



His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Shahdat Hossain
Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
29 Rue Jacques Jordaens
1000 Brussels

18 January 2019

Excellency Mr. Mohammed Shahdat Hossain,

On behalf of our organisations, we write to express our concerns about key matters of interest for ready-made-garment workers in Bangladesh and consequently for Belgian retail workers and consumers buying and purchasing the clothes they make.

First, we urge the government of Bangladesh to allow the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh to fully and independently continue operations in Bangladesh for the duration of the private contract. This contract remains binding upon the 192 signatory brands until 2021, or until the government's Remediation and Coordination Cell (RCC) is demonstrably ready. There is broad consensus that the latter is not yet the case.

The Accord has been instrumental in radically improving the safety of garment factories in Bangladesh since it was established in the wake of the Rana Plaza factory collapse in 2013 that claimed over a thousand lives. The Accord has identified more than 100,000 fire, building, and electrical hazards and the large majority have been rectified. Over two million workers have participated in safety training in

over 1,000 factories. Despite this progress, the work is not yet completed and dangers remain as over 50 percent of the factories still lack adequate fire alarm and detection systems and 40 percent are currently completing structural renovations. Therefore, it is critical that the Accord be allowed to continue its important and life-saving work.

Second, we would like to reiterate that the new monthly minimum wage announced last year, 8,000 taka for the lowest pay grade, amounts to a poverty wage that comes nowhere near the workers' unified demands or established living wage calculations. To add insult to injury, the new minimum wage revision, as implemented starting in December 2018, has only benefited a minority of garment workers, whereas most pay grades continue to receive an almost unchanged low base wage on which their overtime payments and other bonuses will be calculated. We will continue to decry poverty wages in the Bangladeshi garment industry and urge the government to take action upon these workers' grievances.

Third, we are shocked and outraged by the violence carried out by Bangladesh's police and other security forces in response to garment worker protests, which has resulted in the injury of dozens of demonstrators and the death of one garment worker. These protests and the ensuing repression do not stand alone. The protests are taking place against the background of the unresolved Ashulia crisis of 2016 and a generally dire situation for freedom of association in the country. In 2016, wage protests in Ashulia led to a week-long shutdown of dozens of factories, over 1,500 workers being sacked, about 30 workers and union leaders being arrested and roughly 50 union leaders going into hiding. Many union representatives still have outstanding charges against them, which leaves them at constant risk of arrest.

We urge the government of Bangladesh to respect workers' right to peaceful assembly and demonstration, and to respect the freedom of association.

As part of a week of solidarity with garment workers in Bangladesh in multiple countries in the week of 28 January, we would like to underscore our concerns and will present ourselves in front of the Embassy in Brussels on 31 January at 12h30.

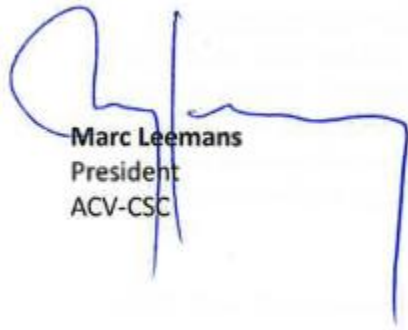
Sincerely yours,




Sara Ceustermans
Coordinator
Schone Kleren Campagne



Carole Crabbé
General Secretary
achACT – Actions Consommateurs Travailleurs



Marc Leemans
President
ACV-CSC




Robert Verteneuil
President
ABVV-FGTB



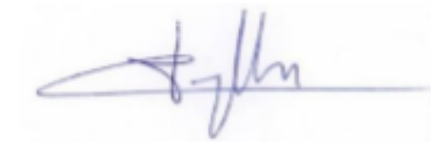
Pierre Santacatterina
General Director
OXFAM-Magasins du
monde



Andre Kiekens
General Secretary
WSM



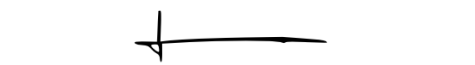
Annuschka Vandewalle
General Secretary
FOS



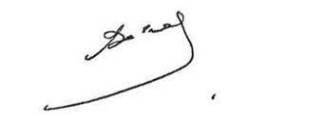
Elie Verplancken
Federal Secretary
ABVV-FGTB Algemene Centrale



Vinciane Mortier
General Secretary
ACV-CSC Metea



Ben Vanpeperstraete
Lobby and Advocacy Coordinator
Clean Clothes Campaign International



Myriam Delmée
Vice Président SETCa/BBTK
SETCa-BBTK



Delphine Latawiec
National Secretary
CNE



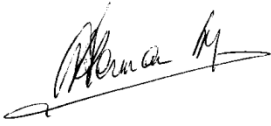
Jean-Philippe Ducart
Manager Public Affairs
& Media Relations
Test-Achats, Test Aankoop



Ariane Estenne
President
MOC



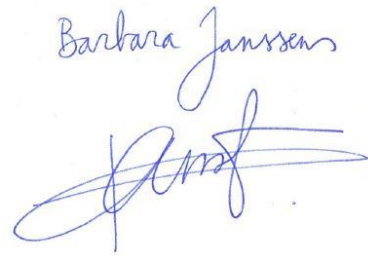
Bauraind Bruno
Secrétaire Général
Bruno Bauraind
General Secretary
Gresea



Daisy HERMAN
General Secretary
ACRF



Marcela de la Peña Valdivia
Coordinator
Marche mondiale des femmes



Barbara Janssens
Coordinator
Netwerk Bewust Verbruiken