

DATES: *Effective Date:* 12/21/2005.

Physical Loan Application Deadline Date: 02/21/2006.

Economic Injury (EIDL) Loan Application Deadline Date: 09/21/2006.

ADDRESSES: Submit completed loan applications to: Small Business Administration, National Processing And Disbursement Center, 14925 Kingsport Road, Fort Worth, TX 76155.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: A. Escobar, Office of Disaster Assistance, U.S. Small Business Administration, 409 3rd Street, SW., Suite 6050, Washington, DC 20416.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Notice is hereby given that as a result of the Administrator's disaster declaration applications for disaster loans may be filed at the address listed above or other locally announced locations.

The following areas have been determined to be adversely affected by the disaster:

Primary Counties:

Hartford, Litchfield, Tolland

Contiguous Counties: Connecticut

Fairfield, Middlesex, New Haven, New London, Windham

Massachusetts

Berkshire, Hampden, Worcester

New York

Dutchess

The Interest Rates are:

	Percent
Homeowners With Credit Available Elsewhere	5.375
Homeowners Without Credit Available Elsewhere	2.687
Businesses With Credit Available Elsewhere	6.557
Businesses & Small Agricultural Cooperatives Without Credit Available Elsewhere	4.000
Other (Including Non-Profit Organizations) With Credit Available Elsewhere	4.750
Businesses And Non-Profit Organizations Without Credit Available Elsewhere	4.000

The number assigned to this disaster for physical damage is 10299 6 and for economic injury is 10300 0.

The States which received an EIDL Declaration # are Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Numbers 59002 and 59008)

Dated: December 21, 2005.

Hector V. Barreto,
Administrator.

[FR Doc. E5-7998 Filed 12-28-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8025-01-P

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Interest Rates

The Small Business Administration publishes an interest rate called the optional "peg" rate (13 CFR 120.214) on a quarterly basis. This rate is a weighted average cost of money to the government for maturities similar to the average SBA direct loan. This rate may be used as a base rate for guaranteed fluctuating interest rate SBA loans. This rate will be 4.625 (4⁵/₈) percent for the January-March quarter of FY 2006.

Luz A. Hopewell,

Deputy Associate Administrator for Financial Assistance.

[FR Doc. E5-8011 Filed 12-28-05; 8:45 am]

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OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

Generalized System of Preferences (GSP): Initiation of a Review To Consider the Designation of Liberia as a Least Developed Beneficiary Developing Country Under the GSP

AGENCY: Office of the United States Trade Representative.

ACTION: Notice and solicitation of public comment.

SUMMARY: This notice announces the initiation of a review to consider the designation of Liberia as a least developed beneficiary developing country under the GSP program and solicits public comment relating to the designation criteria. Comments are due January 13, 2006, in accordance with the requirements for submissions, explained below.

ADDRESSES: Submit comments by electronic mail (e-mail) to: FR0441@ustr.gov. For assistance or if unable to submit comments by e-mail, contact the GSP Subcommittee, Office of the United States Trade Representative; USTR Annex, Room F-220; 1724 F Street, NW., Washington, DC 20508 (Tel. 202-395-6971).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Contact the GSP Subcommittee, Office of the United States Trade Representative; USTR Annex, Room F-220; 1724 F Street, NW., Washington, DC 20508 (Telephone: 202-395-6971, Facsimile: 202-395-9481).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Liberia's GSP eligibility was suspended, effective May 1, 1990, because, following a review and recommendation by the Trade Policy Staff Committee in 1989, it was determined that it had not taken

and was not taking steps to afford internationally recognized worker rights to workers in Liberia. The review was initiated in response to a petition filed by the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights in 1988. The GSP Subcommittee of the Trade Policy Staff Committee (TPSC) has initiated a review in order to make a recommendation to the President as to whether Liberia meets the eligibility criteria of the GSP statute, as set out below. After considering the eligibility criteria, the President is authorized to designate Liberia as a least developed beneficiary developing country for purposes of the GSP.

Interested parties are invited to submit comments regarding the eligibility of Liberia for designation as a least developed beneficiary developing country. Documents should be submitted in accordance with the below instructions to be considered in this review.

Eligibility Criteria

The trade benefits of the GSP program are available to any country that the President designates as a GSP "beneficiary developing country." Additional trade benefits under the GSP are available to any country that the President designates as a GSP "least-developed beneficiary developing country." In designating countries as GSP beneficiary developing countries, the President must consider the criteria in sections 502(b)(2) and 502(c) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (19 U.S.C. 2462(b)(2), 2462(c)) ("the Act"). Section 502(b)(2) provides that a country is ineligible for designation if:

1. Such country is a Communist country, unless—
 - (a) The products of such country receive nondiscriminatory treatment, (b) Such country is a WTO Member (as such term is defined in section 2(10) of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act) (19 U.S.C. 3501(10)) and a member of the International Monetary Fund, and (c) Such country is not dominated or controlled by international communism.
2. Such country is a party to an arrangement of countries and participates in any action pursuant to such arrangement, the effect of which is—
 - (a) To withhold supplies of vital commodity resources from international trade or to raise the price of such commodities to an unreasonable level, and (b) To cause serious disruption of the world economy.
3. Such country affords preferential treatment to the products of a developed country, other than the United States, which has, or is likely to have, a

significant adverse effect on United States commerce.

4. Such country—

(a) Has nationalized, expropriated, or otherwise seized ownership or control of property, including patents, trademarks, or copyrights, owned by a United States citizen or by a corporation, partnership, or association which is 50 percent or more beneficially owned by United States citizens, (b) Has taken steps to repudiate or nullify an existing contract or agreement with a United States citizen or a corporation, partnership, or association which is 50 percent or more beneficially owned by United States citizens, the effect of which is to nationalize, expropriate, or otherwise seize ownership or control of property, including patents, trademarks, or copyrights, so owned, or (c) Has imposed or enforced taxes or other exactions, restrictive maintenance or operational conditions, or other measures with respect to property, including patents, trademarks, or copyrights, so owned, the effect of which is to nationalize, expropriate, or otherwise seize ownership or control of such property, unless the President determines that—

(i) Prompt, adequate, and effective compensation has been or is being made to the citizen, corporation, partnership, or association referred to above, (ii) Good faith negotiations to provide prompt, adequate, and effective compensation under the applicable provisions of international law are in progress, or the country is otherwise taking steps to discharge its obligations under international law with respect to such citizen, corporation, partnership, or association, or (iii) A dispute involving such citizen, corporation, partnership, or association over compensation for such a seizure has been submitted to arbitration under the provisions of the Convention for the Settlement of Investment Disputes, or in another mutually agreed upon forum, and the President promptly furnishes a copy of such determination to the Senate and House of Representatives.

5. Such country fails to act in good faith in recognizing as binding or in enforcing arbitral awards in favor of United States citizens or a corporation, partnership, or association which is 50 percent or more beneficially owned by United States citizens, which have been made by arbitrators appointed for each case or by permanent arbitral bodies to which the parties involved have submitted their dispute.

6. Such country aids or abets, by granting sanctuary from prosecution to, any individual or group which has committed an act of international

terrorism or the Secretary of State makes a determination with respect to such country under section 6(j)(1)(A) of the Export Administration Act of 1979 (50 U.S.C. Appx. section 2405(j)(1)(A)) or such country has not taken steps to support the efforts of the United States to combat terrorism.

7. Such country has not taken or is not taking steps to afford internationally recognized worker rights to workers in the country (including any designated zone in that country).

8. Such country has not implemented its commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Section 502(c) provides that, in determining whether to designate any country as a GSP beneficiary developing country, the President shall take into account:

1. An expression by such country of its desire to be so designated;

2. The level of economic development of such country, including its per capita gross national product, the living standards of its inhabitants, and any other economic factors which the President deems appropriate;

3. Whether or not other major developed countries are extending generalized preferential tariff treatment to such country;

4. The extent to which such country has assured the United States that it will provide equitable and reasonable access to the markets and basic commodity resources of such country and the extent to which such country has assured the United States that it will refrain from engaging in unreasonable export practices;

5. The extent to which such country is providing adequate and effective protection of intellectual property rights;

6. The extent to which such country has taken action to—

(a) Reduce trade distorting investment practices and policies (including export performance requirements); and (b) Reduce or eliminate barriers to trade in services; and

7. Whether or not such country has taken or is taking steps to afford to workers in that country (including any designated zone in that country) internationally recognized worker rights. Note that the Trade Act of 2002 amended paragraph (D) of the definition of the term “internationally recognized worker rights,” which now includes: (A) The right of association; (B) the right to organize and bargain collectively; (C) a prohibition on the use of any form of forced or compulsory labor; (D) a minimum age for the employment of children and a prohibition on the worst forms of child labor as defined in

paragraph (6) of section 507(4) of the Act; and (E) acceptable conditions of work with respect to minimum wages, hours of work, and occupational safety and health.

To designate a country as a least-developed beneficiary developing country, the President must consider the criteria in section 502(c), as well as the criteria in section 501 of the Act. Section 501 provides that, in extending preferences under the GSP, the President shall have due regard for:

1. The effect such action will have on furthering the economic development of developing countries through the expansion of their exports.

2. The extent to which other major developed countries are undertaking a comparable effort to assist developing countries by granting generalized preferences with respect to imports of products of such countries.

3. The anticipated impact of such action on United States producers of like or directly competitive products.

4. The extent of the beneficiary developing country's competitiveness with respect to eligible articles.

Requirements for Submissions

All submissions must conform to the GSP regulations set forth at 15 CFR Part 2007, except as modified below. Comments must be submitted, in English, to the Chairman of the GSP Subcommittee of the Trade Policy Staff Committee (TPSC) as soon as possible, but not later than 5 p.m., January 13, 2006.

In order to facilitate prompt consideration of submissions, USTR requires electronic e-mail submissions in response to this notice. Hand-delivered submissions will not be accepted. Submissions should be single-copy transmissions in English with the total submission not to exceed 50 single-spaced standard letter-size pages. The e-mail transmission should use the following subject line: “Liberia GSP Eligibility Review”. Documents must be submitted as MSWord (“.doc”), WordPerfect (“.wpd”), or text (“.txt”) files. Documents submitted as electronic image files or containing imbedded images (for example, “.jpg”, “.pdf”, “.bmp”, or “.gif”) will not be accepted. Spreadsheets submitted as supporting documentation are acceptable as Quattro Pro or Excel files, pre-formatted for printing only on 8½ x 11 inch paper. To the extent possible, any data attachments to the submission should be included in the same file as the submission itself, and not as separate files.

Submissions in response to this notice will be subject to public inspection by

appointment with the staff of the USTR Public Reading Room except for information granted "business confidential" status pursuant to 15 CFR 2003.6.

If the submission contains business confidential information, a non-confidential version of the submission must also be submitted that indicates where confidential information was redacted by inserting asterisks where material was deleted. In addition, the confidential version must be clearly marked "BUSINESS CONFIDENTIAL" at the top and bottom of each page of the document. The non-confidential version must be clearly marked "PUBLIC" or "NON-CONFIDENTIAL" at the top and bottom of each page. Documents that are submitted without any marking might not be accepted or will be considered public documents.

For any document containing business confidential information submitted as an electronic attached file to an e-mail transmission, the file name of the business confidential version should begin with the characters "BC-", and the file name of the public version should begin with the character "P-". The BC-" or "P-" should be followed by the name of the party (government, company, union, association, etc.) which is submitting the comments.

E-mail submissions should not include separate cover letters or messages in the message area of the e-mail; information that might appear in any cover letter should be included directly in the attached file containing the submission itself, including the sender's identifying information with telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address. The e-mail address for these submissions is FR0441@USTR.GOV. Documents not submitted in accordance with these instructions might not be considered in this review. If unable to provide submissions by e-mail, please contact the GSP Subcommittee to arrange for an alternative method of transmission.

Public versions of all documents relating to this review will be available for public review approximately three weeks after the due date by appointment in the USTR Public Reading Room, 1724 F Street NW., Washington, DC. Availability of documents may be ascertained, and appointments may be made from 9:30 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m.

to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, by calling 202-395-6186.

Marideth J. Sandler,

*Executive Director for the GSP Program;
Chairman, GSP Subcommittee of the Trade
Policy Staff Committee.*

[FR Doc. E5-8021 Filed 12-28-05; 8:45 am]

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OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

Generalized System of Preferences (GSP): Import Statistics Relating to Competitive Need Limitations; Invitation for Public Comment on Possible De Minimis Waivers and Redesignations

AGENCY: Office of the United States
Trade Representative.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice is to inform the public of the availability of interim 2005 import statistics relating to competitive need limitations (CNLs) under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program. Public comments are invited by 5 p.m., January 27, 2006, regarding possible *de minimis* CNL waivers with respect to particular articles, and possible redesignations under the GSP program of articles currently not eligible for GSP benefits because they previously exceeded the CNLs.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION 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) 395-6971.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Competitive Need Limitations

The GSP program provides for the duty-free importation of designated articles when imported from designated beneficiary developing countries (BDCs). The GSP program 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.

Section 503(c)(2)(A) of the 1974 Act sets out the two competitive need limitations (CNLs). When the President determines that a BDC exported to the United States during a calendar year either (1) a quantity of a GSP-eligible article having a value in excess of the applicable amount for that year (\$120

million for 2005), or (2) a quantity of a GSP-eligible article having a value equal to or greater than 50 percent of the value of total U.S. imports of the article from all countries (the "50 percent CNL"), the President must terminate GSP duty-free treatment for that article from that BDC by no later than July 1 of the next calendar year.

Under section 503(c)(2)(F) of the 1974 Act, the President may waive the 50 percent CNL with respect to an eligible article imported from a BDC if the value of total imports of that article from all countries during the calendar year did not exceed the applicable *de minimis* amount for that year (\$17.5 million for 2005).

Under section 503(c)(2)(C) of the 1974 Act, if imports of an eligible article from a BDC ceased to receive duty-free treatment due to exceeding a CNL in a prior year, the President may redesignate such an article for duty-free treatment if imports in the most recently completed calendar year did not exceed the CNLs.

II. Implementation of Competitive Need Limitations, Waivers, and Redesignations

Exclusions from GSP duty-free treatment where CNLs have been exceeded will be effective July 1, 2006, unless previously granted a waiver by the President. CNL exclusions, as well as decisions with respect to *de minimis* waivers and redesignations, will be based on full 2005 calendar year import statistics.

III. Interim 2005 Import Statistics

In order to provide advance notice of articles that may exceed the CNLs for 2005, and to afford an opportunity for comment regarding potential *de minimis* waivers and redesignations, "Interim 2005 Import Statistics Relating to Competitive Need Limitations" that cover the first 10 months of 2005 can be viewed at: http://www.ustr.gov/Trade_Development/Preference_Programs/GSP/Interim_2005_Import_Statistics_Relating_to_Competitive_Need_Limitations.html.

If unable to access these statistics on the USTR Web site, contact the GSP Subcommittee of the Trade Policy Staff Committee, which will make alternate arrangements to provide the lists.

Full calendar year 2005 data for individual tariff subheadings will be available in mid-February on the Web site of the U.S. International Trade Commission at <http://dataweb.usitc.gov/>.

The four lists comprising the "Interim 2005 Import Statistics Relating to