stronger economic, political, social and cultural integration that is in favor of people, respectful of diversities, and that favors environmental sustainability, as a strategy to face neoliberal globalization. It is fundamental to strengthen the processes of subregional and regional integration, with a full participation of the workers, in order to react to FTAs that only increase the distance between and within the impoverished and the rich countries.”72 “It is impossible to move in this direction” - the TUCA-CSA argues – “without going beyond the exhausted neoliberal model still present in the continent. Building alternative processes to the neoliberal model the TUCA-CSA will drive the strategy of Sustainable Development, consistently with a generalized common sense that consider three axes, each one having the same relevance: the economic, social and environmental. The starting point for economic, social and environmental policies, in order to help meet the target of a sustainable development, is an active role of the State, sustained by a new democratic assent based on popular sovereignty, and an enlargement of the forms of participation of the civil society in the decision making process, both at the national and the regional level”73.

This more general approach might become stronger now as the global economic crisis changes the framework. Sheila Katz, Canadian Labour Congress representative, argues that “Hopefully the opportunities that come out of this worldwide economic and multiple crises will allow for some talk and discussion on re-regulating the economies, re-regulating the financial systems, and might lead to the development of a new kind of trade agreements, to a new kind of globalization if you will, one that is more to the benefit of the workers in the world”74. Nevertheless the tendency to push for new FTAs will be strongly present as well, especially for countries and regions willing to boost their economies through increased exports.

4. Conclusions and recommendations for Europe

The story of how most of the trade unions of the Americas dealt with Free Trade Agreements is long and complex. Nevertheless our research supports the idea that a convergence process has occurred in the hemisphere. Considering the difficulties of the first attempts by the Canadian Labor Congress to speak a common voice with the AFL-CIO in approaching the US-Canada FTA negotiations in the mid 1980s, it is noteworthy that the analysis which is

72 http://www.csa-csi.org/content/section/26/189/
73 Ibid.
74 Sheila Katz, Interview on February 9th, 2009, by Bruno Ciccaglione
today proposed by the TUCA-CSA, not only opposes FTAs, but goes beyond the concept of fair trade. Instead it seeks to design a model of integration that is an alternative to free trade, not only because it proposes alternative trade rules, but because it aims at moving away from neoliberalism by giving a new centrality to the State, and to a new democratic and participatory process. It would be overstating the reality to claim that every trade union of the Americas is concretely and consistently operating in harmony with the Program of Action approved by the TUCA-CSA, but still it is clear that the labor movements of the Americas followed a path that is unique and obtained some genuine achievements, as was the case of the defeat of the FTAA. This happened because of the development of new practices both in terms of cross border alliances and in terms of coalition building with other social actors, as is the case of the building of the Hemispheric Social Alliance, and a result of similar national coalitions which involved many different social movements. The variety of modalities used and the continued debate and discussion both within the labor movement and with other social actors also contributed to the building of a common vision that enriched the different contributions.

The vision that trade unions of the Americas developed in the last decades on trade rules has increasingly produced a critique of the negotiations with the EU - especially in Central and South America, with arguments that are similar to the ones used in the case of negotiations with the US. According to the TUCA-CSA, the agreements signed between Mexico and Chile 75 and the EU, marked a clear change in the EU strategy: the former EU approach, more focused on political dialogue and cooperation, the American trade unions argue, was abandoned in favor of an approach based on free trade agreements, similarly to the approach of the US 76. Trade unions claim that this is evident in the current negotiations with MERCOSUR, the Andean Region Countries and Central America. Gonzalo Berron, TUCA-CSA representative says that "Only a few years ago the way the EU was proposing agreements was different, but now it's clear for everybody that EU is only pushing for Free Trade Agreements and is not this fraternal good friend aiming to increase cooperation with Latin

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76 http://www.csa-csi.org/content/section/26/189/ - Action Program of the ITUC-CSA
America”\textsuperscript{77}. Kield Jacobsen, CUT Brazil representative, says that “\textit{In terms of the contents of the trade agreements, the EU agreements are exactly the same as the ones planned and implemented by the US with the ALCA (FTAA). In this sense the CUT stands against them with the same arguments}”\textsuperscript{78}. For these reasons trade unions of Central and Latin America consider problematic the relationship with the European trade unions: “\textit{Although sometimes their rhetoric is similar to ours, then we see a different conclusion, because we oppose these Association Agreements, as the Europeans only claim to remove some of the worst elements out of the agreements. We do not disagree on the need to have a social and labour chapter, but the problem is that the trade chapter of these agreements simply makes any other element subordinated, and cancelling any effect of the other chapters}”\textsuperscript{79}. Even more openly critical is the CUT Brazil representative: “\textit{There is a difference in our relationships with the TUs of the United States and those of the European Union, when it comes to free trade agreements. The US trade unions oppose them, the Europeans support the negotiations, generally, although with some remarks. (...) It is very difficult to explain to the European trade unions the impact of these agreements on the development process in our countries, because they continue saying that according to their calculations the export of manufactured goods would be increased for European companies. So they think this can generate new employment. When in the ITUC we tried to coordinate trade union confederations of different countries to oppose the NAMA within the WTO negotiations, even if only one European trade union – the British – explicitly stood against our coalition and vision, the European trade union participation in this coalition gradually decreased}”\textsuperscript{80}.

A full discussion of this issue would be lengthy and take us outside the subject of this report. But we want to stress the need for further discussion, since trade rules are one of the critical issues that challenges labor movements worldwide, if the global labor movement is to build a new transnational solidarity capable of preventing in the future the race to the bottom that we observed in the decades of the neoliberal globalization.

In the context of the global economic crisis, the debate on trade seems to be focused on “protectionism” vs “further liberalization” as possible “solutions”. Both of these extremes

\textsuperscript{77} Gonzalo Berron, Interview on March 24\textsuperscript{th}, 2009, by Bruno Ciccgaglione
\textsuperscript{78} Kield Jacobsen, Interview on March 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 2009, by Bruno Ciccgaglione
\textsuperscript{79} Gonzalo Berron, Interview on March 24\textsuperscript{th}, 2009, by Bruno Ciccgaglione
\textsuperscript{80} Kield Jacobsen, Interview on March 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 2009, by Bruno Ciccgaglione
seem to be outside of the vision of trade unions of the Americas. Introducing the recent publication “Trade Unions 2009: Strategies to face the world crisis, Multilateralism and Trade and Investment Agreements”, Victor Baez Mosqueira, General Secretary of the TUCA-CSA, addresses the specific different perspectives of developed and developing countries facing the crisis and the need to face the contradictions by proposing a “development of a new kind”. For Latin America and the Caribbean Countries he argues that “Starting from the concept of Fair trade within a multilateral framework, we should address regional integration. In the last 20 years Regional Integration became a key issue for trade unions in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially between close countries that share similar productive development structures and cultural closeness. Following this path trade could be increased, and stronger alliances could be built to face other regional 'blocks' and central countries, in order to achieve a better ability to impose their conditions upon the 'market jungle'”.

In terms of trade rules, the labor movements of the Americas face the global crisis starting with a demand for a renegotiation of the existing free trade agreements and opposing the ones that are currently being negotiated or ratified.

Also the recent developments are noteworthy:

- The joint letter to the Governments of Canada and the US sent by the AFL-CIO and the CLC demanding that the governments “review and renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and to adopt a series of complementary policies necessary to build a strong, fair economy for workers in the United States, Canada and Mexico”. We should also note the on-going struggles to stop the ratification of the FTAs with Colombia in the US and in Canada.

81 “Sindicatos 2009: Estrategias frente a la crisis mundial, el multilateralismo y los acuerdos comerciales y de inversión” - http://www.csa-csi.org/content/view/5051/
82 Victor Baez Mosqueira, No pagaremos el costo de la crisis. Por un modelo sustentable y justo de desarrollo. Hacia una Plataforma Laboral de las Américas (PLA), ante la crisis Crisis y Trabajadores, - Sindicatos 2009: Estrategias frente a la crisis mundial, el multilateralismo y los acuerdos comerciales y de inversión - http://www.csa-csi.org/content/view/5051/
84 On the US FTA with Colombia and the AFL opposition to it see http://www.aflcio.org/Issues/jobs economía/global economía/colombia fta.cfm. On the Canada FTA with Colombia and the campaigns of the CLC see http://canadianlabour.ca/en/colombia-campaign
• The position of the TUCA-CSA and the Latin American and Caribbean trade unions on the problems and pitfalls of negotiations with the EU.

• Efforts to relaunch the multilateral framework in order to include labor and environmental standards, and the difficulties of reaching a clear consensus within the labor movements (and with other social movements) on whether the WTO is the right space for such a debate in the current framework.

• The demand for a new model of trade that is strictly connected with a wider analysis of the current crisis and its connections with other crises (climate change, food crisis, energy crisis and, many argue, democracy crisis).

To conclude we would like to summarize some of the most interesting and original elements emerged in our research on strategies, practices and struggles of trade unions in the Americas facing FTAs. We consider they could offer an opportunity for European trade unions in order to build common platforms and ultimately to build new forms of transnational solidarity. These elements are the following:

  – **Demanding a new kind of trade rules** that are not conceived to serve the interest of Transnational Companies, transcending the neoliberal model based on FTAs. Emphasis on social clauses is not considered sufficient to accept or support a trade agreement.

  – **Always trying to build a concrete link** – and possibly common platforms - **between trade unions of the countries involved in the negotiations** (both in bilateral and in regional/multilateral negotiations);

  – **Building wide alliances with social movements**, at the national and the transnational level. This led to the creation of the Hemispheric Social Alliance. While such an experience can not be “exported” one to one in other regions such as Europe, it still seems to offer a useful political indication, especially on trade issues. This strategy proved to be somewhat effective, not in order to give a new political role to trade unions, but to be effective in defending labor rights, both within the national borders and at the transnational level. It is noteworthy that in Europe some interesting
experiences of networks working on trade issues already exist, such as the Seattle to Brussels Network (S2B)\(^{85}\). This network includes social movements, NGOs and environmental groups aiming “to challenge the corporate-driven agenda of the European Union and other European governments for continued global trade and investment liberalisation”\(^{86}\). While at the global level, within the Our World Is Not For Sale Network (OWINFS)\(^{87}\), participation to the network by trade unions is relevant, the European TUs participation in its European part, S2B, is marginal\(^ {88}\).

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85 “The S2B network was formed in the aftermath of the WTO’s 1999 Seattle Ministerial to challenge the corporate-driven agenda of the European Union and other European governments for continued global trade and investment liberalisation. It has also developed as a response to the increasing need for European coordination among civil society organisations” - http://www.s2bnetwork.org/

86 http://www.s2bnetwork.org/index.jsp?id=7&random=r575950355269015

87 Http://www.ourworldisnotforsale.org (this web site is actually being reorganized, should be available in the next months)

88 Some of the main trade unions participating in the OWINFS (as members or collaborating with different working groups) are Canadian Labour Congress (Canada), CUT Brasil, COSATU (South Africa), CTA (Argentina), KPMP (Philippines), FKTU (South Korea). Noteworthy is also the participation of the Public Services International (PSI).