

Bahrain. The notification letters to the Congress can be found on the USTR Web site at <http://www.ustr.gov/new/fta/Bahrain/2003-08-04-notification-house.pdf> and <http://www.ustr.gov/new/fta/Bahrain/2003-08-04-notification-senate.pdf>, respectively. The interagency Trade Policy Staff Committee (TPSC) has invited the public to provide written comments and/or oral testimony at a public hearing to be conducted on November 5, 2003 to assist USTR in formulating positions and proposals with respect to all aspects of the negotiations (68 FR 51164) (Aug. 25, 2003). It is intended that negotiations will be launched in January 2004.

The FTA is part of the President's initiative on the creation of a Middle East Free Trade Area. By moving from unilateral trade preferences to a reciprocal trade agreement, the FTA will seek to eliminate duties and unjustified barriers to trade in both U.S.- and Bahrain-origin goods and also address trade in services, trade in agricultural products, investment, trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights, government procurement, trade-related environmental and labor matters, and other issues. The FTA is expected to contribute to stronger economies, the rule of law, sustainable development, and more accountable institutions of governance, complementing ongoing domestic, bilateral, and multilateral efforts in the region.

The Trade Act of 2002 (Pub. L. 107-210) (the Trade Act) sets forth special procedures (Trade Promotion Authority) for approval and implementation of Agreements subject to meeting conditions and requirements in Division B of the Trade Act, "Bipartisan Trade Promotion Authority." Section 2102(a)-(c) of the Trade Act includes negotiating objectives and a listing of priorities for the President to promote in order to "address and maintain United States competitiveness in the global economy" in pursuing future trade agreements. The President assigned several of the functions in section 2102(c) to the Secretary of Labor. (E.O. 13277). These include the functions set forth in section 2102(c)(8), which requires that the President "in connection with any trade negotiations entered into under this Act, submit to the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a meaningful labor rights report of the country, or countries, with respect to which the President is negotiating," and the function in section 2102(c)(9), which requires that the President "with respect to any trade agreement which the President seeks to

implement under trade authorities procedures, submit to the Congress a report describing the extent to which the country or countries that are parties to the agreement have in effect laws governing exploitative child labor."

II. Information Sought

Interested parties are invited to submit written information as specified below to be taken into account in drafting the required reports. Materials submitted should be confined to the specific topics of the reports. In particular, agencies are seeking written submissions on the following topics:

1. Labor laws of Bahrain, including laws governing exploitative child labor, and that country's implementation and enforcement of its labor laws and regulations;
2. The situation in Bahrain with respect to core labor standards;
3. Steps taken by Bahrain to comply with International Labor Organization Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labor; and
4. The nature and extent, if any, of exploitative child labor in Bahrain.

Section 2113(6) of the Trade Act defines "core labor standards" as:

- (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
- (E) Acceptable conditions of work with respect to minimum wages, hours of work, and occupational safety and health.

III. Requirements for Submissions

This document is a request for facts or opinions submitted in response to a general solicitation of comments from the public. To ensure prompt and full consideration of submissions, we strongly recommend that interested persons submit comments by electronic mail to the following e-mail address: FRFTABahrain@dol.gov. Persons making submissions by e-mail should use the following subject line: "Bahrain: Labor Rights and Child Labor Reports." Documents should be submitted in WordPerfect, MSWord, or text (.TXT) format. Supporting documentation submitted as spreadsheets is acceptable in Quattro Pro or Excel format. Persons who make submissions by e-mail should not provide separate cover letters; information that might appear in a cover letter should be included in the submission itself. Similarly, to the extent possible, any attachments to the submission should be included in the same file as the submission itself, and

not as separate files. Written comments will be placed in a file open to public inspection at the Department of Labor, Room S-5317, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20210, and in the USTR Reading Room in Room 3 of the annex of the Office of the USTR, 1724 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20508. An appointment to review the file at the Department of Labor may be made by contacting Betsy White at (202) 693-4919. An appointment to review the file at USTR may be made by calling (202) 395-6186. The USTR Reading Room is generally open to the public from 10 a.m.-12 noon and 1-4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Appointments must be scheduled at least 48 hours in advance.

Signed at Washington, DC, this 27th day of October 2003.

Arnold Levine,

Deputy Under Secretary for International Affairs.

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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Office of the Secretary

Bureau of International Labor Affairs; Request for Information Concerning Labor Rights in the Dominican Republic and Its Laws Governing Exploitative Child Labor

AGENCIES: Office of the Secretary, Labor; Office of the United States Trade Representative and Department of State.

ACTION: Request for comments from the public.

SUMMARY: This notice is a request for comments from the public to assist the Secretary of Labor, the United States Trade Representative, and the Secretary of State in preparing reports regarding labor rights in the Dominican Republic and describing the extent to which it has in effect laws governing exploitative child labor. The Trade Act of 2002 requires reports on these issues and others when the President intends to use trade promotion authority procedures in connection with legislation approving and implementing a trade agreement. The President assigned the functions of preparing reports regarding labor rights and the existence of laws governing exploitative child labor to the Secretary of Labor, in consultation with the Secretary of State and the United States Trade Representative. The Secretary of Labor further assigned these functions to the Secretary of State and the United States Trade Representative, to be carried out by the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary

of State and the United States Trade Representative.

DATES: Public comments should be received no later than 5 p.m. December 18, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Persons submitting comments are strongly advised to make such submissions by electronic mail to the following address:

FRFTADominicanRepublic@dol.gov. Submissions by facsimile may be sent to: Betsy White, Office of International Economic Affairs, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, U.S. Department of Labor, at (202) 693-4851.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For procedural questions regarding the submissions, please contact Betsy White, Office of International Economic Affairs, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, U.S. Department of Labor, at (202) 693-4919, facsimile (202) 693-4851. These are not toll-free numbers. Substantive questions concerning the labor rights report and/or the report on the Dominican Republic's laws governing exploitative child labor should be addressed to Jorge Perez-Lopez, Office of International Economic Affairs, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20210, telephone (202) 693-4883, facsimile (202) 693-4851.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

On August 4, 2003, in accordance with section 2104(a)(1) of the Trade Act of 2002, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) notified the Congress of the President's intent to enter into free trade negotiations with the Dominican Republic. The notification letters to the Congress can be found on the USTR Web site at <http://www.ustr.gov/new/fta/Dr/2003-08-04-notification-house.pdf> and <http://www.ustr.gov/new/fta/Dr/2003-08-04-notification-senate.pdf> respectively. At a public hearing conducted on October 8, 2003, the interagency Trade Policy Staff Committee (TPSC) received written comments and oral testimony from the public to assist USTR in formulating positions and proposals with respect to all aspects of the negotiations (68 FR 51167) (Aug. 28, 2003). It is intended that negotiations will be launched in January 2004.

Through these negotiations, we expect to provide for essentially the same disciplines as those in the Free Trade Agreement we are currently negotiating with the five members of the Central American Economic Integration System (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua) (CAFTA),

and to negotiate specific market access commitments with the Dominican Republic.

The Trade Act of 2002 (Pub. L. 107-210) (the Trade Act) sets forth special procedures (Trade Promotion Authority) for approval and implementation of Agreements subject to meeting conditions and requirements in Division B of the Trade Act, "Bipartisan Trade Promotion Authority." Section 2102(a)-(c) of the Trade Act includes negotiating objectives and a listing of priorities for the President to promote in order to "address and maintain United States competitiveness in the global economy" in pursuing future trade agreements. The President assigned several of the functions in section 2102(c) to the Secretary of Labor. (E.O. 13277). These include the functions set forth in section 2102(c)(8), which requires that the President "in connection with any trade negotiations entered into under this Act, submit to the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a meaningful labor rights report of the country, or countries, with respect to which the President is negotiating," and the function in section 2102(c)(9), which requires that the President "with respect to any trade agreement which the President seeks to implement under trade authorities procedures, submit to the Congress a report describing the extent to which the country or countries that are parties to the agreement have in effect laws governing exploitative child labor."

II. Information Sought

Interested parties are invited to submit written information as specified below to be taken into account in drafting the required reports. Materials submitted should be confined to the specific topics of the reports. In particular, agencies are seeking written submissions on the following topics:

1. Labor laws of the Dominican Republic, including laws governing exploitative child labor, and that country's implementation and enforcement of its labor laws and regulations;
2. The situation in the Dominican Republic with respect to core labor standards;
3. Steps taken by the Dominican Republic to comply with International Labor Organization Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labor; and
4. The nature and extent, if any, of exploitative child labor in the Dominican Republic.

Section 2113(6) of the Trade Act defines "core labor standards" as:

- (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

(E) Acceptable conditions of work with respect to minimum wages, hours of work, and occupational safety and health.

III. Requirements for Submissions

This document is a request for facts or opinions submitted in response to a general solicitation of comments from the public. To ensure prompt and full consideration of submissions, we strongly recommend that interested persons submit comments by electronic mail to the following e-mail address: *FRFTADominicanRepublic@dol.gov*. Persons making submissions by e-mail should use the following subject line: "Dominican Republic: Labor Rights and Child Labor Reports." Documents should be submitted in WordPerfect, MSWord, or text (.TXT) format. Supporting documentation submitted as spreadsheets is acceptable in Quattro Pro or Excel format. Persons who make submissions by e-mail should not provide separate cover letters; information that might appear in a cover letter should be included in the submission itself. Similarly, to the extent possible, any attachments to the submission should be included in the same file as the submission itself, and not as separate files. Written comments will be placed in a file open to public inspection at the Department of Labor, Room S-5317, 200 Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20210, and in the USTR Reading Room in Room 3 of the annex of the Office of the USTR, 1724 F Street NW., Washington, DC 20508. An appointment to review the file at the Department of Labor may be made by contacting Betsy White at (202) 693-4919. An appointment to review the file at USTR may be made by calling (202) 395-6186. The USTR Reading Room is generally open to the public from 10 a.m.-12 noon and 1-4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Appointments must be scheduled at least 48 hours in advance.

Signed at Washington, DC, this 27th of October 2003.

Arnold Levine,

Deputy Under Secretary for International Affairs.

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