Resolution on the European Union's Generalised Systems of Preferences

2006/2653(RSP) - 15/11/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted a joint resolution on the European Union's Generalised Systems of Preferences, and noted that the economic development and integration into the world trade system of GSP+ beneficiary countries is crucial to achieving sustainable development objectives, including stability and good governance. The criteria for obtaining tariff preferences under GSP+ include effective implementation of core UN and ILO conventions, as listed in Annex III to Regulation 980/2005/EC. Parliament took note of Decision 2005/924/EC, whereby the Commission granted special incentive arrangements to Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Georgia, Guatemala, Honduras, Sri Lanka, Republic of Moldova, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, El Salvador and Venezuela. It called on the Commission, in cooperation with GSP+ beneficiary countries, to strengthen its commitment to ensuring effective implementation in those countries of the core human and labour rights of UN and ILO conventions, as well as of the conventions related to the environment and governance principles. A commitment to respecting the ILO and UN rules should be extended also to GSP beneficiary countries. Parliament believed that granting preferential access to countries which did not respect human rights and international labour conventions tended to weaken the incentive for countries to comply with ILO standards.

Despite their ratification of the relevant ILO conventions, repeated infringements of workers" rights had been reported in several GSP+ beneficiary countries. If these infringements were found to constitute serious and systematic violation of the ILO's core labour rights they could, as laid down in Article 16 of the Regulation, provide grounds for the temporary withdrawal of GSP+ preferences. Parliament called on the Commission to strengthen its monitoring of the implementation of ILO conventions in GSP+ beneficiary countries, and to inform the Generalised Preferences Committee of reported infringements of labour rights. The Commission should also consult on whether an investigation should be carried out into the existence of serious and systematic violations of the ILO's core labour rights conventions, particularly as regards child and forced labour.

Parliament also asked that the Commission do the following:

- make recommendations to the governments of beneficiary countries and stress that their failure to demonstrate progress towards effective implementation should lead to the temporary withdrawal of GSP+ privileges;

- keep Parliament informed of the results of its monitoring of the implementation of the UN and ILO conventions and of the level of compliance by GSP+ beneficiary countries, especially in the areas of freedom of association, collective bargaining, non-discrimination in employment and the elimination of child and forced labour;

- inform Parliament at an early stage of any recommendation for the temporary withdrawal of preferences in accordance with Article 16 of the Regulation;

- carry out a mid-term review of the GSP instrument, including an assessment of the effectiveness of implementation of the GSP+ requirements;

- take into account Parliament's views on the extension of the GSP+ scheme to specific countries and on any renewal of the current Regulation in 2008;

- produce a comprehensive, annual, country-by-country report not only detailing the situation in the beneficiary countries but also indicating the actions undertaken by the Commission.