



*High Commissioner*

Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

24 December 2009

Letters Editor  
Financial Times

Dear Sir,

**Suspension of GSP+ Concessions would affect Sri Lankan poor**

The European Commission's decision to suspend the GSP Plus trade concession to Sri Lanka is both perverse and poorly timed.

Sri Lanka is a country at peace for the first time in over 25 years following a longstanding struggle with terrorism.

For the European Commission to propose now what is, in effect, a sanction on our country is wrongheaded and counterproductive. Much of our garment industry is based in rural areas and employs female workers, who would be the main losers if unjustified attempts to attack our trade with the EU were to succeed.

Sri Lanka is proud of its garment industry – we produce goods for a wide range of major UK and international retailers. These companies choose Sri Lanka not only because we produce quality goods at competitive prices, but also because we do this while enshrining the highest labour standards.

As a Government we are working hard to ensure that all Sri Lankans benefit from the huge boost in quality of life and economic opportunities that peace affords.

The decision to penalise Sri Lanka in this way, just prior to what will be the first general election for everyone in our country, for nearly three decades, points to political insensitivity and an agenda that, despite claims to the contrary, will not advance rights and opportunities for the people of Sri Lanka.

We strongly implore decision makers in Brussels to reconsider and make efforts to work more constructively with Sri Lanka as we seek to build a better, more prosperous future for all our people.

Justice Nihal Jayasinghe  
High Commissioner

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