

Minister of Foreign Affairs
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON | Canada | K1A 0G2
chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca

**Minister of Environment & Climate Change
Canada**
200 Boulevard Sacré-Coeur
Gatineau, QC | Canada | J8X 4C6
ec.ministre-minister.ec@canada.ca

**Minister of Innovation, Science & Social
Development Canada**
235 Queen St
Ottawa, ON | Canada | K1A 0H5
ised.minister-ministre.isde@canada.ca

Minister of International Trade Diversification
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON | Canada | K1A 0G2
jim.carr@parl.gc.ca

September 5, 2019

**Environmental and Labour organizations petition Canadian Ministers
to ensure Canada's trade deal with Brazil and Mercosur countries enforces the protection of the
Amazon**

In response to Canada's [announcement](#) that it will continue negotiations on the Mercosur trade deal with Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay despite the critical threats to the Amazon rainforest, we, the undersigned organizations, ask the offices of relevant Ministers to take steps to reassure Canadians that economic and diplomatic relations with Brazil will actively seek the protection of the most diverse ecosystem on earth. The destruction of the Amazon is a planetary tragedy particularly for Indigenous people.

Escalating deforestation of the Amazon will make meeting our Paris Agreement climate targets all but impossible. The Amazon is an important global resource. It is one of the most important tools for mitigating climate change and cooling the planet by absorbing an important amount of global carbon emissions. The Amazon is also the most diverse ecosystem on land and helps stabilize rain cycles in South America. Today, conventional free trade deals encourage deforestation because they deepen market access for agricultural and mining products.

The protection of the Amazon is a global emergency and responsibility. Climate change and deforestation are contributing to increased temperatures and changes in the rain cycles in the Amazon which negatively impact agriculture, human health, the region's forest, water availability and biodiversity. Canada needs to step up and rapidly implement ambitious domestic policies, which are currently lacking, to respond to this land and climate emergency, for example, by phasing out fossil fuel subsidies. Canada's current contribution to international climate finance can support climate mitigation in developing countries, including by reducing the degradation of forest ecosystems, but this is currently insufficient considering our historical contribution to climate change and our international obligations. Canada's announcement of \$15 million to assist the emergency response to the tens of thousands of fires currently burning in the Amazon is essential. However, this short-term response will not resolve the long-term problems of runaway climate change and escalating destruction of the Amazon.

We ask the offices of relevant Canadian Ministers to take the necessary steps to ensure that:

1. Trade agreements have enforceable provisions which uphold environment and climate protection, as well as labour and Indigenous rights.

The Mercosur trade agreement must hold all signatories and multinational corporations and investors accountable for environmental, human health and Indigenous rights impacts. The agreement should also include rules to guarantee full transparency of the supply chain of agricultural commodities imported by both countries. Without stringent, positive obligations on each member state to uphold environmental standards and climate commitments in line with the *Paris Agreement*, trade agreements lack the mechanisms necessary to hold states to account. Canada's obligation to protect these rights not only exists domestically, but in its extraterritorial actions motivated by trade agreements. Enforceable mechanisms are fundamental to forbid investors and corporate interests to convert natural habitat in their supply chain.

2. The public interest is paramount to corporate rights and procedural protections.

Investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms within trade deals undermine democratic principles of law-making and justice, as they allow foreign corporations to challenge public interest regulations in an unaccountable, and nontransparent international trade body. The risk of an unlimited damage award to a multinational corporation or investor from an investment tribunal undermines environmental justice, and impedes government decision-making on environmental matters of urgent concern. The threat of such lawsuits not only causes government ministries to change their decision-making, but creates the pretext for regulatory "chill."

3. Trade negotiations are transparent and provide citizens with a right to participate.

A citizen's complaint mechanism should be included in the text of any trade agreement. The public should be given the opportunity to request an investigation, whereby Canada pursues environmental compliance investigations of parties and investors' activities. Without this accountability mechanism, the public cannot challenge whether parties to the agreement are effectively enforcing their environmental laws.

Canada shares an important responsibility in ensuring the sustainability of the Amazon rainforest and must ensure in all trade negotiations, including Mercosur, that we *protect, uphold and enforce* environment and climate, labour and Indigenous rights standards.

Yours very truly,

Catherine Abreu
CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK CANADA

Angella MacEwen
TRADE JUSTICE NETWORK

Michèle Asselin
ASSOCIATION QUÉBÉCOISE DES
ORGANISMES DE COOPÉRATION
INTERNATIONALE

Theresa McClenaghan
CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW
ASSOCIATION

Sujata Dey
COUNCIL OF CANADIANS

Ken Neumann
UNITED STEEL WORKERS

Mark Hancock
CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

Colleen Thorpe
ÉQUITERRE