

The Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina  
Prime Minister's Office  
Old Sangsad Bhaban, Tejgaon Dhaka-1215  
Bangladesh

Brussels, 13 October, 2021

Your Excellency,

At the onset I would like to recognize that amfori has had an open and frank dialogue with Bangladesh over the years, and with your government in particular. amfori believes that trade can make a major difference for Bangladesh's sustainable development agenda, and we genuinely appreciate the progress made to date. In particular, we welcome the National Action Plan on the Labour Sector as it sets up extensive improvements in the labour sector – and I especially applaud your intention to ratify the ILO Convention on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (No.138) by the end of this year.

That said, I also have to express my disappointment that within the National Action Plan the deadline to eliminate all forms of child labour has been set at 2025. Although I realise this is a sensitive and complex issue for your country, it is also one that raises particular concern within the EU. Therefore, any shortening of this deadline would be welcomed. Similarly, I note that labour reforms within the EPZs are not due to be completed until mid-2025. This is one area where the EU has been particularly critical – so a more rapid implementation would address those criticisms.

As an organization with close ties to your country, I trust I do not need to inform you too extensively about our organization. However, allow me to say that amfori represents almost 2,500 retailers, importers and brand-name companies from more than 40 countries with a combined turnover of more than one trillion Euro. We offer our members trade, social and environment services to improve the resilience and sustainability of their global supply chains. Many of those members source ready-made garments from your country, attracted by the competitive prices, and preferential duty rates.

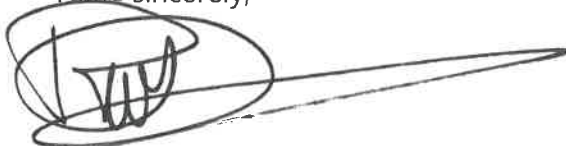
An important principle of our work is that our members source from countries that offer workers their full rights and proper working conditions. That is why we support the condition within the EU's GSP Regulation that EBA countries such as Bangladesh must adhere to the principles laid down in the 15 core ILO/UN conventions. It is also why we support the principle of mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence – and likely the EU legislation that is due to arrive in the near future. This legislation will cause EU companies to place far greater scrutiny regarding social conditions when deciding whether to partner with typical sourcing countries. Therefore, it is critical that Bangladesh enact these reforms.

We were very concerned with the report the European Commission and European External Action Service delivered at the end of 2019 on various shortcomings related to workers' rights. At the time we voiced our concerns and urged progress on the 'roadmap' the Commission produced that listed the changes needed. Tragically, shortly afterwards the world was hit by the covid-19 pandemic – and your country was no exception – and understandably any substantial progress was delayed.

Therefore, I would very much appreciate if you were to issue regular progress reports throughout the implementation of the NAP. Not only would it help us to stay informed about these important reforms, but I am also certain that it would be appreciated by the European Commission, and in particular the European Parliament.

I hope that our input is appreciated in the spirit it is intended; to foster dialogue and rapid progress, that will open new opportunities for Bangladesh and its people, and I am looking forward to further dialogue and partnership with you and your government.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Richard Dictus', enclosed within a circular scribble. A long, thin horizontal line extends from the right side of the signature.

Richard Dictus  
amfori President