



European Union

Statement

**ILO Governing Body, 320th session
(13 – 27 March 2014)**

**"Situation of trade union rights in Bangladesh"
(GB.320/INS/14.3)**

Geneva, 27 March 2014

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

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EU Statement

Thank you chair,

I speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The following countries align themselves with this declaration: Turkey*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia†, Montenegro‡, Iceland‡, Albania†, Norway§ and the Republic of Moldova.

We are particularly concerned about the labour conditions, including freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining and about the application of health and safety provisions, as we are Bangladesh's largest trade partner.

Almost one year ago we were greatly saddened by the Rana Plaza collapse. We deplored the loss of so many lives in this event and in the factory fires that had previously occurred in the readymade garment industry of the country.

The “Sustainability Compact for continuous improvements in labour rights and factory safety in the Readymade Garment and knitwear industry in Bangladesh” launched by the EU, the Government of Bangladesh and the ILO in July 2013, is referred to in the Office report. It outlines concrete and time bound commitments on labour rights, with a particular focus on freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively, occupational safety and health and factory safety, as well as responsible business conduct and lists immediate deliverables.

* Candidate country

† The Candidate countries former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia as well as potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

‡ Candidate Country Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

§ Liechtenstein and Norway are members of the EFTA and the European Economic Area.

We are closely following its implementation, together with Bangladesh, the ILO and the US, which associated itself to the Compact.

We welcome the progress of the country since July 2013 in recognizing and improving workers' and trade unions' rights and implementing commitments under the Sustainability Compact, as described in the report of the Director General. In particular we welcome the amendments to the Bangladesh Labour Act, the preparation of implementing regulations to the labour law and of a new labour Act for Export Processing Zones, the registration of 152 new trade unions, the lodging of anti-union discrimination cases, the upgrade of the Office of the Chief inspector of factories and establishments to a Directorate with 679 new posts, the start of the recruitment process of labour inspectors, the implementation and coordination of private sector initiatives, the launch of an ILO technical cooperation programme to help implement the National Plan of Action on Structural Integrity and Fire Safety in the RMG Sector, funded by the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and other countries with different projects related to RMG sector as well as the launch of the Better Work Programme for Bangladesh. Preparations are also underway to launch a publicly accessible database listing all RMG and knitwear factories in Bangladesh, as a platform for reporting labour, fire and building safety inspections.

All this shows that decisive progress could be made on labour rights and occupational safety and health, with the strong engagement and joint efforts of the ILO and its tripartite constituents, of the Government of Bangladesh, of the EU and its Member States, of both sides of industry and of other key stakeholders

We encourage the Government to address remaining shortcomings in respect of international labour standards, in particular the concerns raised by the Committee of Experts in its report regarding the labour law reform, and continue implementing commitments under the Sustainability Compact. Concerning occupational safety and health, we encourage Bangladesh to continue working with the ILO to improve the overall framework in this area, including the ratification of relevant ILO Conventions.

Considering that occupational safety and health is an important element of the Decent Work agenda, the EU and its member states, along with other partners, have been supporting action in this area through concrete projects targeting working conditions in the garment sector and vocational training, notably for injured or disabled persons.

We also support European social partners in the textile and clothing sector in their promotion

of a sector-specific Corporate Social Responsibility framework aimed at producing a harmonised set of CSR standards. We further welcome that European social partners in the commerce sector have included a follow-up to the Accord on Fire and Safety in Bangladesh in their joint work programme 2014-2015.

We stay engaged in improving labour rights and factory safety in Bangladesh, stand ready to continue, with the ILO, to assist the Bangladeshi authorities to meet the required international labour standards and express our resolve to pursue deep engagement with all actors involved in the supply chain.

We welcome the decisive efforts of the Office to bring together the various relevant stakeholders to promote labour rights and safe workplaces in Bangladesh. We encourage the Office to stay engaged in the country on these issues.

Thank you Chair.