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June 16, 1998

Ambassador Charlene Barshefsky US Trade Representative Office of the US Trade Representative 600 17th Street, NW Washington, DC 20506

Attn: Mr. Jon Rosenbaum

update letter

Dear Ambassador Barshefsky.

The International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF) requests that in addition to the new petitions filed as part of the GSP review process this year, you also continue your review of Pakistan and Thailand. As you know, both of these countries have had GSP petitions pending for several years. Recent events in both countries demonstrate that there remain serious issues of the denial of basic worker rights. In both cases, since previously filed petitions remain unresolved, we ask that you include these countries in your review and focus on the outstanding issues. The ILRF will present additional information on current issues at the public review hearing.

With respect to Pakistan, child labor remains a serious problem, particularly in the production of hand-knotted carpets. Further, the right to associate and bargain collectively is granted selectively by the government, based on the political affiliation of specific trade unions. On April 16, 1998, for example, the Lahore office of the All Pakistan Trade Union Federation was violently attacked by district police. The office was destroyed and five union leaders were arrested. The union believes that the attack was motivated by the union's participation in the Global March Against Child Labor, which involved public speeches critical of the government's failure to address the child labor problem. The GSP review process should be continued to gather additional information and to engage the government of Pakistan in a discussion involving specific steps that must be taken before GSP benefits can be restored.

In Thailand, the key issue remains the failure to carry out plans to reform the labor laws to allow for freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively, particularly in the public sector. Further, under pressure from the IMF and World Bank, the government of Thailand is planning to raid the country's social security funds to bail out banks and other businesses that suffered losses in the recent financial crisis. These plans are being discussed without participation from workers. The GSP review process should be used to enter a dialogue with

the government of Thailand to ensure that workers' rights and interests are not sacrificed without meaningful participation from trade unions and other civil society organizations representing workers.

If you have any questions or would like any further information, please let me know. The ILRF looks forward to participating in the review process concerning whether Pakistan and Thailand are in compliance with the worker rights standard of GSP.

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Pharis J. Harvey Executive Director