

Generalized tariff preferences GSP: exclusion of the Union of Myanmar/Burma of the GSP for industrial goods

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OBJECTIVE: the regulation seeks to withdraw temporarily access to the Community's generalized tariff preferences scheme from the Union of Myanmar because of its use of forced labour. **COMMUNITY MEASURE:** Council Regulation 552/97/EC temporarily withdrawing access to generalized tariff preferences from the Union of Myanmar. **SUBSTANCE:** pursuant to Articles 9 of Council Regulations 3281/94/EC and 1256/96/EC applying multiannual schemes of generalized tariff preferences in the industrial and agricultural sectors, these preferences may be temporarily withdrawn in whole or in part in cases where a beneficiary country (here the Union of Myanmar) practices any form of slavery or forced labour.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 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. This country also refused to cooperate in the inquiry launched by the Commission to verify the practice of forced labour. The Council is therefore withdrawing temporarily the generalized tariff preferences applicable to industrial and agricultural products originating in Myanmar until such time that it has been established that this type of practice has been brought to an end. This withdrawal will not apply to goods where there is proof that they were dispatched to the Community before this date. The Council, acting by a qualified majority, on a proposal from the Commission will cease this withdrawal when it is established, on the basis of a Commission report, that these practices underlying the withdrawal have ceased. **ENTRY INTO FORCE:** 24/03/1997