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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

December 20, 2022

The Honorable Katherine Tai  
United States Trade Representative  
600 17th Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20508

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
United States Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Ambassador Tai and Secretary Blinken,

We write to encourage you to engage the Governments of Ecuador and Uruguay to explore beginning trade agreement negotiations. It is in our national interest to expand export opportunities for products made and grown in the United States to like-minded countries and work more collaboratively with trusted partners in Latin America.

There is no greater opportunity for the Biden administration to capitalize on the bipartisan momentum and success of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) than by expanding trade relationships in our own hemisphere. Setting high-standard rules for trade in Latin America can help advance the post-pandemic economic recovery of some of our strongest democratic neighbors, improve market access for U.S. exports, strengthen U.S. manufacturing by leveraging regional supply chains, and better orient our economies for this era of strategic competition. Without further U.S. engagement, however, the United States risks losing market access opportunities for American companies and the potential erosion of our influence in the region relative to China.

Two countries in particular are well-positioned for renewed engagement. Ecuador and Uruguay have taken steps in recent years to strengthen opportunities for foreign investment, and both countries are strong democratic partners in Latin America. While the United States has Trade and Investment Framework Agreements with both countries, we do not have a trade agreement with either. Pursuing comprehensive agreements with each country would not only offer improved market access for U.S. exporters, but also facilitate greater collaboration on labor rights, environmental sustainability, anti-corruption measures, inclusive development, and policies benefitting small and medium sized enterprises. By adopting the USMCA template, the United States can promote expanded trade with key allies and do so in ways that ensure a level playing field for American workers, farmers, and firms.

Lastly, we note that in the absence of U.S. engagement both Ecuador and Uruguay have begun to look to others, including China, for preferential trading terms. Therefore, while we welcome the recent announcement of a new Fair Trade Working Group with Ecuador to explore progress on labor, environmental, and digital trade rules, we believe more can be done. By engaging the Governments of Ecuador and Uruguay in trade talks, the administration has an opportunity to reaffirm its interest in Latin America and build stronger, deeper partnerships that promote mutual economic growth, advance democratic values, and benefit workers in the United States and across the hemisphere.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Menendez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent "R" and "M".

Robert Menendez  
Chairman

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rob Portman". The signature is cursive and stylized, with a large "R" and "P".

Rob Portman  
United States Senator