

NOTICE TO IMPORTERS**Imports into the Community of products from Serbia and Montenegro**

(2004/C 14/02)

By a notice to importers published in the *Official Journal of the European Communities* C 152 of 26 June 2002, p. 14, Community operators were informed that there was reasonable doubt as to the proper application of the preferential arrangements for sugar of headings CN 1701 and CN 1702, which was declared at import as originating in the countries of the western Balkans in order to benefit from preferential tariff measures.

The preferential arrangements provided for in Council Regulation (EC) No 2007/2000 for sugar of CN codes 1701 and 1702 imported from Serbia and Montenegro were suspended for a period of three months by Commission Regulation (EC) No 764/2003. Following the publication of a second notice to importers in the *Official Journal of the European Union* C 177 of 26 July 2003, p. 2, the suspension of preferences for sugar was extended for an additional period of six months, beginning 8 August 2003, by Commission Regulation (EC) No 1343/2003.

The suspension measure was decided on the basis of findings that the administrative structure and legal framework in force in Serbia and Montenegro did not allow the competent authorities of this beneficiary country to properly verify the originating status of the products and to provide administrative co-operation as required for the verification of evidence of origin.

The Commission recognises the important efforts made in the meantime by Serbia and Montenegro with a view to remedying the identified loopholes and to ensuring compliance with the conditions imposed by Community law for Serbia and Montenegro to benefit from the preferential arrangements.

However, until such compliance is ensured, there are doubts that products imported from Serbia and Montenegro under the preferential arrangements are actually and properly subject to the verification of their originating status as required by Community law.

Community operators presenting documentary evidence of origin with a view to securing preferential treatment for all products imported from Serbia and Montenegro are therefore advised to take all the necessary precautions, since the release of the goods in question for free circulation may give rise to a customs debt.

This notice does not apply to Kosovo as defined by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of 10 June 1999. Kosovo is subject to international civil administration by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) which has established a separate customs administration.
