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**Farmers to have equal say in Fairtrade**

Farmers from Africa, Asia and South America are to have an equal say in running the global Fairtrade movement for the first time this week.

In a ground-breaking move, producers of tea, coffee, bananas and other goods will have half the votes at Fairtrade International’s annual General Assembly in Germany on Wednesday, 12 June 2013.

Fairtrade is the first major development organization to pioneer such power-sharing between groups in the northern and southern hemisphere.

Marike de Peña, vice-chair of Fairtrade International and director of the banana co-operative Banelino in the Dominican Republic, said the “unique” arrangement would help serve the interests of Fairtrade’s more than one million small farmers and their workers. She added: “This is what real empowerment is about.”

Previously growers and producers in the southern hemisphere had three out of 22 votes at Fairtrade International’s annual meeting, with the majority held by national Fairtrade organizations in the consumer countries of the wealthy north.

Under reforms begun five years ago, the constitution of Fairtrade International, the global co-ordinating body for the movement, was changed in January to give producers groups and consumer countries parity.

Delegates to the General Assembly in Bonn will vote on Fairtrade International’s accounts, elect a new board and make decisions on new applicants and markets.

Chief Adam Tampuri, chair of Fairtrade Africa and the Gbankuliso Cashew Farmers Association in Ghana, said: “We are convinced that what we have just achieved in Fairtrade International is a very important breakthrough: people in the south are not just beneficiaries but, for the first time, co-owners.

“This is not the end of the story and we still have a long way to go, but this fundamental step is a source of great motivation for us to strengthen and improve Fairtrade in the years to come.”

Molly Harriss Olson, Chair of Fairtrade International, said: “Producers have always been involved centrally in everything that we do. In fact there is no major decision that is taken without their guidance and support.

“But there is a big difference between having a seat at the negotiating table (or even a few seats) and owning half of the board room.”

NOTES for Editors

1.    The first Fairtrade International General Assembly meeting under the new constitution will be held on 12 June 2013 from 9:00 to 17:00 at the Gustav-Stresemann-Institut in Bonn (Address: Gustav-Stresemann-Institut e.V.; Langer Grabenweg 68; D-53175 Bonn-Bad Godesberg).

2.    Photos from the Fairtrade International General Assembly will be available on 12 June.

3.    Further enquiries, contact Reykia Fick, Media Relations Manager, Fairtrade International: r.fick@fairtrade.net, +49 (0) – 228 – 949 23 –141, mobile: +49– 172 541 6076