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PRESS RELEASE

Global support for Bangladesh factory safety surpasses one million

Labour rights groups push brands to sign agreement before deadline of 15 May

AMSTERDAM – Over one million people have signed petitions calling for brands sourcing from Bangladesh to sign the legally-binding *Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh* immediately.

“Global citizens have sent a clear message to international brands sourcing from Bangladesh, such as H&M, Mango, Primark, GAP, C&A, KIK, Benetton, H&M, JC Penney, and Wal-Mart,” says Tessel Pauli from Clean Clothes Campaign. “We are calling on brands to take immediate action in implementing sustainable safety measures in their supplier factories in order to prevent another tragedy such as Rana Plaza.”

Signatures to the petitions have been collected by a coalition of trade unions and labour rights and citizen's organisations around the world, all calling on international brands to sign the *Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh* by May 15, 2013, a date agreed on by brands at an earlier meeting near Frankfurt, Germany. This Accord for independent building inspections, public disclosure of audit results, mandatory building renovations to address hazards, and union access to factories to educate workers on how they can protect their rights and their safety, including their right to refuse unsafe work. This transparent and practical agreement is supported by all key labour stakeholders in Bangladesh and internationally.

With the death toll of the Rana Plaza collapse topping 1000 and yet another fatal fire in a Bangladesh garment factory on 8th May, it is more important than ever that brands sign on immediately. The global campaign brings together the [Clean Clothes Campaign \(CCC\)](#), [IndustriALL Global Union](#), [UNI Global Union](#), [International Labor Rights Forum \(ILRF\)](#), [United Students Against Sweatshops \(USAS\)](#), [Maquila Solidarity Network \(MSN\)](#), [War on Want](#), [People and Planet](#), [SumOfUs.org](#), [Change.org](#), [Credo Action](#), [Avaaz](#) and [Causes](#).

Since 2005, more than 1700 garment workers have died in Bangladesh due to unsafe buildings. The latest tragedies highlight, once again, the need for urgent action and the failure of corporate social auditing schemes. Two of the factories in the Rana Plaza building had been audited by the Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI), and many of the brands have other auditing schemes in place – yet all failed to identify the illegal building construction and safety practices.

Tessel Pauli from Clean Clothes Campaign: *'Brands cannot ignore this massive global support and have to sign this Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh before the deadline of 15 May. We have been pushing for binding and independent safety measures for too many years now. It is time to stop the killings. The accord has the potential to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of workers who are currently at risk.'*

Jyrki Raina, General Secretary of IndustriALL Global Union: *'The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh is the only credible programme that brands can sign. The requirements of this*

programme are straightforward, commonsense measures which will have a vital impact on worker safety in factories in Bangladesh. It is now time for all other brands to commit to sustainable safety in Bangladesh.'

UNI Global Union General Secretary Philip Jennings: *“The Accord is a call for justice and provides a sustainable solution to factory safety which cannot now be ignored. These global retailers must change their behaviour. We have seen the terrible consequences in Bangladesh of the business as usual mentality. Companies must sign up and show they are finally willing to take on their responsibilities to these factory workers who are ultimately part of their global workforce.”*

The labour signatories are calling on all major brands and retailers sourcing from Bangladesh to sign on to the **Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh** before 15th May, in order to ensure its rapid implementation.

Many of the organizations supporting the campaign have been campaigning on safety issues in Bangladesh since the collapse of the Spectrum factory in 2005, which left 64 people dead and involved high street brand Zara. In 2012, P&H (owner of Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfger) and the German retailer Tchibo were the first brands to commit to the safety accord.

END OF PRESS RELEASE

Notes

The Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) works to improve conditions and support the empowerment of workers in the global garment industry. The CCC has national campaigns in 15 European countries with a network of 250 organisations worldwide.

For more information on Fire and Building safety and compensation schemes in Bangladesh see the CCC report Hazardous Workplaces, published in 2012.

<http://www.cleanclothes.org/resources/publications/2012-11-hazardousworkplaces.pdf/view>

For more information on The Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Agreement see

<http://www.cleanclothes.org/news/press-releases/2013/04/29/201cstop-the-killing-act-now201d-clean-clothes-campaign-urges-brands-to-sign-safety-agreement>

<http://www.cleanclothes.org/news/2012/10/26/statement-regarding-gap2019s-refusal-to-agree-to-a-fire-safety-program-in-bangladesh>

CCC has been working with partners in Bangladesh to improve fire and safety conditions since 2005, when the Spectrum disaster killed 64 workers. Since then we have campaigned for justice for workers following numerous fire, including Garib and Garib, That's It Sportwear and Eurotex. See <http://www.cleanclothes.org/news/2013/04/11/spectrum-collapse-eight-years-on-and-still-little-action-on-safety>

For background on the series of the calamities in the Bangladesh garment industry, visit <http://laborrights.org/deadlysecrets> to download International Labor Rights Forum’s report “Deadly Secrets”.

Endorsed by

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SumOfUs.org
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