

**Question for written answer E-010751/2012
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Henri Weber (S&D)

Subject: Burma and the Generalised System of Preferences

In 1997, the EU decided to withdraw the preferential trade status enjoyed by Burma under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) on the grounds of serious and systematic violations of fundamental international conventions on forced labour. Since 2011, the Burmese Government has committed itself to taking steps to ensure that human rights are better respected. This will to reform, which has been welcomed by the international community, could well mark the beginning of Burma's transition to a system based on the rule of law. In view of the changes that are taking place in Burma, the Commission is proposing that the country be included once again in the list of GSP beneficiary countries.

The prospect of Burma's economy opening up has aroused the interest of many foreign companies, to the extent that some observers are talking of a new 'gold rush' to invest in the country.

Although the changes that have occurred in Burma since 2011 must be welcomed as positive steps forward, it is vital that the EU does not act hastily and that it ensures that its trade policy remains consistent with its social and human-rights objectives.

Is the Commission resolved to scrupulously assess and monitor developments throughout Burma with regard to the Burmese authorities' reforms in the areas of democracy, human rights, forced labour and freedom of association before including Burma once again in the list of GSP beneficiary countries?

What guarantees can the Commission give to ensure, in conjunction with the Burmese authorities, civil-society stakeholders and trade unions, that transnational companies doing business in Burma do not collude in violations of workers' fundamental rights?