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Resolutions and Declarations Bureau Meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria 13-15 April 2018

1) Resolution on Progressive Global Trade Policies of the 21st Century

Signed by JS Belgium and SSU Sweden

Today we are facing an unbalanced global free trade which is benefiting mostly the northern countries at the cost of the structural and social development of the countries in the global south. A crucial element to obtain a more fair and equal global society is respect for global working rights and our (inter)national trade unions. Institutions such as the WTO show a disproportional weight of the traditional western countries in disrespect of the global south. We want to transform our economic system in a progressive direction and demand a new generation of global trade agreements where we promote a new and fair global trade agenda. Therefore, YES calls upon a reform of the WTO and for a global trade policy that respects our planet and its precious resources.

We are in favor of fair trade: trade that is beneficial to societies and workers all around the globe which is more balanced between northern and southern countries. More equal access to trade for developing countries and a reform of the current European agricultural policy is therefore crucial just as investments in sustainable sectors and technologies.

The social cost of today's unfair global trade is visible in many violations of basic human and workers' rights as well as the unequal use of natural resources. Today we see the destructive effects on our environment and climate where actions taken in the northern hemisphere are mostly impacting countries in the south. It is therefore crucial that the richest and developed countries take up their responsibility and deliver the financial support in climate finance for developing countries for actions on climate change adaptation and mitigation, they promised during the 2016 Paris Agreement.

For too long, global trade policies have been working in the interest of powerful and influential multinationals at the cost of our welfare states and our environment. We see an ongoing rise in global inequality. On the contrary, we believe free trade should be used as a tool to reduce global inequalities.

Trade policies of the 21st century should be at the interest of our welfare state and in favor of the protection of the environment and not to corporate and particular interests. Its goals should be more balanced: we should include global agreements on the fight against tax evasion, the reinforcement of regulations for the financial sector and the enhancement of social and environmental standards. Future trade agreements should put environmental and consumer protection at the centre of its focus while protecting workers' rights worldwide.

We can no longer ignore the disastrous impact of neoliberal trade policies on the environment. There is a huge hypocrisy in declaring the urgency of tackling climate change on the one hand, and agreeing to trade deals that will raise gas emissions. Trade agreements should be evaluated according to their impact on the environment as well as on social rights, before they are implemented. Climate finance for developing countries is therefore crucial.

It is also clear we need more transparency, public discussion and a broader consultation. By opening up the discussion on important trade treaties to the general public we should also involve social movements and trade unions instead of leaving it to the multinationals and international banks to discuss it for us.

We are not against global trade, but we do fight against the undermining of the rule of law and the attacks against the hard fought social and environmental progress we made. The globalization of trade policies should again work in favor of everyone, north and south, not only for particular interests. The discussion is not to be pro or contra free trade, nobody is waiting for countries that literally build walls round their economy. The resistance is about democracy, about the interests of civil society that need to prevail and deserves protection of our governments.

Far beyond that, we need to build a common vision for trade policies that strengthen worker's rights, reduce inequality and preserve our environment. Trade policies should not be aiming at raising big businesses' profits. Free trade is important for the future of European jobs and growth, but it must always be in the objective of raising social and environmental standards on a global level, tackling climate change and promoting human rights at work.