

Generalised tariff preferences GSP: exclusion of the Union of Myanmar/Burma of the GSP for agricultural goods

1997/0041(CNS) - 17/02/1997 - Legislative proposal

OBJECTIVE: the regulation seeks to withdraw temporarily access to the Community's generalized tariff preferences scheme in the agricultural sector from the Union of Myanmar because of its use of forced labour. **SUBSTANCE:** pursuant to Article 9 of Council Regulation 1256/96/EC applying for the period 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1999 multiannual schemes of generalized tariff preferences for certain agricultural products from developing countries, these preferences may be temporarily withdrawn in whole or in part in cases where a beneficiary country (here the Union of Myanmar) practices any form of slavery or forced labour. Following a complaint made by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) to the Commission and the examination of the complaint by the Commission and an enquiry it conducted it appears that this country practises forced labour on a large scale. This complaint was initially lodged in the context of the non-respect by the Union of Myanmar of Article 9 of Regulation 3281/94/EC (scheme of generalized preferences for industrial products) and has now been extended to the GSP for agricultural goods (see COM(96)711 - CNS96317). This type of labour, formally prohibited by ILO Convention No 29, was imposed systematically and under coercion and violent reprisals for military operations and civilian and military infrastructure building projects. The Commission is therefore requesting in this proposal the withdrawal of access to generalized tariff preferences for agricultural goods from the Union of Myanmar.