

ETI Conference 2005

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Thank you Master of Ceremonies, UK and International brands, retailers and their suppliers, NGOs on labour rights issues, trade union organizations, government representatives, relevant institutions, socially Responsible practitioners and relevant trade associations.

MC, LECAWU is honoured to speak at the opening plenary session of ETI, Let me express my gratitude to the ETI for inviting LECAWU for the Conference that has a theme of the plenary session is "putting workers centre stage" and is aimed at convincing brands , retailers and suppliers that their codes need to be implemented in such away that workers are given an active role in shaping better working conditions for themselves and this involves actively promoting freedom of association and measures such as educating workers about their rights.

LECAWU first started engaging brand, retailers and suppliers in September 2001 through the Ethical Trading Action Group (ETAG), ETAG members include the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE), and the Maquila Solidarity Network, which acts as the ETAG secretariat.

ETAG receives two reports on labour rights violations in Lesotho's garment industry.

The first report, by the Dutch Centre for Research on Multi-national Corporations (SOMO) and the South African Trade Union Research Project (TURP),

A second report, by the Lesotho Department of Labour, Lesotho National Development Co-operation and the Lesotho Clothing and Allied Workers Union (LECAWU) confirms most of those findings.

The General Secretary of LECAWU was invited by UNITE to US where he was able to meet with Hudson Bay Company in Canada and addressed the US Congress senate's.

In July 2002 Nien Hsing and C&Y Garments signed the Memorandum of Understanding

In November, 2002 three LECAWU delegates were in New York for the demonstrations/picketing at GAP shops in Manhattan, New York that was attended by workers representatives from Indonesia, Mexico and El Salvador. UNITE was negotiating with GAP on behalf of this countries.

From that campaign, GAP has had direct relations with LECAWU whereby, GAP monitors consult LECAWU at all times they visit the factories in Lesotho.

There had been Stakeholders meeting in Lesotho and Durban Republic of South Africa respectively whereby GAP re-affirm its commitment to source from Lesotho.

- It is LECAWU's view that it is critical for retailers and brands sourcing from Lesotho to actively support FOA and CB is for the simple reason that the

Investors in the Industry are in the Business to maximize profit's and therefore, issue of the ILO principles becomes of secondary nature.

The freedom of association is principle that is enshrined in the Constitution of Lesotho and the labour law but the government lacks political will, inefficiency, and with pressure from investors, have ignored their responsibility to nurture fundamental rights.

Lesotho has ratified the ILO convention 87 on the Right to organise and bargain collectively.

The codes can promote collective bargaining by providing explicit provisions on the right of workers to form and join unions and to bargain collectively.

We therefore hope that the brands and retailers codes should not be just public relations exercises, but a handle that workers and their representatives can use to help enforce their rights, as part of the mechanism of normal industrial relations.

- As an example of good practice at factory level;
 - Clear rules and regulations that are known to the workers,
 - Clear disciplinary and grievance procedures that are consistently applied,
 - Industrial relations that are workers friendly
 - Abiding by External tribunal decisions,
 - Compliance with the labour laws and codes of conduct

Precious garments and its sister company P&T Textile have good industrial relations with LECAWU and have full-time shop stewards. The communication level is of a very level as the Managerial positions are occupied indigenous people that is from the General Manager, Production manager and Supervisors these facilitates downwards/upwards communication.

We therefore, recommend that compliance should be encouraged, by increasing the volume of orders as an incentive.

- In conclusion, the international brands and retailers can improve FOA and CB by doing the following;

-Amongst the many brands and retailers in Lesotho, namely:- GAP, Wal-Mart, K-mart, Levi's, Calvin Klein, Target, Hudson Bay etc. the list is exhaustive. LECAWU has had engagement with only GAP and Levi's through their Monitors who have Offices in Durban Republic South Africa, we therefore would like to see other brands and retailers engage with the union through their Monitors.

1. All personnel to undergo training to understand the code and its implication, to ensure its effective application and monitoring.
2. Monitoring methods should be transparent, documented and effectively communicated to management, workforce and stakeholders,
3. The verification process should include discussion with management, trade unions and workforce, examination of company data and observation of the company.
4. An agency should be established to coordinate appeals and complaints procedure, would oversee the performance and review the activities on regular basis.
5. The codes should make provisions for periodic impact analysis which will reveal the weaknesses and strengths, and pave the way for further improvements in effectiveness.
6. All brands and retailers Monitors should consult trade union officials and shop stewards prior and post inspections of suppliers, to factory visits,
7. Monitor compliance by interviewing Shop stewards and workers on the workplace/spot,
8. To monitor the target and consult workers on the spot
9. We further recommend that the brands and retailers to Increase the volume of their order's to complying suppliers.

MC, I thank everybody for your attention.