



British Tamils Forum United Kingdom

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EC decision on GSP+ to Sri Lanka sets dangerous precedent and undermines EU compliance regime.

The British Tamils Forum (BTF) is deeply disappointed with the European Commission's proposal to reinstate the GSP+ trade concessions to Sri Lanka in exchange for “commitments” from the Sri Lankan government on sustainable development, human rights and good governance.

Sri Lanka has a long history of consecutive governments failing to deliver on its international commitments. The current government is no exception with its non-delivery of key commitments and emphatic U-turns on the UN Human Rights Council Resolution 30/1, which it co-sponsored.

The European Commission has accepted commitments by the Sri Lankan state with no objective evidence of progress towards meeting the eligibility criteria. It has chosen to do so at a time the Sri Lankan state is flagrantly breaking its commitments to the UNHRC. This decision is dangerous, as it will enable the Sri Lankan state to project false sense of progress and normalisation. It also seriously undermines the EU compliance regime as it sends the message that paying lip service is sufficient to gain EU subsidies.

Despite the decision, we welcome the Commission’s call for setting conditionality and rigorous monitoring of progress in human rights and good governance. However, BTF is concerned that the level of cooperation and needed access to the monitoring bodies setup by the European Commission to "rigorously monitor" Sri Lanka would not be forthcoming, given Sri Lanka's President and Prime Minister have repeatedly rejected any form of foreign monitoring.

BTF believes in development and understands trade concessions such as GSP+ plays a vital role in the economic empowerment of People. However, in the absence of effective laws and governance structures, the benefits of such schemes do not reach the people. Hence, the stringent requisite criteria set by the European Union. We wish to see Sri Lanka effectively implement the 27 conventions so that all the People of the country benefit from the scheme as intended. BTF resolves to continue to work for this goal along with USTPAC, Swedish Tamil Forum and other partnering organizations.

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Notes to Editors:

British Tamils Forum exists to harness the skills and the knowledge of the members of the forum, well-wishers and significant others including mainstream decision makers in the UK with the aim of alleviating the sufferings of the Tamils community in the Island of Sri Lanka and to further their right to self-determination within a democratic frame work under pinned by international law, its covenants and conventions. For more information info@britishtamilsforum.org and/or visit: www.britishtamilsforum.org