

100 days until current Accord ends – labour signatories urge brands to sign onto 2018 Accord

With 100 days until the current Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety expires, garment companies are urged to continue their involvement to create a safe and sustainable garment industry in Bangladesh and to sign its successor, the 2018 Transition Accord.

The 2018 Transition Accord will continue the work of inspecting factories in Bangladesh, identifying safety hazards, and ensuring that they are corrected. As of today 109 garment companies have signed the 2018 Accord, covering more than 2 million workers.

However, many garment companies still must reconfirm their commitment to the safety of the Bangladeshi workers in their supply chain. Among the companies that are still dragging their feet are Marks and Spencer, Next, Sainsbury's, Metro Group, Abercrombie & Fitch, and Dansk Supermarked.

The global union signatories to the Accord, IndustriALL and UNI, and the four witness signatories, Clean Clothes Campaign, International Labor Rights Forum, Maquila Solidarity Network and Worker Rights Consortium, call upon the garment companies that have not yet signed the 2018 Accord to do so as soon as possible.

“Not signing the 2018 Accord means that one hundred days from now workers will be left in unmonitored factories. As a consequence, garment brands will fall short on their due diligence obligations to keep the workers in their supply chain safe,” says Ineke Zeldenrust, international coordinator of Clean Clothes Campaign.

The original Bangladesh Accord came into effect in May 2013, in the aftermath of the Rana Plaza building collapse of April 2013, in which 1,134 workers were killed. The Accord has created a credible system to monitor and remediate factories of signatory brands and to train workers in the field of safety. This work will continue under the 2018 Accord.

“There is still no credible alternative to the Accord to protect worker safety in Bangladesh. It is simply not an option for brands to go back to the company-led programs that so clearly failed to prevent large-scale factory tragedies before. Signing the 2018 Accord is the only way for

companies to meet their due diligence obligations to ensure that Bangladeshi garment workers can work in safe factories,” says Jenny Holdcroft, assistant general secretary of IndustriALL.

This is equally urgent for companies that have not fulfilled their obligations under the first Accord yet as well as for companies that have repaired all safety defects discovered in their factories under the first Accord.

“The need for safety committees and inspection programme is ongoing because a factory can be safe one day, and then the fire doors are blocked the next. As long as the Bangladeshi government is not yet ready to assume this responsibility, the Accord will continue to provide the training, engineering expertise, and accountability structures necessary to make garment work safer,” says Christy Hoffman, Deputy General Secretary of UNI Global Union.

The one hundred-day warning is also aimed at encouraging garment companies that are not part of the current Accord, including those who have joined the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, a corporate-led safety programme, to sign the 2018 Accord.

“We urge the Alliance companies and those that signed neither programme to join the 2018 Accord as soon as possible and thereby display their willingness to engage constructively with Bangladeshi and international trade unions and confirm their commitment to keeping factories in Bangladesh safe,” says Judy Gearhart, executive director of International Labor Rights Forum.

Notes to the press:

- The full text of the 2018 Accord and details on how to sign on can be found on the Accord website: <http://bangladeshaccord.org/wp-content/uploads/2018-Accord-sign-on-info.pdf>.
- Both IndustriALL and UNI maintain lists of brands that have signed unto the 2018 Accord: <http://www.industriall-union.org/signatories-to-the-2018-accord> and <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/2018AccordSigners>. And lists of brands that have signed the current Accord but have not yet renewed their commitment: <http://www.industriall-union.org/brands-that-have-not-signed-the-2018-accord>.

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