



EU-Canada Trade and Investment Deal Fails its First Democratic Test

For Immediate Release
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Brussels, Belgium — Today, Belgium rejected the flawed EU-Canada trade and investment deal, which would have expanded the rights of corporations to challenge laws protecting public health and the environment.

"Difficulties remain, especially on a symbolic and extremely important political issue: the dispute settlement mechanism," the leader of the Belgian Walloon region Paul Magnette told the Walloon parliament.

The first dominos to fall against the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) came last week, when the Belgian Parliaments of the Walloon and the Brussels-Capital regions voted 'No' to CETA.

Today marked the first opportunity for EU governments to officially vote on CETA. EU countries were allowed only a 'Yes' or 'No' vote on the final text. Because there was no unanimous agreement, the text now cannot pass on to the ratification process.

"Today's rejection of CETA is a David versus Goliath victory in which the public interest triumphed over enormous corporate lobbying for this agreement," says Layla Hughes, Senior Attorney at the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL). "As it stands, CETA threatens EU laws that protect us from dangerous chemicals. Until recently, revising this flawed agreement seemed to be very much against the odds. Thanks to Belgium, we now have a second chance to ensure that trade and investment agreements do not trade away our health for private profits."

"CETA threatens to stop, halt, or reverse EU efforts to protect us from pesticides that disrupt our hormone systems," adds Génon K. Jensen, Executive Director at the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL). "I am thankful to the Belgian government for having voted 'No,' and I now urge the European Commission to ensure that EU trade policy does not jeopardize our health and the environment."

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Note for editors:

Earlier this week, CIEL sent an open letter to Paul Magnette to thank him for stopping CETA. A provisional application of CETA would have introduce provisions that go beyond the World Trade Organization (WTO) and that would have enabled Canada to challenge laws that protect our health and the environment.

The threat of undue Canadian influence on environmental regulations is real. For example, Canada has raised concerns about EU's REACH, which is among the world's most ambitious system to limit our exposure to dangerous substances, over 20 times at the WTO's Technical Barriers to Trade Committee.

Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) – Founded in 1989, CIEL uses the power of law to protect the environment, promote human rights, and ensure a just and sustainable society. CIEL is dedicated to advocacy in the global public interest through legal counsel, policy research, analysis, education, training, and capacity building.

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) — HEAL is a leading European not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union (EU). We demonstrate how policy changes can help protect health and enhance people's quality of life.