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ETUC Press release

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Trade unions oppose privileged rights for Big Business in EU-Canada trade deal

Investor-state dispute settlement on negotiating table this week

25/11/2013

On 18 October 2013, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and Canadian Prime Minister Steven Harper announced the conclusion of the negotiations on a European Union–Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

This “next generation” free trade agreement will include a controversial and unnecessary investor-to-state dispute settlement process (ISDS). In spite of the 18 October EU-Canada deal, negotiations on investment protection and ISDS continue.

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) strongly opposes the inclusion of ISDS in CETA, and the subsequent creation of a parallel court system which allows multinationals to sue and threaten governments with heavy costs for doing their democratic job of regulating their societies and economies. Both the EU member states and Canada are advanced societies with functioning legal systems allowing adequate opportunities for investors, whether domestic or foreign, to defend their interests. ISDS is too often used to ‘freeze’ government action and block improvements in social and employment standards. CETA would be the first EU trade agreement to include ISDS.

In January this year, the ETUC and its Canadian counterpart CLC signed a joint position on the CETA negotiations, stressing *“It is imperative that the failings of the NAFTA are not*

replicated, let alone aggravated, by any future CETA. This applies to investor rights in the first instance. We oppose the inclusion of an investor-state arbitration mechanism in the agreement. We concur with the European Parliament's assessment that "a state to state dispute settlement mechanism and the use of local judicial remedies are the most appropriate tools to address investment disputes"".

The full ETUC-CLC position is available here:

<http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf/CLC ETUC final.pdf>

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) exists to speak with a single voice, on behalf of the common interests of workers, at European level. Founded in 1973, it now represents 85 trade union organisations in 36 European countries, plus 10 industry-based federations. The ETUC is also on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Flickr](#).

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