



Attendees:

Anita Househam (Secretariat)  
Anna Turrell (Secretariat)  
Anna Walker (Levi Strauss & Co.)  
Claire Bussy Pestalozzi (Secretariat)  
Caitlin Morris (Nike)  
Fiona Sadler (M&S)  
France Auer (ILO, on behalf of Johanna Walgrave)  
Joyce Kortlandt (Oxfam International)  
Judy Gearhart (SAI)  
Lynda Yanz (MSN)  
Sasha Radovich (Secretariat, Chair on behalf of Simon Zadek)

Apologies:

Neil Kearney (ITGLWF)  
Paul Dearman (Tesco)  
Simon Zadek (Secretariat)

The meeting does not have quorum.

## 1. Update Working Groups

### Americas

Dominican Republic - The working group delegation is scheduled to visit DR on the 14<sup>th</sup> April, responding to an invitation from the tripartite committee. SAI, ITGLWF and the FLA will be participating in the visit. NGOs are not represented in the tripartite committee, but seem to be kept in the loop.

Nicaragua - The government is in collaboration with BSR organizing a forum at the end of April, with invitations solely to companies. The ILO Better Work team has been invited by the government and will be making a country visit. The MFA Forum should find out more about the initiative.

Suggestion:

- There should be formal representation from the MFA Forum secretariat at the government-led forum in April.

Mexico - The group is working closely with the ITGLWF in addressing the current crisis in the textile industry. The group has also been invited by the Secretary of Economy to provide consultation on a special training and certification project it is developing.

The next working group meeting is scheduled to take place in Mexico 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> June.

The Secretariat will provide support for the next meeting to ensure NGO participation.

### Bangladesh

The buyer and multi-stakeholder groups are currently working on the agenda for the local roundtable scheduled to take place in Dhaka 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> May. Both the UNDP and the GTZ have been approached by the Secretariat to co-host the event, and will expect confirmation once the draft agenda has been provided.

The buyer group is also prepared to meet with the High Commission in London. The Secretariat will, with the group, develop a formal invitation and include the agenda to be sent to the High Commission as required.

Action:

- The Secretariat will send ExCo the May roundtable draft agenda

### Lesotho

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The Secretariat has arranged with the High Commission in London to host a meeting in London and Brussels with buyers and a Lesotho delegation including the Minister of Trade in the end of May. Dates are yet to be confirmed. ComMark has agreed to financially support the meetings. The Secretariat is working with the High Commission on managing expectations in light of these meetings and a potential country visit.

## Morocco

An in-country meeting was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> March with the biggest buyers including Inditex to discuss challenges in respect of social compliance and competition. Minutes from the meeting will be circulated. Joyce Kortlandt expressed concern that there had been no NGO representation during the meeting, not even via other stakeholders as agreed in the September 07 meeting. A statement was presented under the name of the Alliance (NGOs and trade unions), however it had not been signed by the 2 unions present in the meeting (UMT and CDT). It was however felt that it was not a matter for the ILO or Secretariat to decide whether the statement was to be presented, but rather a matter for the local NGO CDG (Centre de Droit des Gens) who represents the Alliance. There is currently no formal document stating that the CDG represents the Alliance. The Secretariat had communicated directly with Oxfam on this issue. These protocol issues should be raised at the next Morocco meeting.

Decision:

- Protocols for NGO representation needs to be agreed by the Morocco WG
- The ongoing issue of in-country NGO participation will need to be revisited during the next strategy meeting in New York September 2008.

## Romania

The in-country visit has been scheduled to take place on the 16<sup>th</sup> May, organized by the Ministry of Economy. There is still discussion on how to ensure employer representation, as there is no employers organization in the sector. The Secretariat reached out to the buyers on ExCo for participation, but the buyers would like to wait and see what the progress will be in the country.

## Responsible Transitions

The guidelines are currently being revised to incorporate the ILO comments into the final draft. The final draft will be circulated within a week.

The Group is exploring funding opportunities for a pilot project, focusing on payment of welfare benefits. The GTZ has been approached. Proposals from country working groups may be presented on the next RT call.

There is some concern that the guidelines have not yet been publicized. The Secretariat informs ExCo this is not possible until it gets final approval from the ILO. The ILO confirms that a final position on this will be given within a week.

Decisions

- Once the ILO has fed back its position, the Guidelines will be posted on the MFA Forum website.

## Purchasing Practices

The Secretariat is working on the final gathering of key work on purchasing practices carried out by other companies/organizations. The results will be made available online and the issue will be revisited in the next international convening to decide whether a purchasing practices working group should be established.

- Once finalized, the Secretariat will circulate the matrix to the Forum and organize a call to discuss next steps

## 2. MFA Forum participation

### Donors as ExCo observers

Following DFID's funding agreement, the MFA Forum will need to revisit the discussion on whether a donor caucus is appropriate for the ExCo and if so, if this caucus is part of the government caucus that

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was suggested/instigated per the London '06 meeting and per the participant categories as outlined in the Collaborative Framework. A final decision on this issue can only be made during the strategy and planning meeting scheduled for September in New York.

It is suggested that the Forum holds separate ExCo/donor meetings a few times a year.

Decisions:

- A background paper will be prepared by the Secretariat and ExCo to be presented at the next international convening introducing the option of 2 new caucuses; donors and government.
- Until a decision is made in the next strategy and planning meeting, DFID will be invited to observe as government, as previously agreed at the IC September 2006, on ExCo calls.

## 3. Review of MFA Forum's role

### In the context of labour standards in Bangladesh

Following the Bangladesh buyer group's response to the arrest of an NGO investigator, there have been requests from participants that the Forum is more proactive in this kind of work. ExCo will have to consider whether the Forum should be involved in this kind of work, and/or whether ExCo would need to sign off on such activities. It is suggested that the Forum does circulate more information on issues arising in the sector, and create a framework on how to deal with it.

Decision:

- When appropriate, and on an ad hoc basis, working groups can act on requests. However the Forum will not actively seek out these issues.

## 3. Financial & Fundraising Update

### Fundraising

Following the Secretariat's efforts to raise funds from business participants, we have received some level of funding from the major players, bar Wal Mart, Inditex and M&S. The Secretariat is currently following up with them. Fiona Sadler from M&S informs ExCo that funding is on its way.

Funding has been secured from DFID. Funding discussions are still ongoing with SIDA, USAID and GTZ, although the latter will only be on a modest level, and only in direct programme areas. The level of security on SIDA funding has been lowered due to internal issues, but the Secretariat is following up on this.

Anna Walker kindly offers to advocate for the Forum during her visit to Washington DC in May, with the Secretariat's support.

Action:

- The Secretariat (Sasha Radovich) will follow up with Anna Walker on USAID presentation
- The Secretariat will contact WalMart and Inditex for feedback.

## 3. AOB

### International Convening

In response to the Secretariat's proposal to hold the next international convening on 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> September in New York, some concern was raised by participants that Ramadan would inconvenience the event. The USA and Europe are on holiday in August, and Eid occurs during the first 2 weeks of October. It is considered that these two events will cause a higher level of disruption than Ramadan. The ExCo is also reminded that it was Ramadan during the September 07 convening, with no known disruption.

Decision:

- The next international convening will take place on the 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> September in New York

### Secretariat

Staffing announcement - Anita Househam is leaving her post as MFA Forum co-ordinator to pursue new opportunities. Anna Turrell and Claire Bussy Pestalozzi are welcomed onboard the Secretariat.

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## Next ExCo teleconference

Suggested time and date: 7<sup>th</sup> May 3:30 - 5 pm GMT / 4:30 - 6pm CET / 7:30 - 9 am PST / 10:30 - noon EST