Presentation by Molly Scott Cato, Member of the European Parliament

I’m proud of the work the European Parliament has done to support the process to achieve a binding treaty and to require multinational corporations to respect human rights across the world. We regret that, apart from France, the EU is not engaged in the negotiations. Our task now is to reach out into the other EU institutions and to persuade them to become a fully engaged part of the process.

The politics of resisting corporate power matters but the personal is important too. That is why I would like to share one testimony of a woman whose human rights have been invaded and who stands for the thousands across the world who have suffered at the hands of multinationals. She is not a victim but a brave woman fighting for justice.

Rosalinda Dionicio Sánchez, is a Mexican activist whom I had the pleasure of meeting recently. She became part of the movement opposing the attempts by Minera Cuzcatlán (a Mexican mining company affiliated with Canadian company Fortuna Silver Mines Inc.) to open a mine in her town. She became active in her small town of Ocotlán after a fellow activist was killed and she was shot twice.

She is an extraordinarily brave woman, but also an ordinary working woman who has been drawn into the global resistance to corporate exploitation. There are too many cases like this - particularly in the global South - of people who have suffered at the hands of multinational companies who put profit before people and environment.

Rosalinda went on to study law to prepare herself to combat such injustices. She knows her local and national laws and uses them as best she can to protect her people. But these laws are not strong enough to resist the power of massive global companies who are larger than many countries. This is why we need an international, legally binding instrument that would protect people like Rosalinda who are unjustly intimidated and frequently killed by multinationals for trying to protect their livelihoods, their land, and their families.

In our debates with the Commission we are frequently told about chapters of trade agreements that include protection for human rights and the rights of indigenous people not to have their land stolen. But these rights are not in parts of treaties that are legally binding as they should be if the idea of Trade For All is to become more than an empty slogan.

People across the world feel threatened by globalisation. Many corporations are larger and more powerful than nation states. Politicians have allowed these companies to disempower them and this is undermining faith in democracy itself.

We should not reject globalism and retreat into a selfish and damaging nationalism - as the Trump administration has done. But if we are to resist this nationalism we must manage and harness globalisation through reinforcing a global rules-based system that works for all. The binding treaty is the first step along this path.