

## PRESS RELEASE

### Workers demand fire, building safety accord for Pakistani textile factories

KARACHI, April 25, 2019: The representatives of trade unions, federations and labour supporting organisations at a consultation meeting on 'Fire and Building Safety in Pakistan Garment and Textile Sector' here on Thursday agreed to have a "Pakistan Accord" for workers' safety with support of international brands on the similar pattern of Bangladesh Accord, which was being successfully implemented since 2013.

The consultation meeting jointly organised by the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education & Research (PILER), the National Trade Union Federation of Pakistan (UNTF) and the Labour Education Foundation (LEF) at PILER Centre, was also attended by trade unions representing workers in the textile and garment sector and labour supporting organisations.

This meeting was a follow up meeting of the same groups held here on 13-14 September 2018 in which the groups unanimously agreed on the need for brands to sign a Pakistan Accord.

In Bangladesh, after the Rana Plaza building collapse on 24 April 2013 over 1,100 workers lost their lives and after that deadly incident apparel brands had signed a legally-binding Accord, which has improved fire, electrical, and structural safety in more than 1,600 factories. The 193 brands in the Bangladesh Accord include the majority of the global brands buying garments from Pakistan.

In Karachi there was the fire at Ali Enterprises garments manufacturing factory on 11 September 2012, which was producing garments for the German brand KiK. However, a prevention programme with the apparel/textile brands whose clothes the factories produce has not yet been developed to prevent future tragedies. And, in fact, more than 100 workers have also died in other garment/textile fires and building collapses in Pakistan since the Ali Enterprises factory fire.

The participants said they believe that an Accord in Pakistan will help improve safety for garment/textile workers and attract sustainable investment from international apparel brands, which all have policies requiring safe and decent working conditions.

They recommended the key components of the Pakistan Accord should include all the key components of the Bangladesh Accord, with the additional of several elements that are important for garment/textile workers in Pakistan. The Accord should be negotiated and signed directly by genuine union federations that represent garment/textile workers and brands, with NGOs as witness signatories, and equal or majority participation from unions in program governance.

They said the Accord should be statutory and legally binding, transparent and enforceable both globally and in Pakistan; cover all main aspects of factory building safety, including fire, electrical, structural, boiler, gas, and chemical safety, and potable drinking water and hygienic toilet facilities – all through a program of independent inspections by qualified engineers, with corrective action plans and follow-up inspections.

The Pakistan Accord requires establishment of safety committees, with genuine representative union participation, and trainings provided for the committee members; entail mandatory safety trainings for all employees in a factory; maintain a worker complaint mechanism covering all legally required wage

standards, workers' rights and women's rights, and that complaints be investigated, with option of judicial review.

They recommended that the Accord should protect workers' right to refuse dangerous work and to exercise the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining; and ensure provision of employment letters to all workers and register all employees with the Social Security institutions.

They suggested to have a cooperation agreement with the National and Provincial Government authorities.

The labor leaders and civil society organizations representing workers in Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, and Balochistan urged the international apparel and textile brands to agree to a Pakistan Accord before the next fire or building collapse happens. Any further delay will only result in the further loss of workers' lives. The group believes that there should also be an effective program developed to improve respect for legally-guaranteed workers' rights, including occupational health and safety, in garment/textile factories that are not in the supply chains of the Accord signatory brands.

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