



Geneva, 18 June 2015

Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith
Finance Minister
Dhaka, Bangladesh
Sent by email to info@pmo.gov.bd; mission.bangladesh@ties.itu.int

Calling on the Government of Bangladesh to return to the spirit of cooperation

Dear Minister,

We write this letter to you on behalf of [UNI Global Union](#) and [IndustriALL Global Union](#), to express our great concern over the remarks you have made, according to press reports, to the leaders of BGMEA, BKMEA and BTMA where you characterized the Accord as a 'noose for the apparel industry'. Your remarks wrongly accuse the Accord of seeking to hold back Bangladesh's progress, when the reverse is true. As your government is well aware, the Accord came into being in response to the collapse of Rana Plaza, when it became evident to the world, and specifically to garment brands, that the safety of garment workers in Bangladesh could not be guaranteed.

Inspections subsequently carried out by the Accord in factories supplying to Accord member brands have found that no factory producing garments in Bangladesh can currently be considered safe, and a number of factories had such serious safety violations that the Bangladesh Inspector General ordered them to be closed.

The easiest response for the brands to this situation would be to walk away and look for safer countries to produce in. Instead, 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.

Your reported comments seem to suggest a belief on the part of the Bangladesh government that the confidence of the brands has been won and therefore the Accord should cease its operations. This could not be farther from the truth. The danger for the Bangladeshi garment industry is not over – the factories are not safe yet. While the inspections have largely been completed, and much work has been done in the factories to make improvements, particularly to electrical safety, the vast majority of essential remedial actions have yet to be carried out. Indeed, all Corrective Action Plans are currently behind schedule, some of them by more than a year.

Inspecting the factories is not enough on its own. All remediation work must be completed and health and safety committees elected and trained so that worker safety can be guaranteed. If the factories are not made safe, not only does the Bangladesh government risk more tragedies and the loss of more workers' lives, it puts at risk the future of the export garment industry. No brand will want to stay in Bangladesh with the reputational risk that unsafe factories present.

The messages that your government sends to factories through their representative organizations, and through the media, are influential. Sending a negative message about the operations of the Accord that has the effect of delaying or undermining essential factory safety improvements is not in the interests of the government, the industry or the workers.

IndustriALL and UNI will continue to support the work of the Accord in Bangladesh until the factories are safe. We urge your government to reconsider its stance towards the Accord and to return to the spirit of positive cooperation that we have previously experienced.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Jyrki Raina'.

Jyrki Raina
General Secretary
IndustriALL Global Union

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

Philip Jennings
General Secretary
UNI Global Union