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Health and Safety Action Points for Buyers sourcing from Bangladesh

Our organizations, in consultation with the Worker Rights Consortium and stakeholders in Bangladesh, and incorporating proposals developed earlier by the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF), have compiled a list of actions that companies sourcing garments from Bangladesh should take within their own supply chain to prevent future tragedies. We are also asking that companies collectively press the Government of Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) to take specific actions to address these problems industry-wide in Bangladesh.

Specifically, we ask that:

1) Apparel buyers should press the government of Bangladesh and the BGMEA to:

- a) Undertake an urgent review of all multi-story buildings currently housing garment production facilities to ensure they may be safely used for this purpose. This review should be conducted by a committee consisting of representatives from all government departments directly involved in the observance of the relevant laws and regulations, labor groups, and international buyers.
- b) Ensure that the factory inspectorate is equipped with the necessary resources to conduct regular inspections for adherence to workplace safety and labor legislation, including Bangladesh's National Building Code and Factory Act.
- c) Such inspections must ensure that each factory:
 - i) Has a sufficient number of emergency exits and keeps such exits unlocked and unobstructed during working hours, so that workers can swiftly and safely evacuate in case of emergency and rescue and firefighting teams and equipment can quickly enter.

- ii) Meets regulations for gas lines and electrical wiring, fire retardant materials in walls and roofs, the safe use in multistory buildings of the machinery being operated, and maintenance of working public address systems, emergency lighting, and other warning and response mechanisms.
 - iii) Has a professionally-developed fire emergency policy, which is tested through regular, monthly fire drills with all workers.
 - iv) Has a designated manager responsible for structural and fire safety, and an adequate number of employees who are trained to respond appropriately to fires and other emergency situations.
 - v) Has well-maintained fire prevention materials and fire fighting equipment on the premises.
 - vi) Has a factory health and safety committee comprised of representatives of management and workers, which meets regularly to review and address health and safety issues, including fire safety.
 - vii) In the case of factories operating in buildings housing more than one enterprise, in addition to the measures outlined above, has a coordinated fire emergency policy and procedures, accessible fire fighting equipment, designated and trained personnel, and a program of regular fire drills for the entire building.
- d) Issue – on a quarterly basis – a public list of all factories that do not meet the standards outlined above and revoke the export license and BGMEA membership of each factory on this list until compliance is demonstrated.
 - e) Set up a high-level investigative committee to conduct inquiries into accidents at factories involving worker fatalities or multiple serious injuries. Such a committee should conduct a thorough investigation into the causes of each such incident and issue a public report of its investigation. The government should pursue all applicable criminal charges against the employer in the case of negligence.
 - f) Provide emergency short-term compensation and adequate disability or survivors' benefits to the families of workers who are killed or permanently disabled because of workplace accidents. Provide free medical treatment to workers injured in such incidents. The amount of compensation should be determined through negotiations with worker rights organizations, including the unions representing the workers.
 - g) In the case that factories are closed due to accidents or a failure to meet safety standards, ensure workers are provided income support, equivalent

to their former average earnings, for the duration of the closure or, in cases where factories are closed permanently or for an extended time, a reasonable period in which to secure alternative employment.

- h) Ensure respect for workers' internationally recognized rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining. Trade unions can and should play a central role in promoting workplace health and safety by ensuring workers a voice in identifying and addressing hazards, and providing collective representation to workers who are injured in workplace accidents. Government (in particular the Joint Director of Labor) and factory management should ensure the removal of all unlawful or unreasonable obstacles to the registration of factory-level unions.

2) Buyers should do the following with respect to each of their own supplier factories:

- a) Conduct regular audits of factories to ensure the facilities are compliant with applicable structural and fire safety standards, including in each area discussed in item 1.C above.
- b) Develop a system that includes meaningful engagement with labor groups at each stage of the audit process, including pre-audit planning, arrangements for labor groups to accompany brand representatives to observe inspections at certain facilities, and review of audit findings.
- c) Notify the Bangladesh government and BGMEA when factory audits identify health and safety hazards, and publicly disclose the results of such audits.
- d) Ensure that workers have information about and access to credible grievance mechanisms in order to report information about health and safety hazards.
- e) Ensure respect for workers' internationally recognized rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining. As discussed above, trade unions can and should play a central role in promoting workplace health and safety.