

**Joint Conclusions**  
**Second Follow-up Meeting on Bangladesh Sustainability Compact**  
**Dhaka, 28 January 2016**

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The Partners of the Bangladesh Sustainability Compact – Government of Bangladesh, European Union, United States of America and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) – met in Dhaka, on 28 January 2016, to take stock of the progress in the implementation of the Compact since the last Meeting. They recalled that the Compact (*Geneva, July 2013*) and the last Follow-up Meeting (*Brussels, October 2014*) serve as a set of mutually agreed concrete commitments by its Partners aimed at securing respect for labour rights, occupational safety and health and promoting responsible business conduct in Bangladesh’s ready-made garment and knitwear (RMG) sector.

The Compact Partners had elaborate discussions on the progress of implementation of the Compact. They recognized important progress that has been made since adoption of the Compact and the last Follow-up Meeting. They further recognised the need to maintain momentum on progress in all of its pillars and reaffirm their commitment to ensuring implementation of the outstanding commitments of the Compact involving all stakeholders, both in public and private sectors. They affirmed to work collectively to carry forward the lessons learnt towards improvement of working conditions and worker's rights in the export-oriented RMG sector in similar conditions elsewhere.

The Compact partners recognized further progress made by Bangladesh since the last Follow-up Meeting towards meaningful and sustainable changes in the RMG industry in Bangladesh *inter alia* recent promulgation of implementing Rules under the Bangladesh Labour Act; the near-completion of initial safety audits by the Government of hundreds of RMG factories; the formal launch of the Better Work Bangladesh programme with ILO/IFC; and the continuation of efforts to improve the capacity of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE), the Fire Service and Civil Defence Department (DFSCD) and the capital development authority (RAJUK), including through increase in staff and budgetary allocation. They also took note of a detailed Update provided by Bangladesh, titled “Update by Bangladesh – Progress in Implementation on Outcome of the Review Meeting of the Sustainability Compact, as on 11 January 2016” available at [www.mincom.gov.bd](http://www.mincom.gov.bd) .

Recalling the outcome document of the last Follow-up Meeting, the Partners focused on the development of concrete steps forward in certain priority areas. In that context, they recognised the need to:

- ensure that trade union registration process is carried out as a smooth and expeditious formality, in accordance with objective and transparent criteria;
- upgrade the (Bangladesh) Directorate of Labour with additional staff and resources to effectively investigate and prosecute unfair labour practices in a timely and transparent manner and to promote harmonious industrial relations;
- adopt the necessary legislative changes to the legal framework applicable in the EPZs to protect freedom of association and collective bargaining rights and to ensure that such rights are commensurate with those provided in the national Labour Law, involving all stakeholders and the ILO.
- ensure the effective implementation of the Bangladesh Labour Act and its Rules, in line with the relevant ILO Conventions, including with regard to Participation Committees and Safety Committees;
- complete recruitment of inspectors and to ensure effective inspections in all of the country’s active export-oriented RMG factories, including their subcontracting factories, so that all RMG workers in Bangladesh are afforded a safe working environment;

- undertake remediation and transparent monitoring through the DIFE website of all export-oriented RMG factories, according to the developed Corrective Action Plans, in a timely and effective manner in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, recognizing the usefulness of the funds mobilized by donors and the importance of effective financial support.

The Compact Partners also underlined the need to consult on further amendments to Bangladesh's labour related legal framework towards ensuring full compliance with core ILO Conventions and to address the conclusions and recommendations of the ILO supervisory bodies, including with regard to freedom of association.

The Partners also recognised the significant contributions of the private sector initiatives in making progress towards fulfilment of the Compact, and the 1,500 safety assessments undertaken by the National Initiative (Bangladesh). During the past year, the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety and the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety completed initial safety audits of over 2,000 RMG factories, oversaw the development and implementation of the Corrective Action Plans, and posted all safety audits on publicly accessible websites. The Partners recognized that the complex work of overseeing remediation continues and they recommitted themselves to facilitate the work of the Accord and Alliance over the remainder of their five-year commitments and to the sustainability of those efforts in Bangladesh. All Partners noted the critical need to continue building capacity of the regulatory authorities/bodies in Bangladesh responsible for occupational safety and health, electrical safety and structural integrity so that they can fully and independently carry out their functions, as soon as possible.

The Partners recognised the importance for brands and retailers to adopt practices that promote responsible business conduct in global supply chains. They encouraged brands and retailers to adopt a uniform code of conduct for factory audits in Bangladesh.

The commitment of the Partners to Bangladesh remains strong. The European Union and the United States, in close cooperation with the ILO, remain closely engaged with the Government of Bangladesh and stakeholders, including the RMG industry in Bangladesh, to help ensure that the further development and the sustainability of the RMG sector in Bangladesh advances in line with improved workers' rights and safety. Building on the demonstrated collaboration and partnership developed over the last years, the Partners welcomed the association of Canada to the Compact and will continue to pursue full implementation of the Compact to ensure that economic growth goes hand-in-hand with worker's rights and safety and concrete and tangible improvements are made in the identified areas – with support from the development cooperation programme of partners and other stakeholders.

The Compact Partners will remain engaged, including through the contributions of the "3+5" process, with a particular focus on concrete and tangible improvements in the areas of most urgent need outlined above. The Partners will convene again in early 2017.

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