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**Written statement* submitted by Europe – Third World Centre, a non-governmental
organization in general consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the
submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The negotiations of the enlargement of ALBA offer a perspective of alternative regionalization to the neo liberal mondialization¹

1. On December 4th 1986, after several years of relentless work, the Declaration on the Right to Development was approved by the vast majority of States (146 out of 155 votes in favour, a dozen abstentions and one opposition, that of the United States of America.). This document, which clearly reaffirms the right of peoples to self-determination and to choose freely the political, social and economic system that suits them, in opposition to competition amongst countries, insists on their cooperation in order to direct development towards the noble goal of the fulfilment of all human rights on the entire planet. This development places human beings at the centre as subjects and actors in collective democratic action in all fields of social life, including production. Twenty years later, this text has not received any official commemoration and has gone unheeded. While a working group on this subject is getting logged down in rather scholastic debate, its contents, nevertheless, seem to be taking up roots in the field itself. This is the case in Latin America with initiatives such as ALBA (meaning “dawn” in Spanish).

2. It seems a long time ago when, under pressure from Washington, The Organization of American States excluded Cuba from the circle of “democracies” as being “incompatible with the inter-American system”. Today it is the United States that appears to be isolated. After decades of military dictatorships, followed by neo-liberal pillaging, the peoples of Latin America have rebelled, bringing into power several governments leaning to the left: Venezuela, Bolivia, Uruguay, Chile, and more recently Nicaragua and Equator. In Argentina, it was a popular revolt of the people that brought to a halt of ultra liberalism. In Mexico, Peru and Salvador, the left came close to winning the elections and could possibly do so in a near future. Even in Colombia, where the government, backed by the United States, has tried for years to wipe out the guerrillas, a front of progressive forces is taking shape. A less known aspect of these advances of the Latin American left but equally fundamental, is ALBA. It is useful to draw lessons from these mobilizations that have taken place in Latin America, where the people, thanks to their mobilization, were able not only to stop the ZLEA-NAFTA -FTAA from coming into force, but also were able to take the offensive in launching ALBA, an alternative to the regionalization designed to be handed to neo-liberal globalization.

The defeat of ALCA

3. ALCA was set up in order to establish a zone of free trade amongst the countries of America, with the exception of Cuba. Its goal was the liberalization of the flow of capital and goods and the establishment of a legal framework allowing trans nationals² to loot the continent. This initiative did not come from Latin America. First conceived in the 1990's under the G. Bush's administration, it was revived by G.W Bush in 2001 at the Summit of the Americas. Although officially presented as aiming to “promote social development in fairness”, this treaty was presented to the American Congress in a more prosaic manner “To guarantee our companies the control of a region extending from the North Pole to the Antarctic, and thus assuring the free access of our goods, services, technologies and capital,

¹ This statement has been written in collaboration with Rémy HERRERA, a researcher at the CNRS-Centre d'Economie de la Sorbonne (France).

² Refer to « FTAA and the Urgent Necessity of an Alternative for Development », 60th session of the Commission on Human Rights, E/CN.4/2004/NGO/122.

without any hindrance”³. ALCA was seen as complementary to a network of military bases already set up on the continent. ALCA represented the economic constituent of the global strategy concerning the reorganization of American hegemony in the world, in which the control of the western hemisphere was an essential part. In the same spirit of the IMF’s plans for structural adjustment, and the WTO’s discipline, ALCA was meant to extend ALENA. The integration of Latin America into such a treaty, thus submitting the weakest to a logic that could only benefit the strongest, could by no means be considered as a solution to the structural crisis. ALCA was nothing more than an attack on rights of people to democracy, national sovereignty and development.

4. The negotiations around the preliminary aspects of the agreement were conspicuous in their lack of transparency- none of the people or their representatives in parliament were informed, consulted or called upon to take position on the treaty. National sovereignty was particularly endangered by the chapter relative to investments - a rejoinder to the AMI that not only made a provision allowing the holders of capital to obtain huge privileges but at the same time denying the State receiver of foreign capital the right to impose restrictions on the investors or on the speculators. The text of ALCA made no mention of any social rights for workers, thereby repeating the dichotomy inherent in the capitalistic world system: globally integrated markets where everything except work is taken into consideration. The very serious dangers embodied in ALCA weighed down on the people of Latin America and brought about a rise of opposition to the treaty⁴. These resistances converged on all sectors of civil society: parties, trade unions, social movements including indigenous feminists and environmental concerns. By the mobilizations of committees for struggle and demonstrations, people became informed and organized. Supported by this momentum Cuba and Venezuela drew up radical criticism concerning this destructive project while other States, mainly Brazil, renegotiated the calendar, whereby delaying the deadline, thus reminding that another type of integration was possible. The final blow was delivered at the IVth Summit of the Americas in 2005 in Argentina by the refusal of the states belonging to MERCOSU to sign the ALCA. Today bi-lateral free trade agreements between the United States and certain States of Latin America are making a strong comeback. These treaties are much more pernicious than ALCA and so the struggle continues throughout the continent.

The construction of ALBA

5. Thanks to Cuba and Venezuela’s impetus, the counter attack gave birth to the ALBA. Basically ALBA is a project of regionalization designed to re-enforce the people of Latin America’s autonomy and contribute to the construction of a multi- polar world. Presidents Hugo Chavez Frias and Fidel Castro Ruiz launched ALBA on December 14th in La Havana. The adhesion of Bolivia, officialized on April 29 2006 by the signature of its president Evo Morales Ayma broadened this alliance. And just recently Nicaragua’s newly elected president, Daniel Ortega, has joined the three “most radical” countries of the continent. The relations between Cuba and Venezuela have been particularly developed. One example is the strategic plan that allows for Cuba to supply free medical services, as well as the training of tens of thousands of doctors and specialists in health technologies to Venezuela. Venezuela will, in turn, help Cuba to reactivate oil refineries. and speed up the transfer of technologies between two oil companies, Petroleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA)

³See : Alternatives Sud, *Les Dessous de L’ALCA*, CETRI /L’Harmattan, 2003.

⁴ Europe-Third World Center, *Mobilisations des peuples contre ALCA-ZLEA*, February 2005, Geneva.

and Cuba Petroleo (Cupet). The cooperation between these two countries now extends over a wide scale of fields, going from the co- financing of telecommunication infrastructures, to mining and steel industries, to the food processing industry, to transportation and tourism. And even more, it implies steep cuts in trade barriers and non trade barrier as well as incentives for direct foreign investments carried out by their respective public entities.

6. On top of the consolidation of the relations between the four countries who are signatories to the treaty, this regionalization is bringing about very profound changes to the continent as a whole, laying the foundations for a new form of integration, no longer grounded in the capitalistic values of profit and plundering by trans nationals, but, on the contrary, grounded in the values of cooperation, solidarity and complementarity. The promotion of development serving the people, thanks to economic diversity, the conquest of sovereignty with regards to food and the development in the fields of health and education, all aim at improving the living conditions of the poorest and building an area that can finally free itself from its present blights (poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, underemployment...). This implies necessarily going beyond capitalism, as it now exists. One innovation that is taking place consists in the establishment of a “ compensation fund for structural convergence”, which goal is to give preferential treatment to poor countries by granting them aid to finance investments and to give subventions to their goods destined to national markets or for exportation.

7. At the same time negotiations continue to make headway for the integration in a single continental oil firm, PetroAmerica, the activities of public companies of the region, particularly PDVSA (Venezuela), Cupet (Cuba), YPFB (Bolivia), Petrobras (Brazil), EnarSA (Argentina), PetroEcuador (Equator) and PetroTrin (Trinidad and Tobago). Such advancement would allow these countries to play a greater role in the international energy negotiations as well as to define alternative strategies for the renewal of energy sources and for the protection of the environment. “The Bank of the South” is also an important project for the continent’s future. It would operate with a different logic from the capitalistic banks and would help to lower the foreign debt and to finance development. In the field of communication, the creation in July 2005 of Telesur, a satellite television channel associating Venezuela, Argentina, Uruguay and Cuba has broken the United States’ media monopoly and given the people access to alternative information.

8. Thanks to ALBA and this series of initiatives and alternative projects, the road is well open for the setting up of a regional block in Latin America, a block likely to counterbalance American hegemony while enforcing the respect of the people’s rights on the continent to decide independently and to remain masters of their own collective future. This kind of integration conceived in the spirit of Simon Bolivar and Jose Marti who had declared: “Humanity is our homeland”– has effectively chosen to respect the sovereignty and self determination of each State- nation signatory.

For alternative regionalizations serving the people

9. Solidarity for all peoples- from the South as well as the North- in the building of a universal civilization cannot be founded on assistance or the claim that it is possible to ignore the conflict of interests that oppose classes and countries. Solidarity can only be built by going beyond the laws and values of existing capitalism. The regional organizations of an alternative mondialization should strengthen the autonomy and the solidarity of people from the five continents; a perspective that is in deep contrast to that of

today's dominant models of regionalization conceived as constituent blocks of the neo liberal mondialization. More than fifty years after the Bandung conference in 1955, the people who are victims of the world capitalist system are demanding with vigour a new Bandung. This front of solidarity must not oppose the peoples from the South to those of the North. On the contrary, this front should form the basis of a global internationalism that associates everyone in the building of a common civilization that respects the diversity of all components.

10. Free trade, by definition, can only favour the strongest. It is the enemy of regional integration. Therefore regional integration cannot be achieved within its framework. Hence it is necessary to define the conditions that will allow an alternative cooperation within each great region of the world, in contact with the initiatives of the social movements. In Latin America, given the aggressiveness of the trans nationals, the people have put the question of regional integration in a new perspective, a perspective founded not on comparative advantages but on cooperative advantages. These are the political principles, and not the rules imposed by the IMF and the WTO, that must be the basis for this cooperation in order to promote development. Other continents can learn lessons from this experience even if the situations differ from one region to another. In Africa, a desire for unity exists, just as the awareness of the impossibility of an isolated resistance of the dominating neo liberal forces exists. Nevertheless many institutions of integration remain ineffective- those that are the most active were inherited from the colonial and apartheid periods. The African Union and its social and economic program (NEPAD) are not a solution to the problem of collective resistance. The civil societies must become aware of the need to overcome their differences. Concerning the North African countries bordering the Mediterranean, the Euro Mediterranean Treaties are an example of a kind of regionalization built at the expense of the people of the South. In Asia, in order to face the neo-liberal mondialization, popular resistance bringing together many organizations from the civil society have begun in the majority of the countries in order to plan another type of regional integration. Notably these movements have led to the elaboration of a new popular charter aiming at the strengthening of cooperation within exchanges.

11. Given these conditions, it is appropriate to make the following recommendations. For Latin America, it is necessary to enlarge the campaign supporting ALBA in order to put to an end, once and for all, the United States' strategy for ALCA. At the same time these campaigns should promote the independence and the development of people in a framework of justice and respect of their specificities and build an integration based on cooperation and solidarity. In Africa, civil society movements continue to mobilize and to launch campaigns for peace in order to put an end to the existing conflicts. Breaking away from ideas of integrations built on an ethnic group or one culture, these campaigns must structure actions to be taken on regional and national levels and propose alternatives of African initiatives. In Asia it is important to foil the competition stemming from the dynamics of the accumulation of capital amongst countries and re-enforce the links of solidarity between workers from different countries, as well as developing local economic processes between production and consumption. It is necessary to promote sciences and technologies in order to build a better future for rural societies. In order to be effective, these new forms of cooperation must express the solidarity of the peoples and the

governments- from the South to the North-who are standing up to neo-liberalism and who, together, are looking for real alternatives in view of building a multi-polar world system⁵.

⁵ See The Bamako Appeal :<http://forumtiersmonde.net>