



Meeting of the Morocco Working Group

MFA International Convening London

Nov. 3, 2009, 1.45pm - 3.00pm

Meeting Minutes

Participants of the Meeting:

Abdellah Hassiane (UGTM Morocco)
Maria Belgnaoui (AMITH)
Rhamiri Khadija (UMT)
Steven Oates (ILO)
Aleix Gonzalez-Busquets (Inditex)
Nadia Akka Noureddine (Inditex)
Xavier Carbonell (Mango)
Beatriz Bayo (Mango)
Rebecca Loyo Mayo (Burberry)
Tuze Mekik (Burberry)
Adil Rehman (Next Plc)
Bernice Leppard (Next Plc)
Ingrid Caceres (Disney)

Translation was provided to the non-English speakers

Agenda of the Meeting, Chair: Aleix Gonzalez-Busquets, Inditex

- 13.00 - 13.20 Morocco Working Group update - Including plans for Better Work roll-out
- 13.20 - 13.45 Use of remaining MFA Forum funds - Additional capacity building measures?
- 13.45 - 14.10 Input to ILO Better Work - Organizing a buyers' forum to present BW to European buyers?
- 14:10 - 14.25 Timing of Better Work - Coordination of the transition period
- 14.25 - 14.30 Any Other Business
- 14.30 Close of Meeting

Aleix opened the meeting by welcoming everybody. He apologized that the chair of the Morocco working group, Libby Annat from M&S is not present at the meeting.



He explained that Libby is currently on her honeymoon and therefore he is acting as the chair of the group on her behalf. Aleix pointed out that there is only little time to discuss the next steps but for the continuation of the MFAF's work in Morocco but it would be essential to develop a clear work plan and define concrete actions to ensure the continuation of the MFAF's engagement beyond the planned review of the working groups in mid-2010. He then asked Dorothee to introduce the agenda for the meeting.

Dorothee covered the first agenda point by providing an update of her conversations with the ILO:

- Better Work (BW) is planned to be launched in Morocco and the feasibility study for BW is currently underway. An essential element of the feasibility study is the buyers mapping for Morocco. The ILO has commissioned Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) to conduct this mapping and the MFA secretariat is in touch with BSR to contribute to this exercise.
- An in-country manager was hired by the MFAF (Neama) to conduct the planned capacity building measures for the bipartite committee.
- The ILO commissioned a study about the impact of the economic crisis on Morocco's T&A industry. The final version will be shared with the MFAF.

Tuze asked about the specifics of Naema's contract. Aleix provided some background information on the history of the Morocco working group. He explained that as the MFAF started its work in Morocco in 2006, the stakeholders agreed to work on establishing a sustainable social dialogue between workers and employers. Therefore, a bipartite committee was formed and training of the bipartite committee was planned for November 2009. Due to a scheduling conflict with an EU event, the training had to be postponed to January 2010.

Abdellah pointed out that although the bipartite committee is unique in Morocco, the feedback was not all positive. He explained that the committee has not yet done much work and further support would be necessary to improve its functioning.

Tuze also wanted to know why, according to the assessment tool, there is a poor flow of information between the international and the local level. Dorothee explained that she had taken on this job in September and between May and September the MFAF had no country program manager. As a result, the communication with local actors in Morocco had broken down over the summer. In addition, the communication with the in-country coordinator had been difficult due to the fact that Neama is currently busy working for the ILO's standard department, for ILO's BW program and the MFAF. Dorothee said that she will coordinate with the ILO how to prioritize Neama's work over the next few months.

Bernice asked why the ILO and BSR were not invited to the meeting. Dorothee explained that BSR meant to send someone but the person cancelled last minute. BSR's mapping study is not completed yet and Dorothee will meet with BSR next week to discuss the potential MFAF input to this exercise. The ILO BW team offered to present BW to the MFAF buyers as soon as the feasibility study is completed. Bernice requested the MFAF to streamline its communication with buyers by focussing on decision points. Dorothee explained that reporting on the process would be equally important to the MFAF.



Maria thanked everybody for coming and explained that the MFAF had been very important for the CSR work in Morocco. She reported that the MFAF helped to form the bipartite committee. She said that Fibre Citoyenne (FC) was a huge investment and it was set up to meet the expectations of international buyers. Maria argues that before introducing BW, the MFAF should ensure that the FC project is properly implemented. Rhamiri agreed with Maria, pointing out that the problems of workers have not been adequately addressed as there is still no recognition of union work in Morocco. Aleix responded by pointing out that the MFAF supported the FC due to its legitimacy in-country. The FC would meet local laws but not international standards. For this reason, the FC is just a step towards BW that is based on international standards.

Maria also asked how SAFI will feature in the future work of the MFAF in Morocco. Dorothee explained that this is up to the group to decide. Maria also wanted to know if there are any alternative plans to the Better Work program in case the feasibility study has a negative result. Dorothee explained that the MFAF has only focused on BW because it is rather unlikely that BW cannot be launched in Morocco. The objective of the feasibility study would not just be to decide whether or not BW is suitable for Morocco but also how it can be best implemented in a given context.

All the participants pointed out that the informal sector in Morocco remains an issue that the group should address. The buyers said that it would be difficult to control illegal subcontracting but they would undertake extra precautionary measures. Aleix from Inditex argued that illegal subcontracting might still happen despite of the extra efforts. Adil pointed out that illegal subcontracting would be a risk in Morocco but the risk would not be higher than in Turkey or India, which are bigger sourcing countries for Next.

Abdullah said that it would also be important that buyers ensure that the workers have social security.

Dorothee summarized the discussion and suggested the following plan of action:

Immediate next steps:

1. On a local level, the MFAF will, after the training of the bipartite committee in January, conduct an assessment to ensure that the bipartite committee is fully consolidated.
2. On an international level, the group will get back to the ILO to confirm that the MFAF's buyers are interested in a specific BW presentation on the ILO's plans for Morocco.

Longer-term:

3. Collaboratively address the risk of illegal subcontracting in Morocco

The group endorsed these points.

Aleix closed the meeting and he and Dorothee thanked the participants for their participation.