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NO TRANSAT!

In February 2013 the United States and the European Union announced their intention of negotiating a free trade agreement in order to create a transatlantic market.

**This is NOT A POLITICAL INITIATIVE
It has been instigated by powerful BUSINESS LOBBIES!!!**

Lobbies like the **American Chambers of Commerce to the European Union (AmCham EU)**, the **Transatlantic Business Council (TBC)** and the **Transatlantic Policy Network (TPN)**. Behind these names which are unfamiliar to the general public are powerful multinationals such as Allianz, British Petroleum, BASF, Bayer, Coca-Cola, IBM, Ford Motor, Microsoft, Michelin, Nestlé and many others.

Worse: the **Transatlantic Policy Network (TPN)**'s members also include elected representatives (American and European) who become the mouthpiece for the multinationals. One notable example is the MEP, Vital Moreira (a Portuguese socialist) who chairs the (Parliamentary) Committee on International Trade, where he very faithfully relays the multinationals' points of view: more rights for investors and big private companies, less in the way of solidarity, social welfare and a quality environment for people.

In the name of democratic, ecological and social values, an opposition platform has been set up in Belgium to fight this plan.

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Platform Against the Transatlantic Market

(Translation of the original French text to be signed on www.no-transat.be)

The United States and the European Union have been negotiating behind the scenes for years with the aim of setting up a transatlantic market. Scheduled for 2015, this plan involves:

- new transatlantic institutions, such as the Transatlantic Economic Council, that act undemocratically (no parliamentary debate, unelected representatives) to influence a growing number of political decisions,
- harmonisation of much European and American commercial and security legislation,
- European diplomacy increasingly aligned with that of the USA,
- world governance based on market standards.

In concrete terms, the transatlantic market is taking shape via dozens of political agreements between the United States and the European Union (and, in some cases, the national parliaments) relating to all areas of life: work, health, food, etc. For instance:

1. The transatlantic market is standardizing everything needed for free movement of commerce (goods, services, investments, etc.) on both sides of the Atlantic, by making it a priority to develop 'free competition' and competitiveness. That means that **financial markets and multinational companies have more and more freedom to act within an ever-wider geographical area.**
2. Through this geographical extension of economic competition the transatlantic market favors **corporate mergers/acquisitions, giving multinational firms ever-greater control over the economy and finance** (the 500 biggest enterprises already controlled half of all world trade in 2005!) **to the detriment of many small and medium enterprises and independent firms.**
3. The transatlantic market **threatens the political independence of local councilors.** For one thing, it increases the **financial power of the multinationals**, whereas some of them are already as powerful as some states (for example, Toyota is richer than Israel, Wal-Mart is richer than Greece, Exxon is richer than Austria, etc.). Secondly, the transatlantic agreements choose not to harmonize social, fiscal or environmental standards, thus creating competition between legislative systems that promotes dumping... to the detriment of public funds, working conditions, pay, health and people's well-being generally.
4. By increasing the power of the financial markets and the multinationals over local political bodies, the transatlantic market **threatens to intensify the privatization of public services and social security.** Universal access to essential services (education, transport, culture, etc.); the right to a decent pension; affordable health care; minimum, unconditional unemployment benefits and welfare ... All these jointly won social victories, for which generations have fought, are now endangered. **So, the transatlantic market will make a large swathe of the population considerably poorer**, and create even more downward pressure on pay and working conditions.

5. It is not by chance that the transatlantic market fulfils the requirements of multinational firms. **The fact is that the political decisions behind the creation of this market result directly from lobbying by powerful private firms**, acting sometimes unofficially and sometimes in the capacity of official experts. We are talking here about some politicians being ruled by private interests (for example, nearly 8% of members of the European Parliament belong to a lobby that defends the multinationals' interests: the Transatlantic Policy Network).
6. Far from being an area of freedom for all, **the transatlantic market includes some significant security measures**, to uphold the right to intellectual property, on the one hand, and to operate closer public surveillance, on the other. In the name of the fight against terrorism, the United States and the European Union are establishing **judicial, criminal and police agreements that seriously infringe the very principles of democracy** (right to privacy, a fair trial, separation of powers, etc.). By defining an act of terrorism as the *intention to destabilize a state or influence its decisions*, transatlantic security legislation can be used **repressively against trade unions, NGOs and social movements**. This also involves special enquiry methods, keeping files on everybody and calling certain basic defense rights into question (such as prohibiting access to documents classed as 'defense secret').
7. Lastly, the transatlantic market also aims to extend the competitive market logic to the whole world, thus giving the multinationals an **unlimited right to exploit people and natural resources**. The transatlantic market will thus play its part in worsening **poverty and 'North/South' inequalities while at the same time increasingly seriously damaging ecosystems, biodiversity and the climate**. In so doing, it will increase the numbers of climate refugees, push up the prices of basic commodities, and mortgage the future and the well-being of future generations.
8. **Transatlantic dynamics carry on the European single market process, and in so doing develop it, backed up by national governments** which, all too often, cover up their responsibility by hiding behind the European authorities. All the same, the national authorities are not powerless to act, as is proved by their vetoing the European Commission decision to authorize imports into Europe of chemically treated American chicken (chlorinated chicken). This is a plan which the states have managed to halt, even though the tussle continues within the World Trade Organization. There is a greater-than-ever danger of seeing social relations governed by an increasingly market-based logic.

Our denunciation of the trade agreements between the United States and Europe should certainly not be regarded as narrow anti-Americanism. Our aim is in fact to call into question the treaties which, from the Single European Act (1986) to the Treaty of Lisbon (2009), have shaped the Europe of the markets to the detriment of the Europe of the peoples. The transatlantic market will enable this process to move up a gear, when in fact, we urgently need to reverse!

As citizens, **we fundamentally disagree** with this plan:

- which strips politics of its sovereign powers for the benefit of the market.
- which favors private business interests to the detriment of the democratic, social, environmental, health and humanist concerns which, to us, are fundamental values.

In expressing our disapproval of the transatlantic market (and similar European or American plans involving other countries) we want our political leaders to take a clear stance against this plan and put an end to it by demanding that the European institutions (Council, Commission, Parliament):

- challenge the international agreements granting increased powers to private firms and the financial markets (through the geographical extension of 'economic freedoms'),
- strictly separate political representatives from business lobbies, as having political leaders governed by purely private interests is in itself unacceptable,
- give democratic guarantees of electoral legitimacy and transparency for the debates and decisions relating to the operation or establishing of institutions (European, transatlantic, world),
- pass legislation granting human, social and ecological matters political priority over market standards and commercial demands, which in particular requires regulation and public control of the activities of the multinationals and the financial markets,
- abolish security legislation which infringes fundamental and democratic freedoms.