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Onderwerp: EU Trade Commissioner and ETUC's General Secretary discuss labour standards and trade policy

European Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht and European Trade Union Confederation's General Secretary John Monks met today to discuss how the EU's trade policy can contribute to the promotion of decent work. They addressed the sustainable development aspects of the multilateral trade negotiations and ongoing bilateral trade negotiations including with Korea, India and Colombia.

Commissioner De Gucht remarked *"Free trade agreements can open new avenues to secure improvements in the protection of human rights, including labour rights. Trade policy can help, not hinder, legitimate social concerns. With our new agreements with Korea and Colombia, we will be doing just that."*

General Secretary John Monks said *"The EU-Korea trade agreement is on balance a good deal. It must contribute towards the promotion of workers rights. It's important that all Europe's industrial sectors do profit from this agreement and that it creates new jobs. Of course the proof of the pudding is in the eating so our active involvement in monitoring and reviewing all commitments is indispensable."*

The Commissioner and the Secretary General supported the finalisation of the Doha Development round in 2010 to contribute to sustainable development worldwide.

The ETUC expressed deep concerns about the trade union and human rights situation in Colombia and about a bilateral EU-Colombia trade deal and wished to maintain the pressure on the Colombian authorities to improve the situation. The Commission noted the importance of continuing dialogue with Colombia with a view to ensure respect of labour rights and indicated its intention to closely monitor Colombia's commitments in this respect.

On the EU-Korea Free Trade Agreement, the Commission indicated that a "Domestic Advisory Group" would be established soon and would include trade union representatives. This Group will play an important role in monitoring the Agreement's sustainable development commitments.

Concerning the negotiations for an EU-India Free Trade Agreement, the Commission reiterated its view that sustainable development should be properly reflected in the negotiations.

The dialogue took place in a positive atmosphere and laid the foundations for a productive cooperation ahead.

For further information

On the EU's trade policy and labour standards:

<http://ec.europa.eu/trade/wider-agenda/labour/>

On the ETUC:

<http://www.etuc.org/>

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