

Scheme of generalised tariff preferences GSP: implementing guidelines for the period 2006-2015 from 1st July 2005 to 31st December 2008

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The committee adopted the report by Antolín SÁNCHEZ PRESEDO (PES, ES) amending the proposal under the consultation procedure:

- Article 3 (the "exclusion" clause): to ensure greater transparency and legal certainty, the Commission should take any decision to remove beneficiary countries from the scheme under Article 3(1) "on the basis of the latest comparable and adjusted data available at the time of adoption of this Regulation". Moreover, to make the scheme more predictable, the committee reinstated a clause from the original proposal stipulating that the Commission should publish a list each year in the EU Official Journal of the beneficiary countries to be removed from the scheme; the Commission should provide developing countries and especially LDCs with adequate technical assistance "for the purpose of building the institutional and regulatory capacity required to capture the benefits of international trade and the GSP". Technical assistance should also be provided to developing countries for the ratification and effective implementation of the international conventions required by the new special incentive arrangement for sustainable development and good governance;
- when assessing the implementation of many of these international conventions, the views of civil society representatives, including members of national parliaments, should be taken into account;
- both the European Parliament and the beneficiary states should be kept informed at all times of the implementation, progress and results of the GSP;
- Article 13 (the "graduation" clause): MEPs pointed out that loss of preferences due to graduation was not a punishment but a result of increased competitiveness, showing that preferences were no longer needed to encourage exports. They wanted the threshold for imports of textile products to be reduced to 10%, arguing that, after the end of MFA-based quotas, the European textile industry would be seriously harmed by the proposed 12.5% threshold, which would include countries with a highly competitive textile industry;
- as the new GSP was now open to all fishing products, these must comply with the demanding health and hygiene standards applicable to the EU's own products;
- lastly, MEPs called for the Commission to draw up an impact assessment study by 1 March 2007 on the effects of the GSP during the period from 1 July 2005 to 1 January 2007. Among other things, the study should analyse GSP utilisation rates per country and section, including a comparison with previous years, evaluate the social and trade-related effects of graduation on graduated countries and make a preliminary assessment of the effects of future graduation on the countries likely to be graduated under the next regulation. On the basis of this study, the Commission should draw up a revised regulation by 1 June 2007 covering the period 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2011.