

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2220/09  
by Anne Van Lancker (PSE)  
to the Commission

Subject: The lack of an agreement on a bi-regional advisory body to enable civil society to follow negotiations

Against the background of the negotiations on the Association Agreement between the European Union and Central America a profound financial and economic crisis is developing, which seems to be setting the boundaries for these negotiations, which seek further limitation of governments' freedom of movement by deregulation, in support of the private interests of financial speculators and large companies. Association Agreements promote liberalisation of trade in goods, services and capital, with the result that the governments' responsibilities in ensuring respect for human rights, protecting the environment and ensuring their people's right to development may be compromised.

It should be possible for a permanent, inclusive and open bi-regional consultation mechanism to function in conjunction with this Agreement, in which, in addition to the institutional advisory bodies (CESE and CC-SICA), national and international organisations can also take part. This would mean that civil society would be able to follow the negotiations and would be able to monitor respect for human rights, protection of the environment and ensuring people's right to development.

Why does the Commission provide a mechanism for monitoring implementation of the Association Agreement with Central America that is a formal structure in which, apart from the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), there is no place for other networks and social movements that are interested in following what is happening, whereas in the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Caricom a mechanism is provided for players that are not part of the EESC? What is the justification for this form of unequal treatment of European networks and social movements?