

MFA Forum Executive Committee

22nd of January 2007

Agenda

1. Updates on following working groups:
 - a. Bangladesh (Alan Roberts)
 - b. Lesotho (Andy Salm)
 - c. Americas (Anna Walker)
 - d. Morocco (Maggie Burns)
 - e. Responsible Closure (Caitlin Morris)
2. NGO representative replacement on Executive Co
3. Election process for Executive Committee
4. Secretariat Financial Update

Attendees

Simon Zadek (Chair)
Caitlin Morris (NIKE)
Signe Jensen (Secretariat)
Lynda Yanz (MSN)
Alan Roberts (ETI)
Joyce Kortlendt (Oxfam novib)
Patterson Brown (USAID)
Susan Hayter (ILO)
Maggie Burns (Secretariat)
Anna Walker (Levi Strauss and Co)
Lakshmi Bhatia (Gap Inc.)
Bob Jefcott (MSN)

Apologies

Andy Salm
Neil Kearney

Updates on working groups:

Bangladesh

Despite continuous political unrest in the country, the local Steering Group has moved significantly on the 3-year project plan. Prior to earlier concerns on lack of Multi Stakeholder representation, the last meeting had full representation from all stakeholders. The International consultant Patrick Neyts has been working with the group on the first draft. The draft has been shared with the international buyers

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group, who are all invited to give feedback to the work. The International Buyers group has prior to the receipt of the 1st draft sent a letter to the Steering group commenting on the need to ensure that the timescale for achieving compliance within the industry reflects the urgency with which the industry needs to act due to the upcoming challenge from China.

The MFAF have been asked by the local Steering Group to be present when the final proposal is presented to donors. It was emphasized by Alan, Chair of the international buyers group that the process needs to be nationally driven and it is therefore also the Steering Group who should present the proposal to Donors. The international group will however be represented at the meeting with donors for support, as requested by the Steering Group.

Work in the next couple of months will include a workshop with the local buyers group, covered under existing funding, focusing on the JO-IN code.

Actions

- ✓ Someone from the international Bangladesh working group to travel to Bangladesh to support the Steering group in the presentation of the proposal to the Donors. The person traveling will take the opportunity to work with the local buyers group and look at possibilities of going ahead with the Jo-in workshop.
- ✓ The Secretariat will liaise with Joyce Kortlandt from Oxfam to get her up to speed on Bangladesh issues.

Lesotho

The Chair of the group was not on the call. Nevertheless, the Executive Committee did discuss the work in Lesotho as it was noted that since the MFA Forum convening in London in September 2006, both the group at the international level has struggled to move forward as well as within Lesotho the group has not drawn in the government, industry or trade unions to create a multi-stakeholder group to take forward the work agreed at the conference last year.

The MFA Forum needs to consider if it has a role to play in the country in the future. It was emphasized that if the Forum does have a role to play, the process needs to change immediately.

When the Forum was in Lesotho for the conference 'Destination Lesotho' in May 2005, it was clearly communicated that the government could play a more leading role. A more active role of the government would enable the International group to carry forward the work.

ILO and the IFC are developing a Better Work Programme in Lesotho. The proposal for this is currently being finalized. Once this is done it will be circulated to the MFA

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Forum for broader comments especially concerning implementation. The ILO emphasized that the convening role the Forum plays is still very important.

As a number of different conversations are currently taking place in the country, it was suggested to get these different players on a call to see where the different activities are taking us, and where and if, the MFA Forum can play a role.

Actions

- ✓ The Secretariat to set up a call between Gap Inc, ITGLFW, ILO, WB and the Secretariat.

- ✓ Secretariat should reach out to the government, to ensure that there is a governmental voice in the MFA Forum

Americas

The group has decided to carry out scoping visits to Honduras and Nicaragua to explore the possibility for home-grown initiatives. The group is currently preparing for the visits and will decide on dates by the end of January. They aim to carry out the visits before the Toronto meeting in April.

Similarly, the group is continuing to explore possibilities for work in Mexico. MSN and three brands met in Mexico in December. The group is currently in discussions with other organizations that have expressed an interest in the work in Mexico, and the outcome from these discussions will be brought to Toronto.

The nature of regional work had earlier been questioned by members of the executive Committee, nevertheless the Chair of the Americas group pointed out that the group is currently looking at taking a country level approach, which leaves the concerns regarding regional working on a hold for the moment.

Morocco

An MFA Forum delegation including Levi Strauss, Inditex, ITGLWF and the Secretariat visited Morocco in December on the invitation of the Bi-Partite Committee of the ILO Decent Work Programme in the country. The delegation met the two key Ministries, Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training and Ministry of Trade and Industry, both mandated in the absence of the Ministers, and the Bi-Partite Committee.

The meetings went well with agreement for a number of next steps. Namely:

- the establishment of a local buyers group
- impact assessment on the AMITH's (Morocco's garment and textile trade association) code of conduct
- development of a common code within the context of continuous improvement of the AMITH code
- at a relevant time in the future, to hold a national conference

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The lack of NGO participants in the work in Morocco was questioned by an ExCo member. It was clear that this structure needs to be in place at the point of a national conference to ensure multi stakeholder representation.

Finally, it was requested that the Jo-In Code be translated into French to facilitate a wider understanding within Morocco. However the Secretariat does currently not have the skill to do this, but is looking at the possibilities to do so.

Actions

- ✓ The Secretariat continues discussion with Oxfam and ILO on NGO involvement within Morocco.

Responsible Closure

The Group is currently finalizing clear objectives for its work especially concerning the case studies it will be reviewing. There has been outreach to a number of key players who have done work in this area including the ILO, ITGLWF and BSR. The Secretariat has also sent out a request to the Forum to seek companies' policies, where they exist, on factory and country exits + if they have best practice to share. Once the group's objectives are agreed it hopes to set up a call for all interested parties to comment. The group will have one face to face meeting in US in March and then one face to face meeting at Toronto.

Actions

- ✓ Teleconference in mid- February for all interested parties
- ✓ Face to Face meeting in the US in March
- ✓ Face to Face meeting in Toronto prior to the Strategy and Planning meeting

5. NGO representative replacement on Executive Committee

The Chair presented the replacement for Duncan Pruett from Oxfam, Joyce Kortlandt on the Committee. It was emphasized that the shift was made due to the capacity and knowledge of Joyce Kortlandt who is better suited to play an active role on ExCo. As the ExCo is soon to be revised it was agreed that Joyce could be represented on the committee without a vote of the NGO caucus.

6. Election process for Executive Committee

The Committee discussed the commitment to revise the ExCo by the turn of the year 2006 - 2007. The chair laid out two options for how to proceed on the election process. It was suggested to start the process now and have a quick election process in Toronto in April. Depending on the group there are different ways to proceed on this,

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larger groups may want to wait to convene in Toronto, and smaller groups may want to begin discussion via mail exchange.

USAID and the ILO questioned what caucus they may fit into. Several suggestions came to the table on how to arrange this. It was agreed that having a donor caucus might not be the most efficient way to proceed on this. It was therefore suggested that USAID would stay on the executive committee as an active observer, meaning that they would be able to raise their voice and engage in the discussions on planning and strategy. It was clarified that the ILO falls within the international institutions group.

Actions

The Secretariat will send invitations to the caucuses to either begin the election process or decide to have the election in Toronto prior to the Strategy and Planning meeting.

7. Secretariat Financial Update

The Secretariat provided the participants with a financial update for the financial year 2006/2007.

- ✓ The total expenditure to date, US\$ 362,065
- ✓ Estimated total expenditure for the financial year 2006/2007 US\$ 471,810
- ✓ Budgeted for 2006/2007, US\$ 489,582
- ✓ Total estimated bottom-line in 31st March 2007, US\$ **17,772**

Bangladesh coming in on budget, Lesotho under budget and Core over budget.

- ✓ Budget secured for next financial year, US\$ 141,728 from USAID and Levi Strauss Foundation.

The secretariat is currently pitching for funding for the next financial year.

8. Toronto Strategy meeting 2007

The chair of ExCo started off by laying out the Secretariat's vision of the Toronto Convening coming up in Toronto. Lessons learned from the September meeting in London were that the participants needed more time for smaller group meetings and in their working groups. It was evident that time to network and create relationships and contacts were evident for the success of the convening. Furthermore it was perceived to be important to reach out to the media to get publicity on the event and on the Forum in general. For that purpose it was proposed that a group of Executive Committee members should be formed to deal with the media outreach.

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Regarding funding, the Secretariat is currently in discussion with IDRC and CIDA for funding of the Event. US\$ 10, 400 has already been secured from the USAID funds but if the two funding proposals are successful we will be able to cover most of the costs envisaged.

The Secretariat is currently working on preparation of the event with the MFAF participant and ExCo member MSN, who will be the local host in Toronto.

The partner, MSN, was then given the opportunity to comment. MSN expressed that they were excited about the convening in Toronto and were looking forward to having the event in the city. It was emphasized that that clear roles and responsibilities between MSN and the Secretariat were not yet in place. It was therefore suggested by the organization to get support from members of the Executive Committee to move forward with the process taking into consideration the relative short timeline.

It was agreed that MSN and the Secretariat would continue the preparation with support from ExCo members, where appropriate, for instance on content of the public event and on media outreach.

- 9. Next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for February the 27th at 7am PST / 10am EST / 3pm GMT / 4pm CET**

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