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Directorate-General for Trade
Directorate C: Sustainable Development, Bilateral Trade Relations

Unit C.3: Trade Relations with South Asia, Korea, ASEAN

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TRADE/C3/mmd

Mr David Pred
Executive Director
Bridges Across Borders Cambodia
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Dear Mr Pred,

Thank you for your letter of 7 January 2011 to Commissioner Karel de Gucht. The Commissioner has asked me to reply on his behalf.

Your letter highlights land evictions taking place in Cambodia and calls for an independent investigation, in accordance with the procedures laid down in Article 15 of the GSP Council Regulation (EC) 732/2008. You request us to look into the question of whether temporary withdrawal of EBA-status for Cambodian sugar and potentially other agricultural products is justified.

The Commission services and the European External Action Services (EEAS) have examined your request. Without in any way wishing to downplay your concerns, in our view the issue needs to be addressed in the wider context of land evictions, rule of law and human rights abuses. We place particular emphasis on the responsibility of Cambodia to secure equitable social-economic development, manage its natural resources in a transparent way, and ensure the full implementation and enforcement of Land Management legislation.

In relation to Economic Land Concessions, we have reiterated to the Government the necessity to not only promote all three strands of sustainable development, but also to preserve social cohesion. The EU made its deep concern clear in contacts with Cambodian Government and underlined the need for stronger action to protect the rights of the most vulnerable populations, especially in those cases where the rights and livelihoods of many rural communities could have been negatively affected through the granting of economic land concessions.

From this perspective, this issue is being further discussed between the Commission, the EEAS and the EU Member States in the Council. The EEAS will inform you of the conclusions of that discussion in due course.

Yours sincerely

Rupert SCHLEGELMILCH

Cc:

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