

PRESS RELEASE

The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh's Garment Industry announces its plan to implement the Accord programme.

The Steering Committee of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh today announces its plan to implement the Accord programme, which it delivered within the 45 days deadline. This pioneering Accord is a binding contract between 70 apparel brands and retailers, international and local trade unions and NGOs. Its aim is to ensure sustainable improvements to working conditions in the Bangladesh Garment Industry.

Key highlights include:

- Initial inspections – To identify grave hazards and the need for urgent repairs - will be completed within 9 months.
- An Interim Procedure has been agreed to take effect when existing inspection processes or worker reports identify factories which require immediate remediation measures.
- Hiring process commenced for the Chief Safety Inspector and Executive Director positions.
- Governance structure established through a Steering Committee with equal representation of signatory companies and unions and an Advisory Board with broad representation in Bangladesh.

The Accord signatories stated the priority is to move swiftly to reduce severe hazards facing workers in factories covered by the Accord. Initial inspections at every factory will be completed at the latest within 9 months, and plans for renovations and repairs put in place where necessary. These will focus on those issues that pose grave and immediate risks to workers, in particular inadequate emergency infrastructure and procedures (e.g., fire exits, fire training and evacuation) and fundamental flaws that could lead to a partial or total structural failure of a factory building.

Jyrki Raina, General Secretary IndustriALL: "Our mission is clear: to ensure the safety of all workers in the Bangladesh garment industry. The direct involvement of workers in the factories is key to the success of this programme."

In the interim period, while details are being finalised and the inspectorate is being built, an emergency protocol will ensure swift action to protect workers at any factory where existing inspection programs or worker reports identify an immediate threat to life and limb. All signatory companies using the factory in question will be notified immediately and the factory owner will be told to cease operations pending further investigation and/or repairs. With the involvement of the local unions, factory workers will be informed of the potential danger and their right to refuse to enter a potentially unsafe building. A viable plan with renovations and repairs undertaken to address the hazards will be produced and workers will be paid while the factory remains closed.

Andy York, Ethical Trading Manager, N Brown Group: “The signatories agree that this joint effort is a credible and effective programme with a genuine commitment from all parties to work together. This is the only way to bring about long-term, sustainable change to the garment industry in Bangladesh.”

Efforts have begun to recruit both the Chief Safety Inspector and the Executive Director, both of whom will report directly to the Accord Steering Committee.

Factory data from all company signatories will be collected by July 15, along with details about each factory building. An aggregated list of all covered factories under the Accord will be publicly disclosed.

The legal structure to administer the Accord will be a Foundation established in the Netherlands and with an office in Bangladesh.

The six executive members of the Steering Committee have been elected. Members include officials of IndustriALL Global Union, UNI Global Union and the Bangladesh Council of Trade Unions as well as representatives of signatory companies: Inditex, N.Brown Group and PVH Corp. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has designated a senior representative to serve as chair person.

An Advisory Board which includes representatives of the Bangladesh government, as well as suppliers, brands, local trade unions and NGOs, will be established. The Advisory Board, which will be chaired by an ILO representative, is vital to ensure a strong link to local stakeholders and the National Action Plan.

A delegation of the Steering Committee will visit Bangladesh at the end of July to meet with local stakeholders to discuss their role in implementing the Accord and to establish working relationships.

The Steering Committee would like to give its thanks for the hard work of the Implementation Team over the last 45 days to lay out the Implementation Plan. The Implementation Team consisted of IndustriALL Global Union, UNI Global Union, Clean Clothes Campaign, Worker Rights Consortium, Aldi, C&A, Inditex, N Brown, Otto Group and PVH Corp.

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