

Joint Conclusions  
Third Follow-Up Meeting on Bangladesh Sustainability Compact  
Dhaka, May18, 2017

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On May 18, 2017, the Partners of the Sustainability Compact – the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), the European Union (EU), the United States of America (USA), Canada, and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) – met for the third follow-up meeting. The meeting aimed at assessing progress made since the last meeting on January 28, 2016 and to review priorities for the coming year. The Compact and the Joint Conclusions of the Partners continue to serve as a set of commitments and priorities by its Partners aimed at securing respect for labour rights, occupational safety and health, and the promotion of responsible business conduct in the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector.

The Partners recognize progress made in several areas of the Compact including recent increase in trade union registrations in Dhaka Division, work towards the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs) to better process applications for trade union registration, strengthening of Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishment (DIFE), formation of the Remediation Coordination Cell (RCC) and investment in factory safety with the initial implementation of corrective action plans. They also note the introduction of the concept of workplace cooperation and building a culture of occupational safety and health.

The Partners recognize the need to pursue these efforts and to ensure that the new SOPs are agreed to for the smooth and expeditious processing of trade unions' registration applications in accordance with objective and transparent criteria. The Partners stress that adequate protection against acts of anti-union discrimination is amongst the main element of a conducive and enabling environment for freedom of association and collective bargaining. The Partners recognize the urgent need to further address acts of discrimination against trade unionists, and to effectively investigate and prosecute unfair labour practices in a timely and transparent manner. As part of this effort, the Partners underline the importance of upgrading the Department of Labour (DoL) with staff and resources.

The Partners note the recent distressing events in Ashulia and renew the call on all the social partners to act in accordance with the decisions of the tripartite agreement of February 23, 2017. They welcome the formation of Tripartite Consultative Council (TCC) for RMG sector as an advisory body for industrial relations between the workers and the factory owners. The Partners also stress that criminal complaints pending against the concerned social partners need to be reviewed urgently to ensure due process of law. The Partners recognise the urgent need to begin inclusive consultations towards the amendment of the Bangladesh Labour Act (BLA) and associated regulations to address the conclusions and recommendations of the ILO's supervisory bodies. They note that the draft EPZ labor law has been withdrawn for further review and the TCC has been tasked with proposing reforms to the BLA. They reaffirm the need to ensure that workers in the EPZs enjoy freedom of association and collective bargaining rights.

The Partners recognize the urgent need for promoting responsible business conduct (RBC). They encourage brands and retailers to adopt RBC practices and a uniform code of conduct for factory audits in Bangladesh.

The Partners recognize the significant contributions of the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building safety (the Accord), and Alliance for Bangladesh Workers Safety (the Alliance) to ensure factory safety in RMG factories and for their commitment to sustainable sourcing from Bangladesh. The Partners agree on the need for the National Initiative, the Accord, and the Alliance to commence where not started and advance remediation work. They encourage private initiatives to remain engaged with the government and to renew their commitments to working for safer RMG factories in the coming years.

Recognizing the critical role that the RMG sector plays in the development of the country, the Partners express their continued commitment to the people of Bangladesh including through supporting responsible business conduct. The Compact Partners take note the Government of Bangladesh's planned strategies to achieve the goals of the compact and will continue to review and assess progress together in the coming year.

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