Dear Mr Lange,

We are writing to express our concerns about the EU-Mexico Free Trade Agreement which is currently being negotiated. We understand that you are leading a European Parliament delegation to Mexico this week to meet key ministers, senators, academics, social partners and civil society representatives.

One of the resolutions adopted at the UNI Europa 2016 Conference in Rome included the following wording:

UNI Europa reconfirms that international trade agreements must foremost benefit society. They must be fair, sustainable, transparent and social as well as ensure competitiveness through quality instead of social dumping. All trade agreements must aim to strengthen the social and environmental standards, and secure the rights of workers. As a minimum the signing parties must sign and implement the ILO conventions. A binding and enforceable chapter on social rights must always be included.

The agreements must be negotiated in open and democratic processes and in dialogue with civil society. International trade agreements should improve living and working conditions, not least by facilitating collective bargaining in an ever more globalised world. UNI Europa rejects all trade agreements that give disproportional rights to multinational companies at the expense of democracy.

As you know, the existing EU-Mexico agreement contains no enforceable mechanisms for ensuring compliance with global standards for labour and human rights and environmental protection. UNI Americas, together with the global trade union movement, has expressed its concerns on multiple occasions about the Mexican government's systematic violations of core labour standards, specifically freedom of association and the right to organise and bargain collectively. While Mexico has recently reformed some of the labour provisions of its Constitution, many violations continue in practice. Indeed, the fact that the "Contractos de Proteccion" remains part of the legal provisions in Mexico will create an important unbalance in the future negotiations.

Violations of labour rights occur in a context of systematic violations of human rights, including extra-judicial executions by Mexican military and federal police and targeted attacks on human rights defenders. These violations, which have recently intensified, have been documented in a series of reports by U.N. agencies and human rights organisations,

We would also like to express our concern that this delegation visit will take place at a time when the relationship between Mexico and USA is facing political and social turmoil. Under these circumstances, it is a further challenge for the people and government of Mexico to decide on what an agreement must contain that serves the interests of both contracting parties.

We are further concerned by the lack of transparency surrounding this process, which, according to recent press statements, has been placed on a fast track. While we appreciate that some negotiating texts have been made public, the fact is that there has been no effective or inclusive process of consultation with leaders of democratic trade unions or other key representatives of Mexican civil society.

UNI Europa and UNI Americas call on the European Commission and the Mexican Government to conduct the negotiations transparently and in full consultation with civil society, specifically the democratic trade union movements of Mexico and the EU.

Given the continued attacks on human rights defenders, journalists and independent trade unions in Mexico, we specifically request that the INTA delegation commit to meeting next week with leaders of democratic unions, including the National Union of Workers (UNT) and affiliates of UNI Americas, specifically CTRM, our Telecom union, as well as other important Civil Society actors, such as the German NGO FES. We would be happy to provide contact information if needed.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Yours sincerely,

Oliver Roethig
Regional Secretary – UNI Europa

Marcio Monzane
Regional Secretary – UNI Americas