

## Excerpts of MEP's comments from exchange of views on 'GSP+ and Sri Lanka' - European Parliament International Trade Committee

14 January 2010.



**Ms. Christina Muscardini, (EPP/Italy) Vice-Chair of the International Trade Committee**

“Since the ending of the conflict, the Government of Sri Lanka has kept its pledge to the international community to resettle those displaced, progressively addressed several human rights concerns including the released on bail of journalists against whom charges are pending judicial review and pledged to work towards effective power sharing and ethnic reconciliation. In its response to the EC report, Sri Lanka had also agreed to continue to engage in a dialogue with the EU on any outstanding concerns relating to human rights.... In such context, would it not be more prudent that the EU allow more time before taking this harsh step, which would affect the livelihoods of almost a million Sri Lankans and end any leverage the EU has in influencing the Government of Sri Lanka?”



**Mr. Jan Zahradil (ECR/Czech Republic)**

“I think that when the situation is improving, this is something to my feeling is apparent, slowly but gradually, we should not take such measures that would even worsen the situation that could make more damage than positive contribution. Of course the EU is entitled under some circumstances to use trade instruments like tools for political steps or political measures. I don't think that is the case here. I think we should think twice about the whole situation and I think that it should be taken to account that the impact of such measure on employment and social situation in Sri Lanka and that we should be very cautious and may be more patient. “



**Mr. Pablo Zalba (EPP/Spain)**

“I would like to express my opinion, in the case that in the end, if we do suspend the GSP+ there should be constant corporation between the Commission and Sri Lanka making the GSP+ system so that it will be possible to recover as soon as possible. During the recent years we could see the issue of terrorism appearing. We are confident in this field and we

propose that constant monitoring by the Commission that would allow the return to normalcy as soon as possible.”



**Mr. Niccolo Rinaldi (ALDE/Italy)**

“I am very perplexed about this debate, because I see too many elements that make this a different debate from others. Therefore we needed to be prudent. First the reports that we were reading on Sri Lanka are any way reports that are not always inimical. ....I find the behaviour of the Commission has been taking an extraordinary fast decision. When you punish a country in commercial terms, not only with GSP+, it should always be done very prudently with hearings and many consultations, I find that the decision of the previous Commissioner Ashton was rather rapid. ....I am pleased to see that today it is not the case with this Commissioner, but I always smelt that this debate is too British. A British Commissioner and British members, who are making statements on this issue one direction or the other. There is a strong sense of the Tamil constituency from Sri Lanka in Britain that has somehow affected the objective analysis of this issue.”



**Mr. Daniel Caspari (EPP/Germany)**

“The situation in Sri Lanka might not be ideal as we would imagine from the member states of the EU. But let's bear in mind that though the situation is not ideal, whom are we targeting with these measures? As our colleague Muscardini has said quite justifiably, we are not hitting the government but we are hitting the people that live in these countries, people who are working in these countries because they lose their jobs, they lose their means of survival. So we got to take this into account. People need to make a living for themselves. And that should be make possible. So we should certainly continue to follow the situation, but we should not use measures that we are not applying elsewhere. There are many countries in which the situation is less than ideal.”