Dear Minister / Member of Parliament

The (union name) urges the Government to oppose the ratification of CETA.

Trade unions and many civil society and local and regional governments in the EU and Canada have voiced significant concerns about CETA and the lack of adequate protections for public services, labour standards and democratic decision-making.

Trade unions and others are concerned, firstly, that CETA contains an inadequate carve-out for public services, which means they will not be protected from privatisation. The negative list approach taken in the agreement means any service not explicitly listed will be exposed to the liberalisation commitments of the deal. This danger is increased by the ‘ratchet’ and ‘standstill’ mechanisms, which threaten to prevent future governments from bringing public services back into public ownership.

Furthermore, CETA contains the Investment Court System (ICS). Though modified from the old ISDS system, ICS still provides foreign investors with special courts through which they can sue governments for regulations and policies that they regard as bad for business. This is in part due to CETA’s broad definition of what constitutes ‘indirect expropriation’. We believe that the existence of ICS will result not only in  increased costs for governments implementing regulatory change, but will also have a ‘chilling effect’ on policy. This means that governments will be less likely to introduce public policies with legitimate welfare or environmental objectives, for fear of triggering costly litigation via ICS.

The ICS enforcement mechanism in CETA is in sharp contrast to the lack of enforcement provisions the deal provides to workers to claim their rights. CETA’s provisions on worker protections (and environmental rights) are weak, and we do not see the deal as a whole contributing to the promotion of good jobs and decent pay.

For these reasons, we urge you not to ratify CETA. We also urge you to demand that a comprehensive assessment of the impact of CETA in each Member State be carried out. Finally, it is our belief that the Council should be required to vote on the agreement by unanimity, as stipulated in Article 207 (4.b), given that CETA risks undermining Member States’ responsibilities for the organisation of social, education and health services.

The concern being expressed by an increasing number of Member States, regional authorities, trade unions and civil society groups about the impact of CETA on public welfare, standards and rights must be recognised. We urge you to call for the rejection of CETA, in the interests of the people of Europe and democracy as a whole.

Yours sincerely,