

**27<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

## **Sourcing from Myanmar: ETI position statement**

The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) is a leading alliance of companies, trade unions and NGOs that promotes respect for workers' rights around the globe. Our vision is a world where all workers are free from exploitation and discrimination, and enjoy conditions of freedom, security and equity.

Today IndustriALL Global Union, ITUC and the Myanmar Labour Alliance called for comprehensive economic sanctions against Myanmar's military junta. International and local union leaders delivered an impassioned and compelling presentation on the deteriorating situation in the country, calling for international support in their campaign for a return to democracy and to install human and labour rights in Myanmar. ETI recognises and supports the mandate of global unions in their call to action.

### **ETI member engagement on the issue**

Following the February 2021 coup in Myanmar, ETI has watched with growing concern the ousting of its democratically elected government by military forces, and increasingly aggressive tactics to quash any resistance, identify and remove any opposition leaders and impose their rule through excessive use of force. We have spoken to a number of stakeholders, including unions, brands and other key actors to help gather evidence to establish ETI's position. Having previously asked members to consider the balance of good versus harm being done by continuing to source from Myanmar, we have been conscious of the potential need to consider responsible withdrawal. The key question in that consideration is: **Whether it is possible to continue to trade responsibly, providing workers with continued employment, or does this cause greater harm to the rights of workers and undermine a return to democracy?** Such a decision would and should always be guided by evidence and up to date assessment of the social and economic implications.

The position of IndustriALL Global Union, ITUC and the Myanmar Labour Alliance, based on dialogue with affiliates, triggers an urgent reassessment of that question.

### **ETI's position**

We call on companies as a matter of urgency to reassess their presence in Myanmar ensuring that such an assessment is based on the application of the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) (UNGPs), is widely informed by relevant stakeholders - especially those directly affected,

and based to the extent possible on evidence. This should not only consider conditions at factory level for workers, but the wider impact that trading activity may have in frustrating a prompt return to democracy and the reinstatement of full rights for workers and their representatives. Evidence gathering should also consider what options there are for further engagement, locally and internationally, to foster change and what responsible withdrawal should entail.

This assessment should lead to a decision on:

- the impact of leaving verses the impact or wider implications of remaining,
- what further action can be taken in support of workers' rights and a return to democracy
- and what practical responsible dis-investment and withdrawal would entail.

Global and local unions have a mandate to sound the alarm when labour and human rights are under attack. International actors must heed this warning and act with urgency in the coming weeks.

## **Contact**

If you would like to engage with ETI on this issue, please contact: [media@eti.org.uk](mailto:media@eti.org.uk)