

Question for oral answer O-000031/2023

to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Rule 136

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on behalf of the PPE Group

Subject: Extension of the GSP+ preferential trade scheme for Pakistan beyond 2023

EU-Pakistan relations date back to 1962 and are currently guided by the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development of 2004 and the EU-Pakistan Strategic Engagement Plan of 2019. Pakistan has benefited from the GSP+ preferential trade scheme since 2014. GSP+ provides wide-ranging tariff preferences for imports to the EU from vulnerable developing countries with a view to supporting poverty eradication, sustainable development and participation in the global economy, as well as reinforcing good governance. This preferential status is conditional on GSP+ countries demonstrating tangible progress in the implementation of 27 international conventions on human and labour rights, environmental protection, climate change and good governance. The current GSP+ scheme is coming to an end in December 2023.

With the GSP+ scheme set to expire at the end of the year, the situation in Pakistan remains troubling. The country remains trapped in an ongoing economic crisis, as verified by recent missions from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank evaluating the conditions for new loans and the prospects of repaying past ones. The human rights situation continues to be a cause for alarm, with constant challenges posed by blasphemy cases. Persistent political instability shows no signs of subsiding, and the recent arrest of former Prime Minister Imran Khan is just the latest development in this regard.

1. How does the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) assess the internal developments in Pakistan in recent months? What does he believe the EU could or should do in order to reduce political tensions and support Pakistan in playing a constructive role in the region?

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Lapses: 30.9.2023