

ETI pledges help to promote labour standards in Bangladesh *Bangladesh Financial Express*

7/4/2005

A top leader of the International Textiles Garments and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF) urged the global brands and retailers to ensure that their purchasing practices do not undermine Bangladeshi suppliers' ability to comply with international labour standards, reports BDNEWS.

"They (global brands and retailers) must begin to pay a reasonable price for the items they produce here and allow them to deliver those in a realistic timeframe," said Neil Kearney, Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) board director and general secretary of the ITGLWF.

He said there appears to be a clear national consensus that the survival of the Bangladeshi garment and textile industry would partly depend on its compliance with international labour standards.

Kearney's comment came following a two-day UNDP-MFA Forum Conference in Dhaka titled "Textiles and Garments: Forum on the Future" on June 27 and 28 to discuss actions on issues that Bangladesh is likely to face in a post-quota world.

In the conference, officials of the Bangladesh Ministry of Commerce pledged to work with various professional organisations to carry out urgent actions aimed at improving the textile and garment industry's compliance with national law and with international labour standards.

The government is committed to expanding the brief of the newly formed National Forum on Social Compliance - a body entrusted with improving working conditions in the textiles and garments industry - to include not only government and textile and garment manufacturers, but also trade unions, NGOs, global brands and retailers and UN agencies, the World Bank (WB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

"The launch of this forum and its timing are both incredibly important," said ETI Chair Alan Roberts. "Up to a million jobs in Bangladesh's textiles and garments industry are under threat as global brands and retailers relocate their sourcing to lower-cost countries like China and India," he added.

ETI members Gap Inc, Marks & Spencer, the Co-op, Levi Strauss and Asda/George have all pledged their support to the new National Forum on Social Compliance, which will aim to promote compliance with international labour standards while fears of large-scale job losses and downward pressures on working conditions prevail.