

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0080/06

pursuant to Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure

by Jan Andersson, on behalf of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
to the Commission

Subject: EU system of tariff preferences

Under its Generalised System of Preferences, the EU supports developing countries by giving their goods easier access to its markets. The EU's recent GSP scheme was adopted on 27 June 2005, through Council Regulation (EC) No 980/2005¹, and will be effective until the end of 2008. This regulation also foresees a special incentive arrangement for sustainable development and good governance (the so-called 'GSP+'), which provides additional benefits for countries implementing certain international standards in human and labour rights, environmental protection, the campaign against drugs and good governance. Beneficiary countries commit themselves, among other things, to ratifying and implementing standards enshrined in conventions by the United Nations International Labour Organisation (UN/ILO).

The Commission decided in its decision of 21 December 2005 to grant special incentives to fifteen states, which include countries where there is evidence of systematic violations of the principles laid down in the UN/ILO Convention, especially those which protect freedom of association, collective bargaining, non-discrimination in employment and ending of child and forced labour. This evidence of systematic violation by countries participating in the GSP+ is documented in the annual ILO report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations.

Does the Commission take into account the ILO 'Reports of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations' 2005 and 2006 when granting these special incentives to the countries concerned? Given this evidence, will the Commission apply temporary withdrawal provisions, as specified in Article 16 of Council Regulation (EC) No 980/2005?

Tabled: 29.06.2006

Forwarded: 03.07.2006

Deadline for reply: 10.07.2006

¹ OJ L 169, 30.6.2005, p. 1.