

Public

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U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
1825 K Street NW, Suite 1120
Washington, DC 2006

Dear Sirs:

There was an article in our newspaper some time ago that you were soliciting public comment on trade policies. My comments follow. I am a well-educated 67-year-old woman who is very concerned about the consequences of present trade policies. I think they are disastrous to people and the earth. My expertise is in diet/nutrition, especially for low-income people.

The executive summary of my comments on trade is very brief.
First, do no harm to the earth — it is the ultimate non-renewable resource.
Second, treat employees and ordinary people fairly — they are your customer base.
Third, make a quality product and/or give quality service.
Profits should be the last consideration. They will follow the other steps.

Since our companies, especially the multinationals, have a very short-term outlook, and put short-term profits first, our trade policies **MUST** aim at restraining them, and persuading them to reverse their priorities. Their way is not sustainable and will do — possibly already has done — irreparable harm to our planet. It is in our best interests — actually, it is imperative — to restrain them.

One very basic way would be not to give them any incentives, such as tax breaks, to expand into other countries. If their project isn't profitable without government incentives, then it shouldn't be done. They don't have to go into other countries and ruin their economy, diet and culture. In fact, they should not be allowed to do so.

Trade policies should ^{also} recognize each country's right to protect its land and people from multinational activities. Examples are Europe's banning hormone-treated beef and our demanding turtle-escape shrimp nets. These, and policies like them, are perfectly legitimate and should not be outlawed by any trade agreements.

In addition, policies should insist on practices that don't pollute the air and water, as well as those that do provide living wages and humane treatment for workers. Each country should be allowed to ban products from those countries that don't adhere to these guidelines or that it thinks are detrimental to its people or its society.

Our basic philosophy of unlimited, perpetual growth must be discarded. It leads only to greed and plunder, and is unsustainable. We need to be stewards of our resources, not destroyers, and our trade policies must have that concept as their basis.

Under our present policies, we are "eating our seed corn" and it cannot continue.

Sincerely,

Caroline Mitton

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