

Support for the Bangladesh Accord

Labour representatives

Shalauddin Shapon, BRGWF, October 2018

“The Accord has been working on making factories safe in Bangladesh in a fair and impartial way. Every inspection is carried out by skilled engineers and gradually the Accord is able to make factories 100% safe. In fact, the Accord is forming the OSH committee in factories according to labour law and supervising it. This is not possible for the government or any other organization at the moment.”

Kalpona Akter, BCWS, October 2018

“We need the Accord to continue to work. It has made enormous change and made our workers’ lives safer. Now workers have right to say NO to dangerous work. If the Accord would have to leave the country it would mean putting workers lives in danger again and we should not take this risk.”

Kalpona Akter, BCWS, 5 January 2018

“The government is NOT yet ready with resources and expertise to sustain the change that Accord has made. The government and the manufacturers are saying that RCC (Remediation Co-Ordination Cell) is ready to take over all the work that Accord is doing but this is not true. The RCC is not ready yet to take all the job & responsibilities that Accord in doing in order to make these factories safer. Accord really needs to complete its current extension (up to 2021) and if still needed it should go beyond as well.” [\[original\]](#)

Babul Akhter, Bangladesh Garment & Industrial Workers Federation (BGIWF), signatory of the Accord, October 2018

“The Accord is very important for workplace safety. The Accord works independently and neutrally and has earned a good reputation and credibility, abroad and among workers. The Accord ensures the safety of the workplace for workers. The garment industry is free of accidents due to the Accord. The Accord protects our industry's image and makes it more sustainable. Its contribution is unparalleled and its requirements are very important for worker safety.”

Babul Akhter, Bangladesh Garment & Industrial Workers Federation (BGIWF), signatory of the Accord, November 2018

“If they go, Bangladesh’s garment industry will go back to square one. Workers’ rights and safety will not be protected.” [\[original\]](#)

Amin Amirul Haque, National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF), signatory of the Accord, October 2018

“The Rana Plaza collapse and previously other factory tragedies created consumer concerns about the safety of workers in the Bangladesh Ready Made Garment sector. Without the Accord, with its credible independent inspection programs, the Bangladesh garment industry would have lost the confidence needed to export garments to international markets. Following the commencement of the Accord inspection of factories, the Bangladesh RMG sector benefited from a growth in export. The Accord inspection programs are ongoing and have not yet completed their purpose, and the RCC is not ready for a complete take over of the Accord inspection program. It is important both for the safety of workers and the benefit of the industry that the Accord is allowed to continue to function to ensure the factories are safe to work in. Otherwise consumers and buyers in the international market will again lose confidence in the garments produced in Bangladesh.”

Jenny Holdcroft, IndustriALL Global Union, 19 November 2018

“Despite immense progress, the work of the Accord is not complete. The RCC is not ready to take on the rigorous safety monitoring system currently implemented by the Accord. If the Accord is prevented from having an office in Bangladesh, it will continue to run from Amsterdam. The legally-binding provisions for the Transition Accord signed by almost 200 global fashion brands and retailers with unions will remain in place.” [\[original\]](#)

Valter Sanchez, General Secretary, IndustriALL Global Union, November 2018

“We hope that the Government of Bangladesh can soon develop a robust national public health and safety inspection system. Nevertheless, until such time arrives, the Accord must continue to play a fundamental role in protecting the lives of millions of workers.” [\[original\]](#)

Investors

Bangladesh Investor Initiative, a group of 250 institutional investors from 12 countries, 29 August 2018

“The success of the Accord model relies on the unprecedented collective action of trade unions, brands and their supplier factories and the International Labor Organization: this model, proven to be effective, is needed to finish the job and not allow the hard-earned gains to slip away. As shareholders in a number of the companies sourcing product in the garment sector, the undersigned investors are concerned that the precipitous termination of the Accord would be too costly for worker health and safety and to brands and their investors that depend upon a secure, safe workforce. We therefore urge the government of Bangladesh to make a re-submission to the High Court to enable the Accord to operate until such time as a national safety regulatory body is established and fully prepared to assume control of the Accord’s mandate.” [\[original\]](#)

Brands and retailers

H&M, 25 June 2018

"We want to complete the remediation [at our factories] because we recognise there is no adequate structure in place to regulate safety in Bangladesh. Brands and their consumers cannot forget about Rana Plaza and we strongly believe in the workers' rights to have a safe workplace and to refuse unsafe work. The Accord has delivered on this - a robust, high quality, transparent, inclusive system - and has made well-recognised progress. [...] We stand ready to support the RCC work and national governance that we agreed to. We sincerely hope that the RCC will be able to deliver the same result as the Accord - a robust [program], of good quality, transparent for external stakeholders, and inclusive for international trade unions. A premature shutdown of the Accord may lead brands and retailers to consider sourcing decisions and review their reputational risk for [working with] Bangladesh as a sourcing country." [\[original\]](#)

LC Waikiki, 25 June 2018

“We request as a Steering Committee of the Accord, but also particularly as brands of the Accord – the buyers – that the EU, the US, Canada and the ILO demand that the Government make a resubmission to the High Court in the Suo Moto case explicitly expressing its support for the previously agreed Transition Monitoring Committee arrangements which are as follows: between May and November 2018 the Transition Monitoring Committee will assess the readiness of the RCC against the already agreed criteria and if in November it is decided that the RCC are ready to take over, there would be a six months handover period during which the Accord will help and support the RCC in setting up its operations; if the answer is that the RCC are not ready to take over, then the assessment would continue for another six months before another decision is made.” [\[original\]](#)

KiK, 20 November 2018

"Our CSR Director Ansgar Lohmann on the continuation of the Bangladesh Accord: "It is largely thanks to the work through the Accord that Bangladesh is currently the safest production country in South East Asia." That is why we engage for the Accord to stay." [[original](#)]

KiK, 26 November 2018

"The considerations of the government of Bangladesh to send the Bangladesh Accord out of the country disappoint us very much. The work of the Accord has been immensely successful and the progress should not lose speed" [[original](#)]

KiK, 30 November 2018

"Workers in [#Bangladesh](#), companies and NGOs agree: [@banglaccord](#) has done incredibly important work and has shown tangible success. Its work must be continued, with or without the impending closing down of operations in Dhaka!" [[original](#)]

Varner Group (Cubus, Dressman, BikBok), November 2018

"Varner Group is committed to safe working conditions in Bangladesh and have demonstrated this by being actively engaged in The Accord for the last 5 years. Brands and unions are in ongoing negotiations with the Bangladesh Government to keep the Accord going.

Varner Group has actively supported that the work of the Accord should be continued beyond November 2018. We have sent letters to the top management and owners of all our suppliers in Bangladesh pushing our support for the continuation of the Accord. Varner Group also took part in a delegation of brands, unions, labour rights organizations and Accord staff who met with the ILO, Ambassadors and High Commissioners, government officials and the BGMEA to emphasize the importance of the continuation of the Accord operations in Bangladesh. In addition, together with other brands Varner Group recently approached the Bangladesh government voicing its concerns and support for the Accord in its current form."

Esprit, October 2018

"Rather than making the work easier [the closure of the Accord's Bangladesh office] would make our jobs more difficult (...) Activism in key market countries could make the Bangladesh brand toxic to consumers in spite of the tremendous improvements that we have achieved in recent years." [[original](#)]

C&A, November 2018

Handelsblatt: The termination of the Accord has clear consequences for many fashion companies: if the High Court does not revoke its decision, Accord would have no opportunity to visit audited factories in Bangladesh and to review the improvements. The brands that have signed the Accord would then have to "end their business relationships with these suppliers." [[original](#)].

Tchibo, November 2018

"The Bangladesh Accord is one of the greatest achievements in the efforts to achieve better working conditions in producing countries. (...) We are proud of what we have achieved, even if it is only one building block in the sum of all that still need to be changed. We are therefore all the more dismayed that the institutions in Bangladesh are pushing ahead with an early termination of the Accord without a transparent, independent and viable transition structure being in place. (...) Nevertheless, a forced pull-out of the Accord will significantly reduce our confidence and trust in the country, and it cannot be ruled out that we will also have to consider business consequences if the Accord's requirements do not continue to be implemented." [[original](#)]

Multi-stakeholder initiatives

German Textile Partnership, representing AVE, KiK, Otto Group, Esprit, Aldi, Rewe Group, Hugo Boss, Tchibo, Orsay, C&A, s. Oliver, Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung, HDE, 28 August 2018

“We very much welcome the solution that was achieved between Accord brand and union signatories, BGMEA and representatives of your government with respect to the 2018 Transition Accord in October 2017 through the Transition Monitoring Committee (TMC) arrangement: Once the TMC assesses the Remediation Coordination Cell (RCC) to be ready based on the objective criteria agreed upon, the Accord will hand over its tasks to that national regulatory body. At this point, we would like to confirm that we are truly committed to the TMC agreement. [...] While we faced disagreeable uncertainties in the past months regarding the Accord’s future, we strongly welcome that all members of the TMC have recently reaffirmed their commitment to the October 2017 agreement and constructive collaboration. It is of utmost importance for the safety of millions of employees in the garment industry of Bangladesh and in our firm interest that the agreed terms to hand over the Accord’s responsibilities are met. Against this background, we urge you, Honourable Prime Minister, to advocate for the TMC’s agreement and to ensure that all obstacles to keeping this commitment are withdrawn.” [\[original\]](#)

Ethical Trading Initiative, amfori, Fair Labor Association, DIEH, Fair Wear Foundation, Ethical Trading Initiative Norway, Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textile, November 2018

“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 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.” [\[original\]](#)

Carole Hommey, Initiative for Compliance and Sustainability, representing Auchan, Besson Chaussures, Bizzbee, Brice, Camaïeu, Carrefour, Casino group, Damart, Galeries Lafayette group, Go Sport, Okaidi, Jules, La Halle, Minelli, Monoprix, Naf-Naf, La Redoute, Promod, Tape à l’Oeil, U Enseigne, 21 December 2018

“There is still more to be done to complete the remediation in factories: 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). Having closely monitored the ongoing transition process from the ACCORD to the RCC, including the recent succession of hearings and restraining orders issued by the Bangladesh High Court, as well as the publication of several reports investigating the state of readiness of the newly founded RCC to take over ACCORD missions, we are concerned that all conditions that would allow for a smooth, safe and efficient shift from one system to the other, are not currently met. We believe that further efforts are necessary in order to absorb the work of the ACCORD into the RCC and that it is in the best interest of all parties that the RCC be provided with further opportunity and time to successfully develop.” [\[original\]](#)

Government representatives, parliamentarians

Sarah Gondy, Sustainability Compact officer, Directorate General for Trade, European Commission, 25 June 2018

“As the EU, we very much encourage the Government of Bangladesh to make a resubmission [to the High Court] to ensure that there is no end date for the work of the Accord, including beyond November 2018. (...) The Bangladesh Sustainability Compact has welcomed and supported the work of the Accord ever since it was established. We will continue supporting the Accord. The European Commission strongly encourages the Government of Bangladesh to make a re-submission to the Bangladesh High Court to ensure that the Accord can continue its work beyond November 2018 and for the long-term.” [\[original\]](#)

Amy McGann, Foreign Affairs Officer, Department of State, United States of America, 25 June 2018

“Currently there is no alternative to the Accord and Alliance. The Remediation Coordination Cell only began one year ago and is not fully-staffed yet. As we saw from the Alliance and the Accord, it takes years to develop a fully functional safety organization. It is not surprising that the RCC is not quite ready to take on the work. Both the Accord and Alliance have transition plans that include sharing knowledge with the RCC and it is critical that during the transition period there are no arbitrary deadlines for ending either the Accord or the Alliance. [...] The Accord has negotiated a Transition Accord that importantly includes Freedom of Association and the Government has agreed to a set of conditions that need to be met before the work of the Accord is taken over by the RCC. It takes time to build a culture of safety and the uncertainty created by the Government about the transition of the Accord and Alliance is resulting into some backsliding on safety. We urge the Government to [...] re-affirm that the Accord will remain until RCC can take over as determined by the Transition Monitoring Committee.” [\[original\]](#)

"There's been a lot of progress on safety in Bangladesh and the RCC is a good first step [by the Government] but it takes a long time to build capacity. We encourage the safety monitoring organisation and the Transition Accord to be allowed to operate until the RCC is up to capacity."

Marcia Bloom Bernicat, Ambassador, Embassy of the United States to Bangladesh, United States of America, 25 June 2018

"We acknowledge the progress made by the Accord and the Alliance and we support their continuing efforts as they move ever closer to the goal of 100% factory remediation. [...] We are looking for the Government of Bangladesh to work with the Accord and Alliance to ensure that both organisations can operate in the country until the Government is able to fully manage the factories that are not part of the Accord or Alliance, and to maintain the dramatic safety improvements in factories which do participate in these initiatives. [...] Why would Bangladesh, a short 5 years after Rana Plaza, turn away all the expertise and resources that the private sector brings to the table just as that expertise is needed the most to ensure a successful transition to the Government developing its own mechanisms? [...] The Accord and Alliance should remain on the job until the transition is successfully completed. The United States urges the Government to maintain a collaborative approach to the Accord as it continues to assess when, not if, it can transition to a Bangladesh-led program. It is critical to the safety of millions of workers and the productivity of factories that that assessment should be made fairly and objectively and without artificial time deadlines." [\[original\]](#)

Benoit Préfontaine, High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Canada, 25 June 2018

"The progress of the last 5 years cannot be denied. The inspection and remediation of safety issues in hundreds of factories, the establishment of hundreds of unions, the general improvement in safety standards and communication among all partners and stakeholders are among the accomplishments that have led us to where we are today. It is important that this momentum be sustained [...]. Millions of consumers of RMG sector products [...] are looking [...] for indications that the progress made in Bangladesh is irrevocable and ongoing. [...] This means ensuring that labour and other

human rights are comprehensibly respected and promoted in the RMG sector. We must note that we do not expect the Government of Bangladesh to undertake these efforts alone. This is why it is imperative that the work of Accord and Alliance continue.” [\[original\]](#)

EU ambassador to Bangladesh Rensje Teerink, US ambassador to Bangladesh Marcia S. Bernicat, High Commissioner of Canada in Bangladesh Benoit Préfontaine, 23 October 2018

“Requiring the RCC to regulate safety in factories covered by the National Initiative (NI), while simultaneously taking over the functions of the Accord, would possibly create an undue burden on this new body and may jeopardize its successful startup. We believe that this is not the intention of the Government. Further capacity-building is necessary to ensure that Accord’s work can be adequately and fully absorbed by the RCC without leaving a regulatory gap in RMG factory safety. We urge all stakeholders to jointly agree to a time-bound transition plan.” [\[original\]](#)

Agnes Jongerius, Dutch MEP, and over 50 MEPs from different parties, 16 October 2018

“In our view, the premature close down of the Accord Foundation office has negative consequences for the employees in the garment industry. It is also inconsistent with the commitments from the Government of Bangladesh towards the Sustainability Compact. Moreover, the authorities are not prepared to regulate safety in the garment factories.” [\[original\]](#).

Kirsten van den Hul, Dutch parliamentarian (PvdA), Agnes Jongerius, Dutch MEP (PvdA), 29 November 2018

“That is why the EU needs to take action and increase pressure on the Bangladeshi government. For the safety of millions of textile workers. This can be done by (temporarily) increasing the low trade tariffs. Or at least by threatening to do so. A step that the company lobby in Brussels certainly does not like, but is essential for the credibility of an EU that stands for fair world trade.” [\[original\]](#)

Factory owners

Mostafiz Uddin, Managing Director of Denim Expert Limited, Founder and CEO of Bangladesh Denim Expo and Bangladesh Apparel Exchange (BAE), 20 November 2018

“I am in support of the view that the presence of two external safety platforms in Bangladesh was never going to be a long-term solution. But I would like to see a safe and flourishing garment export industry in Bangladesh. So, the handover of the work needs a more careful approach and attention with the consensus of all the stakeholders and authorities while having utmost respect to our judiciary. The journey of collaboration between brands, partners and policymakers needs to be continued, while strengthening of RCC is crucial to sustain our progress. What we have achieved in Bangladesh with the support of the Accord and Alliance should be carried out to take our RMG sector to an exciting new chapter.” [\[original\]](#)

International institutions

Dante Pesce, UN Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 35/7, mandated by the Human Rights Council, 17 december 2018

“The Working Group is concerned that the Accord may lose its licence to continue to operate in Bangladesh before being able to complete ongoing remediation work, with negative impact on the oversight of health and safety of workers of the factories covered by the initiative still in need of substantial safety upgrades. For example, we understand that a significant number of those factories still do not have fire alarm systems in place. Under the UNGPs, States have the primary duty to protect human rights against abuses by business actors. Companies also have a responsibility to respect human rights, which means they need to demonstrate that they exercise due diligence to

address potential and actual impacts linked to their operations to the maximum of their ability. This includes risks to the rights of workers in their own operations and across global supply chains.”