



Geneva, 18 June 2015

Mr. Atiqul Islam  
President  
Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA)  
Dhaka, Bangladesh  
Sent by email to [atiq@islam-garments.com](mailto:atiq@islam-garments.com); [president@bgmea.com](mailto:president@bgmea.com)

## **Calling on BGMEA to return to the spirit of cooperation**

Dear Atiqul Islam,

We write this letter to you on behalf of [UNI Global Union](#) and [IndustriALL Global Union](#). We have written today to Minister Muhith to express our deep concern over the remarks that he is reported to have made at the meeting with BGMEA, BKMEA and BTMA, characterizing the Accord as a 'noose for the apparel industry'. The press has also reported remarks that you made at this meeting where you describe the Accord as a 'big problem' for Bangladesh's readymade apparel industry.

We repeat the comments that we made to the Minister, that IndustriALL and UNI negotiated the Accord with more than 200 brands sourcing from Bangladesh, in order to demonstrate their commitment to the industry in Bangladesh by working with the factories to make them safe. Making and, importantly, keeping the factories safe requires not only all remediation work to be completed, but also for workers to be able to play an active role in monitoring safety and reporting safety concerns. This is done through the democratic election and training of health and safety committees in the factories and through enabling workers to voice safety concerns without fear of retribution.

You referred in your remarks to efforts by the Accord to ensure reinstatement of workers who were dismissed for raising such concerns. Clearly, if workers are faced with the threat of losing their job, there is very little chance that they will report safety hazards and the Accord is committed to acting on such cases of retribution.

We are alarmed that you used this occasion to make public accusations towards the actions of Rob Wayss. Rob was acting in the face of egregious conduct by a factory which disciplined union activists for reporting unsafe conditions, exactly the sort of threatening and retaliatory action which we must prevent in order to create safe workplaces. He has our full support and is acting squarely within his authority as the Accord's Executive Director. We would hope that BGMEA would equally call upon factories to correct this behavior. Targeting him personally in this way is not only a risk to his personal safety, it gives the impression that he alone is responsible for the decisions taken in the course of implementing the Accord when it is the Steering Committee which is ultimately responsible. Your accusation that Rob is an 'agent' of the AFL-CIO is particularly inflammatory and unhelpful.

We hope that the meeting between the Accord Steering Committee and the BGMEA that is scheduled for next week will be an opportunity for the concerns of all parties to be discussed. Indeed, we agreed to the Accord scheduling regular meetings with the BGMEA precisely to ensure open channels of communication on issues of concern. We urge you to bring all concerns about the operations of the Accord directly to this dialogue rather than airing them first in the press.

Rest assured that we remain committed to working towards the sustainability and success of the Bangladesh garment industry and will continue to implement the Accord, without fear or favour, in furtherance of that goal.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized letters that appear to be 'JRL'.

Jyrki Raina  
General Secretary  
IndustriALL Global Union

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Jennings'.

Philip Jennings  
General Secretary  
UNI Global Union