

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Notorious Rights Violations Rewarded in New European Union Trade Preferences System

Brussels, 15 December 2008: The European Commission's decision to grant additional GSP (generalized system of preferences) trade benefits to sixteen countries including several with serious violations of basic workers' rights has been strongly denounced by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).

"The list of beneficiaries of the EU's GSP plus system over 2009 to 2011 includes some of the world's worst violators including Colombia, Guatemala and Georgia," said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder. "Colombia should only have received benefits in exchange for guaranteed progress in terms of its compliance with internationally-recognised core labour standards."

"In the cases of El Salvador and Sri Lanka where there are ongoing investigations under GSP procedures, the Commission has made clear it is serious about the requirement to respect labour standards and human rights. It must do the same in all such cases," said ETUC General Secretary John Monks. "Furthermore, in the case of Georgia the EU was able to use the GSP system to start a social dialogue process. It must use the GSP system as leverage for decent work elsewhere as well."

The estimated value of the new GSP+ preferences is EUR 357 million annually. Its beneficiaries are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Georgia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Sri Lanka and Venezuela.

The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 311 affiliated national organisations from 155 countries. <http://www.ituc-csi.org>
<http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

For further information, please contact the ITUC Press Department on: +32 2 224 0204 or +32 476 621 018.

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