OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE


AGENCY: Office of the United States Trade Representative.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) received petitions in 2003 to modify the list of products that are eligible for duty-free treatment under the GSP program and to modify the GSP status of certain GSP beneficiary developing countries because of country practices. This notice announces the product and country practice petitions that are accepted for further review in the 2003 GSP Annual Review and sets forth the schedule for conducting public hearing on these petitions and on certain product petitions from previous reviews on which there was a deferral of decisions for requesting participation in the hearing and for submitting pre-hearing and post-hearing briefs.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Contact the GSP Subcommittee of the Trade Policy Staff Committee, Office of the United States Trade Representative, 1724 F Street, NW, Room F-220, Washington, DC 20508. The telephone number is (202) 395-8971.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The GSP provides for the duty-free importation of designated articles when imported from designated beneficiary developing countries. The GSP is authorized by title V of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2461, et seq.), as amended (the “1974 Act”), and is implemented in accordance with Executive Order 11888 of November 24, 1975, as modified by subsequent Executive Orders and Presidential Proclamations.

In a Federal Register notice dated July 16, 2003, USTR extended the due date for filing of product and country practice petitions for the 2003 GSP Annual Review to September 2, 2003 (68 FR 42156). The product petitions received requested changes in the list of eligible products by adding or removing products, or by waiving the “competitive need limitations” (CNLs) for a country for eligible articles. Authorization for granting CNL waivers is set forth in section 502(d) of the 1974 Act (19 U.S.C. 2463(d)). The country practice petition received requested the review of certain practices in certain beneficiary developing countries in determining whether such countries are in compliance with the eligibility criteria set forth in sections 502(b) and 502(c) of the 1974 Act.

The GSP Subcommittee of the Trade Policy Staff Committee (TPSC) has reviewed both the product and country practice petitions, and the TPSC has decided to initiate a full review of the product petitions listed in Annex II and to initiate a full review of the country practice petition submitted. Annex II to this notice sets forth for each type of change requested: the case number, the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTS) subheading number, a brief description of the product (see the HTS for an authoritative description available on the U.S. International Trade Commission (USITC) Web site http://www.usitc.gov/taffairs.htm), and the petitioners for each petition included in this review. Acceptance of a petition for review does not imply any opinion with respect to the merits of the petition. Acceptance indicates only that the listed petitions have been found eligible for review by the TPSC and that such review will take place.

Modifications to the list of articles eligible for duty-free treatment under the GSP resulting from the 2003 Annual Review will be announced on or about June 30, 2004, in the Federal Register and any changes will take effect on the effective date to be announced.

In a Federal Register notice dated July 3, 2003, USTR announced decisions in the 2001 Special Three-Existing Country Review for Argentina, Philippines, and Turkey, the 2001 GSP-AGOA (Africa Growth and Opportunity Act) Review, and the 2002 Annual Product Review (66 FR 40012), including the deferral of certain petitions on conditions to stop certain practices or on conditions requesting the addition or removal of certain products from the Generalized System of Preferences. These petitions are described in Annex II.

Opportunities for Public Comment and Inspection of Comments

The GSP Subcommittee of the TPSC invites comments in support of or in opposition to any petition which is included in this Annual Review (Annex II) or any petition on which there was a deferral of decision (Annex III). Submissions should be submitted on or before 18 CFR part 2007, except as modified below. All submissions should identify the subject article(s) in terms of the case number and HTS subheading number as shown in Annex II and III. The GSP regulations (18 CFR part 2007) provide the schedule for conducting an annual review unless otherwise...