



Joint Declaration

Central American and European Union Advisory Groups established under the Trade and Sustainable Development Title of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Central America

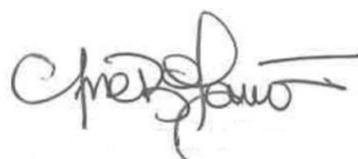
Meeting today, Monday 24 June 2019, in La Antigua Guatemala, Guatemala, Central America, we, the Advisory Groups of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, together with the European Union Advisory Group, declare that:

- a. We have organised ourselves, both internally and regionally, with a view to making our work as Advisory Groups to the Board on Trade and Sustainable Development more effective and efficient, thus bringing about closer interaction among ourselves and with the Parties to the Agreement. To this end, the Central American and European Union Advisory Groups have adopted mechanisms to work more smoothly at regional level, with each individual country group drawing up its own internal rules to improve how it operates at national level. The operational and good practice documents drawn up by each party, with the consensus of members and sectors, are testimony to this.
- b. In this respect, the Central American Advisory Groups on the one side and the European Union Advisory Group on the other have, in accordance with the priorities established by the Board on Trade and Sustainable Development in Brussels in June 2018, produced working documents outlining the concerns of all sectors represented on these issues and have put forward related recommendations. The working documents focus on three main themes:
 - Corporate Social Responsibility
 - Decent work and compliance with International Labour Organisation standards
 - Business opportunities and challenges: increasingly including MSMEs and small producers in the value chain of trade
- c. Having been operational for five years, we consider it imperative to institutionalise joint meetings between the Advisory Groups and to establish mechanisms for direct dialogue between the Board on Trade and Sustainable Development and the Advisory Groups of the Parties. In particular:
 - The Advisory Groups and national contact points shall ensure that the exchange of information is effective and transparent.
 - The Advisory Groups shall meet jointly with the Board on Trade and Sustainable Development ahead of their annual meetings and ensure sufficient time for preparations to guarantee the quality of the dialogue.

- d. We take note of the fact that the European Commission has started the ex-post evaluation of the Association Agreement and, as regards the evaluation of the Trade and Sustainable Development Title, we explicitly ask to be considered as the main channel for consulting the productive, labour and civil society sectors in line with the terms of reference of the evaluation, so as to establish a continuous and structured dialogue with the Advisory Groups on both sides at all stages of the process. With this in mind, the Advisory Groups, acting jointly and on their own initiative, are defining quantitative and qualitative criteria to support this process.
- e. We welcome the funding project launched by the European Union to strengthen the Advisory Groups in the 2018-2021 period, in the framework of its trade agreements with third countries. Nevertheless, we reiterate that under the commitment made at the 2018 meeting of the Board on Trade and Sustainable Development with a view to strengthening the Advisory Groups, the financial support of Central American governments is needed if the Advisory Groups are to fulfil their obligations and responsibilities efficiently.



Gérard Karlshausen,
President
EU Advisory Group



Andrea Bolaños,
President and regional coordinator
Central American Advisory Groups