification of the Association Agreement between Mercosur and the European Union:

- In June 2019, more than 340 organizations, from Europe and Latin America, called for the interruption of negotiations between Mercosur and the European Union, based on the deterioration of human rights and the context of accelerating environmental degradation in Brazil resulting from the actions taken by Jair Bolsonaro's government in this area (see the letter [here](#)).

- In September 2020, the Brazilian Network for the Integration of Peoples (Rebrip, in Portuguese) published an analysis on the problems that the agreement presents for the Brazilian economy and provides a sectoral assessment of its impacts (see the analysis [here](#)).
- As of October 2020, we saw an increase in public manifestations in rejection to the ratification of the Agreement by different sectors and social organizations. As an example, in a public letter, Brazilian economists proposed, as part of an international articulation, a critical review of the Agreement. In this document, the economic models used to calculate the economic gains expected from this Agreement were called into question. Studies have shown that the Agreement does not contribute significantly to the increase of the European GDP, while it leads to a likely fall in the GDP of Mercosur countries, with massive loss of quality industrial jobs (see the letter [here](#)).
- In November 2020, *Plataforma América Latina Mejor Sin TLC* made a global call for adherences to a declaration for the non-ratification of the Agreement, and once again pointed out its negative impacts from an economic, socio-environmental, and climate perspective. Through this statement, it declared that the proposal reinforces the international division of trade, thus deepening the neoextractivist model that has been in force in recent times with dramatic consequences both for the environment and for traditional and peasant peoples and communities in Latin American countries (see the letter [here](#)).
- In December 2020, the Front of Brazilian Civil Society Organizations Against the Mercosur-European Union Agreement launched a detailed position on it (see letter [here](#)).

Below, we also list some of the varied and cumulative negative effects of the signing of the Mercosur-European Union Agreement with respect to the environment, climate and the rights of the Brazilian people:

- The agreement reinforces three important drivers of deforestation: it encourages the intensification of agricultural and mineral commodity production and incites the expansion of logistics equipment. In this sense, it leads to environmental degradation and reinforces some of the main drivers of deforestation and fires that have already been impacting the climate commitments assumed by Brazil in the Paris Agreement and the Aichi Targets on biodiversity protection. It is worth remembering: Data from PRODES-INPE, a satellite monitoring system of deforestation in the Amazon, released in early December 2020, show a 9.5% increase in forest destruction between August 2019 and July 2020. Given this scenario, instead of strengthening actions recognized by the international community, such as the PPCDam and the PPCerrado, the Brazilian government invests against these policies and promotes their closure.
- The chapter dealing with trade and sustainable development does not provide mechanisms for enforceability. The mention, in this chapter, of the mandatory implementation of the Paris Agreement is insufficient, given the lack of mechanisms for dispute settlement, the fragility of the climate agreement itself in relation to its binding measures and the growing adherence to false solutions, such as the carbon market.
- The political agreement does not address environmental and climate issues as imperative clauses to its validity and maintenance. Therefore, allusions to these issues sound like rhetoric. The environment becomes, here, a tool to disguise the real goals of the document: to increase trade for large companies that export goods, privatize services, and liberalize the flow of capital.
- In the area of public procurement, we have reasons to believe that unequal competition between small and medium local companies and European

multinationals will bring significant impacts to the stimulus of family and peasant agriculture, such as the Food Acquisition Program (PAA) and the National School Feeding Program (PNAE), both internationally recognized as part of the effort to fight hunger and malnutrition. The dismantling of these programs has profound consequences for women, since they are the main food suppliers for these initiatives.

- The advance of agribusiness threatens the ways of life of indigenous peoples and traditional populations and their territorial rights, affecting these populations' conditions for a dignified life and income generation.

Finally, we view with concern that the agreement was negotiated by Mercosur governments without any transparency mechanism: no impact studies were presented and no dialogue was sought with the affected sectors or with academia.

In the case of Brazil, the shortening of the democratic space is well known (see [here](#) a study on the militarization of the budget allocated to the environment), as well as the dismantling of environmental preservation policies (see [here](#), a note from civil society on the environmental crisis reflected in the Draft Budget Law for 2021) and human rights. These processes are the result of the dismantling of Brazilian policies, plans, and institutions (see [here](#), letter that counts with the manifestation of almost 600 Brazilian organizations in defense of the National Human Rights Plan, PNDH).

We emphasize that to the economic-financial violence produced by this Agreement we could add violence to world views and to the forms of political and sociocultural organization of indigenous peoples and traditional communities in the countryside-city-forest. At a time when the economic crisis territorialized over Mercosur countries, which became even worse in the face of the challenges imposed by the pandemic of Covid-19, it is of our understanding that approving an unequal agreement would be a real disaster.

**In fact, considering the neocolonial nature of this Agreement, it seems politically symbolic to us, as Brazilians, that Portugal now serves as a spokesperson for European interests that seek to strengthen the historical ties of dependence between our countries, eroding, in parallel, the bases for regional integration and less unequal South-to-South relations.**

Therefore, it is urgent that:

- The process of signing and ratifying the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement be immediately paralyzed in light of the setbacks that have been occurring in Brazil concerning socio-environmental matters, as well as the revision for the worse of the Brazilian NDC in the Climate Agreement. This is an important signal from the European Union to its citizens and the citizens of the world.

- Brazilian civil society be supported by the EU, strengthening, among other possibilities, the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. The EU should encourage the opening of a consultation process with civil society organizations dealing with human and socio-environmental rights in Brazil and provide direct and emergency support to rights defenders in the country whenever necessary, including through political representations.

The Front places itself at the disposal of the representatives of the European Union for the opening of dialogue about the Agreement, as well as to clarify the positions presented above.

Yours sincerely,

*Front of Brazilian Civil Society Organizations against the Mercosur-European Union Agreement*