**Statement of Declaration on 23 Years of NAFTA**

Twenty-three years ago, a new struggle began when the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was put into effect in January 1994. This long road has shown us that NAFTA, an economic model based on neoliberal recipes, failed. The workers of the maquiladoras in northern Mexico have witnessed the deception of the deal as it did not fulfil its promise of more and better jobs. At the same time, we have been affected by this agreement that benefits a few global corporations and government officials while our communities remain in precarious conditions and the quality of life in Mexico continues to deteriorate.

In the case of workers in the export maquiladora industry on the northern border of Mexico, NAFTA has been negative for the majority because it has generated many socioeconomic problems. The following data illustrates the failure of NAFTA:

* **NAFTA failed to create new jobs across the country.** More than 50 percent of the border workforce indicated in 2008 that they migrated from various parts of the interior of the country to the border to obtain work in the maquiladoras. The deal was also unable to keep up with the 1,200,000-young people entering the labor market each year. In addition, since 2001, one-third of the manufacturing jobs created by NAFTA have disappeared as US corporations are moving to China, where wages are even lower.
* **The economic situation has worsened and poverty reaches even those with employment.** In 2008, 62% of maquila workers rated their economic situation worse compared to 1993 – that is before free trade began. Even worse, between 1993 and 2013, per capita income in Mexico increased at an average of 1.2 percent annually, which is much slower than other Latin American countries.
* **Wages have stagnated.** In the maquiladoras, wages are almost 40 percent lower than in other industries. More than two incomes are needed to afford a household's basic needs since wages do not keep up with inflation. In fact, in 1993, the average Mexican worker in the manufacturing industry earned 18 percent of the hourly pay of the average American worker. By 2012, this percentage had fallen to 16 percent.
* **Labor and environmental laws continue to be violated by foreign corporations**. Maquila workers are well familiarized with how global companies and Mexico have bypassed their labor laws to increase their profits at workers' cost.
* **NAFTA is a factor of forced economic migration.** Under NAFTA, Mexico's annual migration to the United States doubled from 370,000 in 1993 (before NAFTA) to 770,000 in 2000. The agreement displaced between one and two million Mexican farmers and hundreds of thousands of Mexicans from all economic sectors migrated to the United States. However, after 2007 when the Mexican immigrant population reached approximately 12.8 million in the U.S., the return of Mexican immigrants to Mexico increased. This is due to the increase in deportations and the economic crisis of the neighboring country. First, we have to leave our country in search of a better life and then we are expelled us from the destination country.

While foreign investment and trade grew in the region from $290 billion in 1993 to over $ 1.1 trillion in 2016, NAFTA has not translated into more and better jobs. On the contrary, it has meant economic instability, overexploitation and abuses that are experienced in these factories daily. Even worse, NAFTA has given unprecedented privileges to investors who have plundered our communities, including our environment.

The cost of free trade is too large for Mexican workers who deserve dignity and respect of our labor rights.

The CFO reached the following conclusions:

* We do not support NAFTA because we do not receive any of its benefits. On the contrary, its effects are prejudicial to us. We also oppose this agreement because it was negotiated behind our backs.
* NAFTA should be renegotiated to promote fair trade relations among Mexico, the United States, and Canada. A new treaty should assure just treatment for workers and full enforcement of the labor laws of each country.
* Mexico’s labor code should be fully enforced, and the government’s labor authorities as well as unions should defend the authentic interests of workers.
* We need to share information about NAFTA directly with other workers.
* We also need to publicize the work of the CFO more broadly.
* We will work with RMALC and other organizations in the three NAFTA countries in order to contribute to the creation of alternatives to “free trade.”
* We need to influence the governments of Mexico and the United States by making the voices of workers heard regarding our situation and our proposals for change.
* We need to develop strategies that permit workers to confront NAFTA and the conditions in their factories without being fired.

The CFO believes it is necessary to fight to stop free trade agreements and economic globalization when they affect workers negatively. As a grassroots worker’s organization on the Mexico-U.S. border, we intend:

* To educate and organize more maquiladora workers.
* To renegotiate NAFTA so that workers have a voice in its development.
* To reject the proposed Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, and in its place adopt the Alternatives for the Americas developed by fair trade networks of our hemisphere.
* To develop international strategies for grassroots organization to combat corporate-controlled globalization.
* To defend the historic gains of workers that are codified in Mexico’s Federal Labor Law.
* To work for the implementation of the conventions of the International Labor Organization.
* To oppose the “Millennium Round” of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and instead evaluate the impact of WTO policies; in addition, to support the formation of a WTO working group to explore the relationship between trade agreements and labor rights.

23 years of economic devastation are enough. It is time to implement a new economic model that benefits the welfare of workers with full respect for human and labor rights.

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