

# The 2018 Bangladesh Accord:

## Brands and unions renew commitment to safe jobs

- On 29 June 2017 trade unions and leading apparel brands announced a second Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety (2018 Accord). This three-year agreement builds on the success of the landmark 2013 Accord by extending protections for millions of Bangladeshi garment workers. The new agreement takes effect upon the expiration of the current Accord, in May of 2018.
- The new agreement promises independent, expert building safety inspections for three more years to all covered factories, ensuring that safety improvements achieved under the first Accord will be maintained and that new problems will be identified and addressed. Extending the agreement also guarantees that hundreds of additional factories will be inspected and renovated, as signatory brands add new suppliers.
- The current Accord model is the only credible mechanism for brands to verify that their products are made under safe conditions. The 2018 agreement maintains key components of the ground-breaking first Accord:
  - ⇒ **A legally-binding framework:** Brands and retailers are legally obligated to require their suppliers to remedy unsafe working conditions. Signatory brands are also required to ensure sufficient funds are available for factories to pay for remediation.
  - ⇒ **Independent inspections:** Qualified safety engineers inspect facilities with participation from workers and trade unions.
  - ⇒ **Clear consequences for factory owners:** Suppliers that refuse to carry out mandatory renovations and operate safely are terminated, meaning they can no longer do business with any Accord signatory brand.
  - ⇒ **Public disclosure and transparency:** All factories, inspection reports, required corrective actions and factory-specific progress updates are published on the Accord's website.
  - ⇒ **Worker empowerment:** Through an extensive training programme, effective complaint procedures and right to refuse unsafe work, workers play an important role in making their jobs safe.
- The 2018 Accord includes new elements, building on the first Accord:
  - ⇒ The agreement recognizes **the importance of Freedom of Association** in ensuring workers have a genuine say in protecting their own safety and will establish a training and complaints protocol to ensure that this right is respected.
  - ⇒ It also includes **enhanced protection for workers** whose factories are closed or relocated due to safety issues, with a requirement for severance payments if workers lose their jobs.
  - ⇒ There is a possibility to **expand the scope** of the agreement to cover categories of factories not originally covered, such as factories making related products such as footwear and home textiles.
  - ⇒ Additionally, the 2018 Accord incorporates **lessons learned over the past four years** to ensure effective implementation, such as a clarified dispute resolution process.

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- While the first Accord was born out of the crisis created by the horrific tragedy at Rana Plaza, the motivation behind this new agreement is advancing the progress made by multinational companies and global unions working together in a legally binding framework. This collaboration can save lives, change an industry, and provide a model for other initiatives to address labour rights in supply chains.
- Bangladesh is the world's second-largest garment exporter, and its share of the global market is growing. Last fiscal year, the sector exported US\$28.1bn in garments and the sector accounted for 82 per cent of the country's total exports. Since the Rana Plaza disaster, the industry grew by more than US\$6 billion.
- The 2018 Accord anticipates an eventual transfer of its functions to an appropriate national regulatory body, once this exists, and commits to contributing to its development through capacity building and sharing experience and expertise.

### **More about the 2013 Accord**

*The first Bangladesh Accord was launched in May 2013 as a response to the Rana Plaza tragedy that killed 1,134 people and injured thousands more. It was established by a coalition of trade unions, non-governmental organizations, and brands and retailers.*

*The Accord's operation in Bangladesh involves more than 200 staff, including 87 structural, electrical and fire safety engineers and 50 worker training personnel.*

*The five-year agreement expires in May 2018. Below is a summary of key achievements of the Accord, by the numbers:*

- **2,500,000 Bangladeshi garment workers** are covered by the first Accord.
- **1,800 factories independently inspected**—and 7,000 periodic follow-up inspections—to identify safety hazards, mandate renovations, and verify their completion.
- **118,500 identified violations** of the Accord's fire, electrical, and structural safety standards.
- **79 per cent remediation** of workplace dangers identified in the Accord's original round of inspections. These corrections include changes like the installation of fire doors and the replacement of shoddy electrical wiring, the ignition source for most factory fires.
- **32 factory buildings with extreme structural flaws** that created the risk of a Rana Plaza-like catastrophic failure were identified by the Accord's inspectors. These buildings were either closed, and in some cases immediately evacuated, or compelled to make swift renovations to ensure basic structural integrity.
- **500,000 workers have been trained in health and safety** by the Accord's training programme, which aims to build and support health and safety committees in each factory.
- **0 deaths due to fire or structural collapses** in any factory where inspection was completed and renovations commenced.

*For more information: <http://bangladeshaccord.org/>.*

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