

To: Prime Minister of Bangladesh, the Honourable Sheikh Hasina

C.c.: Honourable Md. Shahidul Haque, Secretary
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (GoB)
Honourable Shuvashish Bose, Secretary
Ministry of Commerce (MoC)
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (GoB)
Honourable Mroza Khan, Secretary
Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE)
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (GoB)
Honourable Md. Nojibur Rahman
Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister

Subject: **Improving and ensuring worker safety in the Bangladeshi RMG sector**

Dear Honourable Prime Minister,

We, the undersigned representatives of multi-stakeholder initiatives, write with full respect and in total recognition of the important position that Bangladesh holds in the global ready-made garment sector and in acknowledgement of your Government's steadfast leadership in the industry's development and your country's pride and determination to create a safe, secure and sustainable industry.

We understand and value the important role played by the industry in both the global and local economy with around 4 million workers employed in factories in your country. The work undertaken by the Government since the tragic events of 2013 at Rana Plaza, along with that of the ACCORD and the Alliance, has transformed industry safety levels and gone a long way towards establishing the necessary conditions to prevent such a tragedy ever reoccurring. Brands, retailers and traders operating in the western export markets of the Bangladeshi RMG sector take seriously their responsibility for decent working conditions under which their garments and other products are produced, and the Bangladesh ACCORD has played a pivotal role in creating confidence and improving working conditions.

We acknowledge the significant and substantive achievements that have been made on worker safety. The creation of an independent Remediation Coordination Cell (RCC) within the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) to regulate safety in the RMG sector marks an important step towards building a national body that can effectively regulate safety and we believe that the Transition Monitoring Committee has made good progress.

At the same time, however, there is still more to be done to complete the remediation at factories covered by the ACCORD. Less than half of all ACCORD-covered factories have completed the installation of adequate fire detection systems and less than 60% have completed structural retrofitting, based on approved detailed engineering assessments (DEAs).

In addition, those factories not covered by the ACCORD or Alliance will place an extra additional burden on the programme of work of the RCC that could jeopardise its' successful start. We believe that further work is necessary in order to absorb the work of the ACCORD into the RCC and that it is in the best interests of all parties, including the Government, the RMG industry that the RCC be provided with further opportunity and time to successfully develop.

We respectfully note that there is a clear benefit to everyone; Bangladesh, the global RMG industry and workers in local factories to continue and deepen this successful partnership that has delivered such fundamental and substantive positive change and fear that the safety of Bangladesh RMG workers could be compromised if an effective structure is not in place for effective handover of responsibility.

We respectfully call upon all the parties involved to work together, under the leadership of your esteemed office, to take all necessary steps to find solutions to the current challenges facing this partnership in order that the ACCORD may continue to contribute effectively to the growth and development of the sector in Bangladesh and to assist the eventual role of the RCC in taking over the leadership of this work under the guidance of the Transition Monitoring Committee.

Yours Sincerely,

Pierre Hupperts, Chair, Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textile (AGT)

Alexander Kohnstamm, Executive Director, Fair Wear Foundation (FWF)

Sharon Waxman, President and CEO, Fair Labor Association (FLA)

Peter McAllister, Executive Director, Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)

Heidi Furustøl, Executive Director, Ethical Trading Initiative Norway (IEH)

Mikkel Stenbæk Hansen, Executive Director, Danish Ethical Trading Initiative (DIEH)

Christian Ewert, President amfori