



European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)
Confédération européenne des syndicats (CES)

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BS/JN/JKD/TJ/sw

Mr. Karel De Gucht
Commissioner for Trade
European Commission
BE-1049 Brussels
Belgium

Letter sent by e-mail: karel.de-gucht@ec.europa.eu

Copy to Baroness Catherine Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy:
catherine.ashton@ec.europa.eu

Georgia GSP+

Dear Mr. De Gucht,

Further to your letter of 23 August, I am writing to draw to your attention the decision by the United States Trade Representative (USTR) earlier this month to examine whether Georgia should continue to receive US trade preferences due to the poor labour rights record of President Saakashvili's government. That decision was taken following a GSP petition against Georgia filed by the AFL-CIO that raised the same concerns as those set down in our letter of 6 June 2011.

For ease of reference, the decision is at:

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-11-01/html/2011-28248.htm>

In the light of this development I would request that you reconsider your position not to initiate an investigation for temporary withdrawal of GSP+ preferences to Georgia. We find it troubling, and indeed embarrassing, that the EU will not take action although its rules for trade preferences include stronger labour standards provisions for beneficiary countries than do the US. Recent initiatives we have been involved in, including a conference on social dialogue held in Tbilisi on 27 October organised with EU involvement, show that it is clear that the Georgian authorities are not responding meaningfully to your urging that they address their obligations without further delay, and in particular the recommendations of the ILO.

I would urge you now to take action that will lead the Georgian authorities to understand that concrete progress is now essential if they are to hope to develop their relations with the European Union.

Yours sincerely,

Bernadette Ségol
ETUC General Secretary