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Civil society joint reaction to the European Parliament report on an EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles

Today the European Parliament has sent an unequivocal signal, with 600 positive votes, that the textile industry needs to transform its practices towards true respect of social and environmental rights.

With this [report](#), the European Parliament has improved the Commission's original proposal by showing that social and environmental aspects are two sides of the same coin.

Moreover, the European Parliament acknowledges the global dimension of the industry, as well as its specific challenges related to social issues, the gender-dimension, and overproduction.

Given that an overwhelming cross-political majority of 600 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) voted in favour of this report, we call on policymakers at the EU and national levels to listen to this clear call from elected MEPs and turn this high ambition into concrete legislative initiatives.

1. Tackling global overproduction

We welcome the fact that the report clearly mentions to “reduce the global use of primary materials and the overproduction of textiles” and pushes for horizontal minimum requirements for textile products and a ban of destruction of unsold goods. Reducing the global overproduction of textiles will have a major impact on the 300 million garment workers worldwide. This transition must be managed in a socially responsible way to ensure a Just Transition noting that in many non-EU countries there is no social protection.

2. Recognising there is no sustainability possible without workers

The EU Parliament acknowledged that there cannot be a sustainable and circular textile sector without taking into account the global, social and gender dimension of the industry. While the Commission's initial strategy was almost silent on those issues, MEPs today rightfully highlighted how human rights and labour rights violations remain an everyday occurrence for millions of workers in the garment industry. We are glad to see that the report calls for the ratification and implementation of key ILO Conventions, including on *Ending Violence and Sexual Harassment in the World of Work* and the importance of gender-mainstreaming into regulatory and business actions in the sector.

As the EU Parliament also approved today its position on the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, this goes to show the urgent need for an ambitious action to build global value chains which are respectful to people and planet. This includes addressing poverty wages, as the European Parliament has acknowledged that minimum wages in the textile industry are far from sufficient to ensure a living wage and decent living conditions for the people who make our clothes worldwide.

3. Ensuring a Just Transition

MEPs insist that the green and digital transitions of the European textiles sector drive forward a Just Transition which leaves no one behind. This will be essential as the twin transitions will impact millions of workers worldwide. MEPs emphasise the importance of quality social dialogue and the engagement of national and regional authorities to adequately plan for the transition and ensure that mitigating measures are put in place and that change is managed in a socially responsible way, including ensuring that newly created jobs in the circular economy are quality jobs. All stakeholders must be involved to ensure that the twin transitions are fair and just and CSOs welcome the demands by MEPs which need to be followed up with real action and concrete support.

4. Building fairer purchasing practices

For the first time, the EU Parliament not only highlights the harmful impact of unfair purchasing practices in the textile and garment sector but also calls on the European Commission to assess how to best minimise these practices. It should do so through different manners including through legislation, taking into account the experience of the agri-food sector. The COVID-19 exacerbated the existing power imbalances between international brands, suppliers and workers. Strong action to tackle unfair purchasing practices is needed and so we strongly agree with the Parliament's conclusion and call on the Commission to swiftly take action.

5. Enabling the transparency of supply chains

Unfortunately, the text does not sufficiently recognize the role of traceability and transparency in the supply chain and at product level. Transparency benefits workers, suppliers and consumers and is crucial to hold companies accountable. While the importance of the upcoming Digital Product Passport (DPP) as an important tool that needs to be accurate and complete is recognised, we call on policy-makers to ensure that the social dimension be rightfully embedded in this specific framework. We do regret that the report does not explicitly call for mandatory value chain mapping and transparency as abuses cannot be resolved if there is no visibility of suppliers' lists across entire supply chains. Such information is disclosed by a growing number of garment companies and - with the help of an ambitious regulatory framework - could become standard practice in the industry.

6. Maximising local re-use of textiles

The Parliament's report sets an encouraging framework for textile waste management. First, it calls on the Commission to introduce specific separate targets for waste prevention, collection, re-use, preparation for re-use and fibre-to-fibre recycling of textiles. We particularly welcome the recognition of social enterprises' role in textile waste management activities and the call for future EPR schemes to promote it. In addition, the report stresses the need to prioritise waste prevention and preparation for re-use and highlights the fact that research and investments should be dedicated to collection, sorting and preparation for re-use.

7. Ensuring sustainable textile production in Europe

The EP report highlights the importance of ensuring a transition to sustainable and circular business models and products while strengthening the competitiveness and resilience of a sustainable textile ecosystem. CSOs call on the Commission to continue its engagement with all stakeholders involved in the textiles eco-system transition pathway with clear and ambitious commitments being needed. For the transition in European production to be successful, ensuring resilience and competitiveness is key and CSOs are pleased that MEPs have highlighted potential EU funding plus ways to increase the demand of sustainable products for example via public procurement. However, increased engagement with social partners, civil society and regional authorities will be essential to ensure that the move to a more sustainable production model in Europe is possible.

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