

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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