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Austrian government rejects EU-Mercosur Agreement

Trade

The Austrian Vice-Chancellor, Werner Kogler, has rejected the signing of the EU-Mercosur agreement, in a letter to Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa. The Austrian government stresses that the EU-Mercosur Free Trade Agreement is in contradiction with the objectives of the Green Deal and the Paris Agreement. The Portuguese EU Presidency had announced that it would attempt to complete the ratification of the agreement in the coming months. On Thursday (11 March), the representatives of EU member states will meet to discuss a possible additional protocol on deforestation and climate.

Yannick Jadot MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur in the International Trade Committee of the European Parliament, comments:

"The EU-Mercosur agreement is tantamount to the EU giving up any pretences of fighting against climate change. It's welcome to see the Austrian government join us in opposing the EU-Mercosur agreement. This agreement will massively contribute to deforestation, the globalisation of junk food, animal suffering and the disappearance of farmers in Latin America and Europe. European farmers will have to compete with an intensive agricultural model in the Mercosur countries where many pesticides banned in the EU are allowed.

"This trade deal is contrary to the European commitments set out in the Green Deal and the climate commitments of the Paris Agreement. The Mercosur text is flawed to the core, no additional protocol or joint declaration will suffice to change its impact on the climate. As the letter from the Austrian government points out, no agreement that poses a danger to the environment should be ratified. It is time for European trade policy to fully integrate ecological, social and democratic issues. The insignificant economic stakes alone are not sufficient to justify the signing of a new international agreement. All EU countries must reject this damaging agreement."

Anna Cavazzini MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur in the International Trade Committee of the European Parliament, comments:

"We welcome the clear announcement by the Austrian government and call on all EU governments to join in rejecting the Mercosur Agreement. The Mercosur Agreement undermines the Green Deal and the climate commitments of the Paris Agreement and contains no sanctionable provisions on climate protection and human rights. In its current form, the agreement cements trade policies that put people, climate and the

environment at risk; an additional protocol or declaration of intent to protect the rainforest is not enough. The agreement itself must be changed.

"We demand binding rules for deforestation-free supply chains and sanctionable standards in trade agreements like Mercosur instead of toothless sustainability chapters. We reject a circumvention of the democratic co-determination of national parliaments through a possible splitting of the agreement into a political part and a trade part. Both the European Commission and the Council Presidency are called upon to refrain from such undemocratic proposals."

More:
Letter from the Austrian Vice-Chancellor to the Portuguese Council Presidency
Since the negotiation of this agreement was launched in 2000, the equivalent of the surface area of Spain has been deforested in the Amazon. The policies initiated by Brazilian President Bolsonaro have dramatically accelerated deforestation. In October, the European Parliament opposed the EU-Mercosur agreement. In December, French President Emmanuel Macron, made a commitment before the Citizens' Climate Convention not to ratify the agreement.

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