



AFL-CIO – ETUC Joint Statement

The working people of the United States and Europe have been harmed by unfair trade practices, including China's deliberate overproduction of steel and aluminum, intellectual property theft, forced transfer of production, and violation of basic labor rights.

The working people of the United States and Europe have supported the growth of multilateral global governance since the end of the Second World War, and have continued to support that structure even as it has been increasingly captured by the interests of global corporations and the failed ideology of neoliberalism. A global economy requires multilateral institutions—the alternative is a war of all against all. We support the reform of the multilateral system so that it is more democratic, more open, and takes into consideration labor-social-environmental rights, but we oppose efforts to destroy it. The refusal of the Trump Administration to engage productively in established multilateral processes at the OECD and the G-7 in recent weeks has been detrimental to the international system and we urge the Trump Administration to change course.

We support trade that is fair and effectively enforced, in particular when it comes to protecting and enhancing key international labor rights such as freedom of association, right to organize and collective bargaining. This is the only way to ensure a level playing field for workers' rights and avoid a race to the bottom on wages and working conditions. So far, our respective governments and the European Commission have paid too much attention to international trade liberalization, while neglecting the consequences on workers' rights and their conditions. This neglect now threatens the underlying legitimacy of the international system and must be addressed.

When states or firms break trade rules or exploit loopholes, working people are the first to be harmed, and we expect our elected governments to stand up for us. When unfair trade practices go unaddressed, working people suffer further harm. That is why we have long advocated for swift and concrete global actions to address harmful, state-driven trade-distorting practices. To avoid a spiraling trade crisis, a comprehensive multilateral approach must be developed so no country has to go it alone.

We believe that trade enforcement is most effective when our governments cooperate to achieve shared goals. The priority should be to work together to thoughtfully and effectively address trade practices, including those by China, that for too long have allowed global companies to profit at our expense instead of with us. A rules-based trading system requires that rules be enforced. We are united in support for a concerted approach to China's trade-distorting practices and in our opposition to a trade war. We believe the failure on the part of multilateral institutions such as the WTO to effectively address China's trade-distorting practices is a threat to the multilateral system itself and must be addressed.

Global shared prosperity, sustainable development, inclusive growth, and respect for international labor rights require comprehensive trade reform and multilateral action. We urge all of our governments and the European Commission to work together, not at cross-purposes, to achieve these goals.