Update for Swaziland Petition
June 1999

The Kingdom of Swaziland continues to violate internationally recognized trade union rights. The proposed changes to the 1995 Industrial Relations Act are not yet law. And, in practice as well, the Kingdom of Swaziland continues to deny workers their rights.

Freedom of Association

The Kingdom of Swaziland agreed to amend the Industrial Relations Act passed in 1995. The Labor Advisory Board, after months of work, reached consensus on a proposed draft industrial relations bill in March of 1998. Although the draft bill was submitted to the Parliament for action, the call for elections and the dissolution of the Parliament delayed consideration of the proposed bill until 1999. It is our understanding that the draft bill was presented to Parliament and is currently under consideration. The prospects for its passage seem unclear as press reports indicate.

Workers also must be guaranteed their rights to organize and bargain collectively in practice. A new Administrative Order repealing the Swaziland Administrative Order of 1950 was passed in November, 1998 by the Kingdom of Swaziland. This new Order permits local chiefs to introduce forced labor and impose penalties on citizens for non-compliance. The Order also denies citizens the right to representation before a chief’s court and states that no other court has jurisdiction.

In addition, the government’s policy of intimidating and harassing trade unionists has continued in 1998 and 1999.

Conclusion

The Kingdom of Swaziland should be removed from the list of eligible beneficiaries of the Generalized System of Preferences.
June 16, 1999

Mr. H. Jon Rosenbaum, Ph.D.
Assistant U.S. Trade Representative
GSP Subcommittee
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative
600 17th Street, N.W., Suite 518
Washington, DC 20506

Dear Jon:

The AFL-CIO hereby submits petitions to the USTR on the basis of worker rights violations in accordance with Section 502(b)(7) the Trade Act of 1974, as amended. The petitions include information on worker rights violations in Bangladesh and updates on the existing cases on Swaziland and Thailand. These petitions are submitted as required by the notice printed in the Federal Register.

Sincerely,

Barbara Shailor, Director
International Affairs Department
WORKER RIGHTS
AND THE
GENERALIZED SYSTEM OF
PREFERENCES

SWAZILAND

The AFL-CIO Petition to the
Office of the United States Trade
Representative

June 16, 1999