

# USA also dependent on scheme for growth

March 1, 2013 | Filed under: [Business](#) | Posted by: [newsroom](#)



From left: Deputy chief of mission at the US Embassy, Jeff Robertson, with US Commercial officer Cyndee Crook and newly-elected president of the Fiji US Business Council, Rajeshwar Singh at the Holiday Inn Suva during the Fiji US Business Council annual general meeting. Photo: RAMA

By *ELLEN STOLZ*

The US Government's budget crisis, if not addressed soon, could lead to major cuts affecting businesses under the Generalised System of Preference (GSP) for Fiji.

This was confirmed by deputy chief of mission at the US Embassy, Jeff Robertson, yesterday who said: "Our budget crisis is serious and as of March 1, which is the deadline, we have what is called an 'enforced sequestering' that will come into place."

Speaking during the Fiji-US Business Council annual general meeting Mr Robertson said that while the budget crisis would probably not affect the US Embassy other areas were not so fortunate.

"Other US Government agencies will severely be affected including those that provide support to GSP and things related to your business interests," he said.

The Generalised System of Preference for Fiji (GSP) is a programme that is designed in the United States to help developing countries grow economically and to benefit from trade by allowing them duty-free access the markets.

## **GSP benefits US too**

"According to a 2005 US Chamber of Commerce study over 80,000 American jobs are associated with moving GSP imports from the docks, to our farmers, manufacturers and to our retail shelves.

"So we have an interest in keeping this privilege to Fiji open as well," he said.

The programme, Mr Robertson said, allows Fiji to export thousands of different products duty-free. At the moment there are 127 designated beneficiary countries and territories of which Fiji

remains one for the moment.

“The GSP programme also supports US jobs. US businesses imported \$18.5 billion worth of products under the GSP programme in 2011,” he said.

### **Working together**

He also said: “Well, we certainly do not want to suspend the benefits and we are actively working with Fiji to ensure that Fiji’s exports can continue to enter duty-free.

This is in light of the fact that it was alleged that Fiji was not respecting worker rights and should therefore have its GSP eligibility revoked.

Mr Robertson said that at this time a decision has not been made and the process is ongoing.

“We are working closely with the Fijian Government to keep them informed, answer the questions and create channels of communication between the US Government and Shaheen Ali and his team.

“But it really is dependent on the Government’s engagement and compliance with some of the issues that are in question.”

### **US support**

Mr Robertson said the US Government believed in the work that the council had been carrying out.

“We have a unique opportunity among the business councils here in Fiji to work together to produce jobs and growth in both of our nations and in doing good work together.

“And especially with the value of the US dollar relative to the Aussie, Kiwi currencies,” he said.

Source: <http://www.fijisun.com.fj/2013/03/01/usa-also-dependent-on-scheme-for-growth/>