

U.S. Positions Promoting Worker Rights in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement and Their Impact on Taiwan

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to use the negotiation and signing of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) to analyze United States government action in promoting worker rights through bilateral and regional free trade agreements. It also offers several proposals for Taiwan to reform its labor laws and practices seen as hurdles it must overcome to join the TPP. Aside from introductory and concluding remarks, the paper is divided into four sections. First, it briefly describes the historical background and motivations behind the TPP, and the importance of Taiwanese participation. Second, it discusses why and how the U.S. government has raised worker rights issues in international trade, investment and other related activities to safeguard domestic labor. Third, it analyzes the positions taken by the U.S. in promoting five fundamental worker rights contained in Chapter 19 of the TPP. Finally, the paper utilizes various critiques contained in the annual State Department issued Country Reports on Human Right Practices as a basis to propose several reform measures for Taiwan to initiate as required by the TPP. It concludes that these reforms not only improve labor rights domestically, but can Taiwan's labor laws and practices conform to international standards.

Key Words: Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreements (TPP), Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), worker rights, International Labor Organization (ILO), international labor standards