



Letter to the Government of Bangladesh from the below-signed MFA Forum

His Excellency Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed
Chief Advisor, Caretaker Government of Bangladesh
Chief Advisor's Office
Tejgaon
Dhaka - Bangladesh

September 5th 2008

Your Excellency Dr. Ahmed

We want to share with you the outcome of the 28-29th June convening of the MFA Forum in Dhaka and two areas of concern where leadership and support by the Government of Bangladesh are essential for the sustainability of the garment industry.

The MFA Forum is an open network of buyers, suppliers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, international institutions and multi-stakeholder initiatives that is building collaboration for sustainability in the textile and garments industry worldwide by promoting responsible competitiveness.

The roundtable meeting concentrated on three key elements;

- purchasing practices
- labour conditions, and
- the macro-economic environment facing the RMG industry in Bangladesh

Participants reached consensus for future action on the following points:

- skill enhancement of workers is required
- stable and trusting relationships between suppliers and buyers are essential
- trade unions have a positive and responsible role to play and that freedom of association should be resumed and respected
- wages need review as soon as possible and the buyers recognize that an increase in minimum wages will have to be incorporated into the prices paid by the buyers
- to sustain Responsible Competitiveness, the industry would like to understand the Government's plans for improving the industrial infrastructure, for example: power supplies, transportation, ports and environmental protection.

We were sorry we missed the opportunity of having a government representative attend all the meetings and contribute to the discussion. The MFA Forum and its buyers group recognise that we need to work together to address the above points of consensus, and that it is essential to have government commitment through its active engagement. In particular, there are two major areas of concern where leadership and support by the Government of Bangladesh are essential for the sustainability of the garment industry:

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International buyers require freedom of association as part of their ethical compliance codes. These requirements are directly related to the core conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) that were ratified by Bangladesh in 1972. The MFA Forum calls upon the Government of Bangladesh to lift the restrictions on trade union activity invoked by the emergency power ordinance and to establish and implement a framework for mature industrial relations based on tripartite agreements, ILO conventions and national labour laws. This will benefit the RMG industry and enhance its reputation.

The MFA Forum is also concerned about the increasing cost of living due to inflation and increased price of basic foods. The MFA Forum calls upon the Government of Bangladesh to urgently convene the Minimum Wage Board and to introduce an annual review of the legal minimum wage levels.

We hope you will take these concerns into consideration and address them as soon as possible. We welcome a further discussion with you on these issues and look forward to your participation in future convenings. If you have any questions, please contact the MFA Forum Secretariat, contact information is below.

Yours sincerely,

The MFA Forum Participants:

