

With the collapse of the recent trade round in Doha the United States must examine what its economic priorities are around the globe. As the world's foremost military and economic power, we have the ability to encourage economic development, trade, and stability in countries whose people live in conditions unimaginable in the U.S. Specifically, the citizens of many nations around the world suffer from abject poverty, HIV/AIDS, and have almost no opportunities to lift themselves out of their dire condition.

To help correct this, the United States has developed a subsidy system over the last several decades in which over 130 nations are exempted from duties on a number of imports to the United States. This program, titled the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), aims to stimulate developing economies with unique incentives for production and exportation. It is capitalism at its best, and promotes friendship and stability through trade. We, the Black Diaspora, now want in!

In recent years, however, a number of countries that were once deemed "developing" have remained in the GSP program despite marked progress, and are not only reaping the lion's share of its benefits, but brazenly abuse international trade agreements. For instance, the top ten beneficiaries of GSP benefits alone account for over two-thirds of the rewards.

Although they may not have economies on the scale of the U.S., Japan or Germany, countries like Brazil, India and Argentina are no longer the "developing" nations they once were. Indeed, their economies often export over \$100 million each to the U.S. alone, a level that far surpasses any reasonable definition of the term. Imagine if Liberia, Ghana or Kenya could participate in this. It would go a very long way in regards to economic development--jobs, quality of life.

Meanwhile, the overwhelming majority of the poorer countries on the GSP, whose exports are but small fractions of any of the top ten, receive negligent amounts of much needed support. In our own welfare system, strict guidelines are set to ensure those who truly need help are given it, while those who have adequate incomes are no longer eligible. This same standard should apply to nations as well.

International trade abuse is another rising concern with current beneficiaries. U.S. patents and

other forms of intellectual property rights are simply being ignored without consequence. Not only are U.S. farmers being affected by the importation of produce at duty-free prices, these goods are often made through patented biological farming techniques developed in the United States.

In the pharmaceutical sector, Brazil has recently announced that it will begin production of three U.S. drugs, without regard for any existing patent restrictions. Further, the software industry recently reported that in 2003, over \$80 billion of the global market consisted of counterfeits.

Ultimately, countries that willfully violate basic intellectual property rights should not continue to receive subsidies, especially at the cost of American businesses and countries that desperately need more opportunities.

American political interests must also be considered, given the tumultuous political climate abroad. Aside from infringing on international trade agreements, countries such as Brazil and Argentina have befriended dictatorial leftist governments and have become an obstacle to the advancement of human rights and democracy. Governments who have the infrastructure to prevent such abuses must not allow them, yet the unfortunate reality is that political freedom in South America is severely limited at best.

To be sure, while many countries in Asia and South America take the GSP program for granted, scores of African nations lack even the most basic public infrastructure to provide for their citizens. The most effective way we can assist these countries is by helping them build resources through production and trade.

We want better utilization of this program in regards to Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique, Cote D'Ivoire, Senegal, Liberia, Camerouns and all throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Why can't we go to Kroger and Safeway and buy produce and goods from Africa and not just South America. It is time for African Americans to stand up and demand economic equity for the entire Diaspora.

Reform is at hand, and countries that abuse American generosity should be held accountable, while those who need investment, trade incentives, and economic development simply to feed

their people should be given every opportunity to lift themselves out of poverty. Removing the top 10 beneficiaries of the current GSP will accomplish this, while holding egregious abusers of trade and human rights responsible for their actions and ensuring that those countries which are truly in need of our aid receive the help that they deserve.

Let's help the needy and not the greedy.

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