

SOCIAL COMPLIANCE



round table
গোল টেবিল বৈঠক

Eleventh Bangladesh Round Table on Social Compliance

14th March 2013

Ruposhi Bangla Hotel, Ballroom, Dhaka

Documentation



Conveyor



lorenz.berzau@bsci-eu.org

Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI)

Mr. Lorenz Berzau

Av. de Cortenbergh, 172

1000 Brussels
Belgium

Organizer & Facilitator



LIFT Standards e.K.

mitzlaff@lift-standards.de

LIFT Standards e.K.

Mr. Christian von Mitzlaff

Krampasplatz 4A

14199 Berlin
Germany

BSCI is a leading system aiming at improving social compliance in the supply chain of companies sourcing globally. Created in 2003 and with headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, the BSCI provides its member companies a uniform methodology and tools to involve their suppliers in a continuous development oriented process. In addition to this, the dialogue with stakeholders on different levels plays an important role in BSCI's approach.

LIFT Standards e.K. is a consultancy firm providing advisory service on social compliance with audit, remediation and enhanced productivity service to improve the working conditions.

LIFT Standards has been established 2001 in Dhaka and has a proven record to intensively worked in Bangladesh with suppliers and buyers in the interest of improved working conditions.

Table of Contents

I. PARTICIPANTS LIST	4
II. SYNOPSIS	7
III. AGENDA	12
“STRATEGIES TO REDUCE FIRE RISKS IN THE BANGLADESH GARMENTS INDUSTRIES.”	12
IV. ADDRESS DURING THE OPENING SESSION	13
BRIG. GEN. ALI AHMED KHAN, D.G. FIRE SERVICE & CIVIL DEFENCE DIRECTORATE	14
DR. WAJED UL ISLAM KHAN, GENERAL SECRETARY, BTUC	16
MS. LIBUSE SOUKUPOVA, 2 ND SECRETARY, EU DELEGATION TO BANGLADESH	18
MR. MIKAIL SHIPAR, SECRETARY, MOLE	19
MR. FAIZUR RAHMAN, JOINT SECRETARY, MOLE	22
MR. MANJUR MORSHED, SR. SOCIAL COMPLIANCE ADVISOR, GIZ (PSES)	24
OPEN FLOOR DIALOGUE	26
V. SECOND SESSION	
CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT ON FIRE PREVENTION & ELECTRICAL SAFETY BY PVH CORPORATION	30
FACTORY EXAMPLE FIRE SAFETY APPROACH BY HA-MEEM GROUP	32
FIRE INSURANCE BY SADHARAN BIMA CORPORATION	35
OPEN FLOOR DIALOGUE	37
VI. PICTORIALS	55
VII. MEDIA COVERAGE	57
THE DAILY STAR	57
BD NEWS24.COM	58
DAILY SAMAKAL	59
DAILY KALER KANTHA	60

I. Participants List

Name	Organisation	Position
Mikail Shipar	Ministry of Labour & Employment, Bangladesh	Secretary
Faizur Rahman	Ministry of Labour & Employment, Bangladesh	Joint Secretary
Mostan Hossain	Ministry of Labour & Employment, Bangladesh	Deputy Secretary (Planning)
Md. Aminul Islam	Ministry of Labour & Employment, Bangladesh	Deputy Secretary (Labour)
Md. Golam Azam	Ministry of Labour & Employment, Bangladesh	Sr. Assistant Secretary
Brig. Gen. Ali Ahmed Khan, psc	Fire Service and Civil Defence Directorate, Bangladesh	Director General
Major Mohammad Mahboob	Fire Service and Civil Defence Directorate, Bangladesh	Director (Operation & Maintenance)
Md. Nazim Uddin	Sadharan Bima Corporation	Manager
Veronica Rubio	BSCI	Senior Manager – Strategic Issues
Sabine Van Depoele	BSCI	Stakeholder Relations Manager
Oscar de Frias	El Corte Ingles S.A., Liaison Office Bangladesh	General Manager
Johan stellansson	H&M Puls Trading Far East Ltd. Bangladesh Liaison Office	Relations Responsible (Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Srilanka)
Neelanjana Khan	Hennes & Mauritz AB	CSR Project Coordinator
Mehbub Hossain	PVH Corporation	Senior Compliance Officer
Michael Reim	JCK/G.Gueldenpfennig GmbH, Bangladesh	Compliance Manager
Najmeen Akhter	G.Gueldenpfenig GmbH, Bangladesh	Senior Compliance Executive
Enam Chowdhury	Esprit de Corps (Far East) Ltd. – Bangladesh office	Senior Compliance Officer
Farhana Faruk	Axstores Far East Ltd. Bangladesh office	Admin & Audit Officer
Nazrul Islam	MQ Retail AB, Dhaka Liaison Office	Country Manager
Hasan-uz-Zaman	Target Sourcing Services	Sr. Social Compliance Auditor – Bangladesh and Pakistan
Marufur Rahman	M.A.Y Trading UK Ltd.	Agent for MAY Trading
Aimee Kirkpatrick	M.A.Y Trading UK Ltd.	Merchandiser
Firoz Mahmud	HEMA Far East Ltd.	Compliance Auditor
Md. Niomoul Islam	TOM TAILOR Sourcing	Manager Compliance

Iffat Sharmin	Lindex Bangladesh Liasion Office AB	CSR Responsible – Bangladesh and Pakistan
S.M. Shoeb	KappAhl (Far East) Ltd.	Sr. Compliance Officer
Rafia Sultana	KappAhl (Far East) Ltd.	Sr. Compliance Officer
Khairul Basher	Ha-Meem Group	Director - Compliance
Brig. Gen. (Retd) M.A. Mondol	Ha-Meem Group	Executive Director
Hasan Mahmud	Bitopi Group	Executive Director
Aminur Rahman	French Fashions Ltd.	GM
Md. Ferdous	AKM Knit Wear Ltd.	GM – HR & Compliance
Kowsar Uddin Chowdhury	DEKKO Group	GM – HR & Compliance
Q.H.M. Shamsuzzaman	Viyellatex Ltd.	Manager - HR
Md. Eakub Ali	SQ Group	Sr. GM (Compliance and Legal Affairs)
Humayan Mostaque	SQ Group	Deputy General Manager (Operation)
Awolad Hossain Khan	FCI (BD) Group	Asst. Manager – Human Resource
Md. Quaimul Islam	Dekko Apparels Ltd.	Manager – Social Compliance
M. Wahid-uz-Zaman	Pioneer Group	Manager – HR & Compliance
Salimul Ghaus Sohan	GoldTex Garments Ltd.	Manager (HRD & Compliance)
Mohammad Shakhawat Hossain	Tosrifa Industries Ltd.	Deputy Manager – Admin & Compliance
Meer Abdus Salam	Arabi Fashion Ltd.	Deputy Manager
Md. Shofikul	Shanta Industries Ltd.	Manager – Compliance
Uttam Kumar Sarkar	M&J Group	Manager - Compliance
Qazi M. Ashraf	Tiffany's Wear Ltd.	Manager - Admin
Mahbubur Rahman	Four Wings Ltd.	Sr. Admin Officer
Abul Bashar	Sonia Group	Manager (HR & Compliance)
Mosharraf Ali		Consultant
Libuse Soukupova	EU Delagation to Bangladesh	Second Secretary
Fatima Yasmin	EU Delagation to Bangladesh	Economic Advisor

Zillul Hye Razi	EU Delagation to Bangladesh	Trade Advisor
Bjorn Meusel	Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany	Officer Economic Divison & Deputy Economic Cooperation
Dr. Zia Rahman	Dhaka University	Associate Professor – Sociology, Moderator
Md. Manjur Morshed	GIZ (PSES)	Sr. Social Compliance Advisor
Martin Dietschi	Swisscontact – South Asia Regional office (SARO)	Project Manager, Supplier Qualification Project
Lejo Sibbel	ILO	Sr. Design Advisor, Better Work
Saidul Islam	ILO Dhaka Office	P.O
Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmmed	Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies	Asst. Executive Director
Alonzo Glenn Suson	American Center for International Labour Solidarity	Country Program Director
A.K.M. Nasim	American Center for International Labour Solidarity	Sr. Legal Counselor
Kalpona Akter	BCWS	Executive Director
Adv. Farida Yesmin	Bangladesh Supreme Court	Advocate
Dr. Wajed-ul Islam Khan	Bangladesh Trade Union Centre (BTUC)	General Secretary
Md. Towhidur Rahman	Bangladesh Apparels Workers Federation (BAWF)	President
Sirajul Islam Rony	Bangladesh National Garment Workers Employees League (BNGWEL)	President
Abdur Rahim	Solidaridad	Sr. Program Officer
Md. Borkot Ali	BLAST	Assistant Director (Legal)
Christian von Mitzlaff	Round Table	Organizer
Farhana von Mitzlaff	LIFT Standards e.K.	Media Advisor and Photograprer

II. Synopsis

11th Bangladesh Round Table on Social Compliance

-Synopsis -

Agenda of the 11th Round Table on Social Compliance,
held on 14 March at Dhaka has been titled:

“Strategies to reduce Fire Risks in the Bangladesh garments industries.”

Secretary of Ministry of Labour & Employment (MOLE) Mikail Shiper the Chief Guest said, “we can not ignore the responsibility for the recent fire incidents and loss of valuable lives in this largest industrial sector”.

The Round Table has been attended by government officials, suppliers, buyers, trade unions, activists, NGO’s and Diplomatic Missions. Among the speakers were Joint Secretary of MOLE, Director General of Fire Service and Civil Defence and their Director of Operation, BSCI secretariat in Brussels, Second Secretary European Union Delegation to Bangladesh, PVH, Ha-meem Group, Solidarity Center and GIZ among others.

Reasoning for this agenda had been the repeated devastating fire incidents in RMG sector (Tazreen and Smart Fashions) resulting in high number of lives and injuries raising the need to reassess the occupational safety measures at the garment factories. The incidents are a repeated wakeup call and needs for national and international attentions to limit and control these hazards risks. The quest had been on the table on how to contribute to the situation, whereby workers can feel secured enough and will benefit from the recent signed tripartite MoU to set up a National Plan on Fire Safety. Effective and appropriate Government response and its implementations as well as to involve workers’ representation and the international buyer were debated.

The Fire Service and Civil Defence Department headed by Brigadier General Ali Ahmed Kahn in Bangladesh summarised the importance to improve the fire fighting system, un-authorised buildings, ignoring of fire alarms and lack with the existing Fire Act including insufficient fire fighting drill and training, crowd control, missing of water reservoir and some narrow road conditions.

Dr. Wajed-ul Islam Khan from the BTUC pointed out that money can not compensate a loss of life. In his view the compliance situation deteriorated over the past years and fire fighting is not effective.

Libuse Soukupova, Second Secretary of European Delegation to Bangladesh, referred on the Resolution on Bangladesh by the European Parliament (17th January 2013) and the Joint Statement by the EU High Representative and the Trade Commissioner (30 January 2013) calling for immediate actions to take measures to ensure the fire safety in Bangladesh. In particular to comply with international standards and the ILO Conventions. The EU is ready to assist Bangladesh in any way to implement those standards and that European and international companies need to do more to promote health & safety and implementation of international standards in the garment industry aligned with international guidelines on social and corporate responsibility. Calling for action by the private sector, the European resolution states

to set up Health & Safety Committees involving workers at each factories and by establishing an independent inspection system. Furthermore should the stakeholders develop a voluntary label certifying that the products are manufactured in accordance to the ILO Core Labour Standards and that more international brands should incorporate with their subcontractors to improve health & safety standards.

The Secretary of the Ministry of Labour & Employment informed about the activities by the government forming 23 inspection teams and have visited over 1000 factories and the set up of a high power cabinet committee headed by his Ministry. The government promotes the development of an exclusive zone for all garment factories, a 'garment industrial park' in the area of Gazipur. He highlighted the Tripartite Statement of Commitment by government, the employers and the workers to develop the National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire Safety. The draft Plan of Action is to be published soon. The National Health and Safety Council, founded under the Labour Code 2006, is working out a comprehensive Health & Safety Policy with specified responsibilities of the government and others. Government has declared the 27 December as the National Mourning Day in memory of the fire victims.

The Joint Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment, briefly outlined the draft National Action Plan formulated by the 13 members tripartite committee. The plan consists of 3 levels, - the legislative policy, - the Administration and - practical activities. The following skeleton is a draft and does not list the partnering agencies.



Tripartite National Plan on Fire Safety

I.	LEGISLATIVE POLICY	EXECUTIVE AGENCY	TIMEBOUND
a.	Adoption of national occupational safety & health policy to be finalized by the Cabinet Committee.	Ministry of Labour & Employment	31 March, 2013
b.	Review, and where necessary, adjustment of law, rules and legislation.	Ministry of Labour & Employment	30 June 2013
c.	Establishment of the task force for fire safety of the Cabinet committee for the RMG sector.	Ministry of Labour & Employment	31 March, 2013

II.	ADMINISTRATION	EXECUTIVE AGENCY	TIMEBOUND
a.	Recruitment of staff to fill current vacant posts of Factory and Inspection Department.	Ministry of Labour & Employment	31 March, 2013
b.	Implementation of the MOLE's project to strengthen the capacity of the Directorate of Labour Inspectors.	Ministry of Labour & Employment	31 December, 2014
c.	Review and where necessary adjust for factory licensing and certification procedures concern fire safety including electric, chemical and environmental safety.	Ministry of Labour & Employment	30 June 2013
d.	Considering of the establishment of 'one stop shop' for the safety licensing and certifications.	Ministry of Labour & Employment	31 December 2013
e.	Development to introduce a Unified Fire Safety Checklist to be used by all relevant government agencies.	Ministry of Labour & Employment	30 April 2013
III.	PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES	EXECUTIVE AGENCY	TIMEBOUND
a.	Factory level fire safety need assessment.	BGMEA, BKMEA	31 March 2013
b.	Development and Implementation of a Factory Fire Safety Improvement Program.	Ministry of Home Affairs, BGMEA	31 December 2013
c.	Development of a transparent and accountable industry sub-contracting system.	Ministry of Labour & Employment	30 June 2013
d.	Delivery of Fire Safety Crash Course for mid-level factory management and supervisors.	Ministry of Home Affairs	30 June 2013
e.	Development and Delivery of Specific Training on fire safety for union leaders.	MoLE, Ministry of Home Affairs	31 December 2013
f.	Development and Distribution of Mass Workers Education Tools.	Ministry of Labour & Employment	31 December 2013
g.	Establishment of a Worker Fire Safety Hotline.	Ministry of Home Affairs	30 June 2013

h.	Development and Delivery of Specific Training on Fire Safety for the factory inspectors.	Ministry of Labour & Employment	30 June 2013
i.	Development of Guidelines for the Establishment of Labour Management Committees on Occupational Safety and Health on Fire Safety.	Ministry of Labour & Employment	30 June 2013
j.	Development and Dissemination of Self Assessment and Remediation Tools on Fire Safety.	MoLE, Ministry of Home Affairs	30 June 2013
k.	Development of a Tripartite Protocol for Compensation of the Families of Workers, who died and workers, who are injured as a result of occupational accidents and diseases.	Ministry of Labour & Employment	30 June 2013
l.	Establishment of a Public Discloser Website on Fire Safety in RMG factories.	BGMEA, BKMEA	30 June 2013

Md. Manjur Morshed, GIZ/Promotion of Social and Environmental Standards in the Industry (PSES) informed about the GSCP/GIZ 'Fire Alliance'. On 22nd of March on the initiative by the German ambassador, a round table will be held in Berlinto discuss with German and European brands on how to form an alliance on Fire Safety in Bangladesh and to support the National Plan. GIZ is highly interested to support the Tripartite National Plan on Fire Safety, facilitated by ILO with the activities to implementing fire safety training, audit as well as facilitating the institutionalisation of the RMG industry.

In the debate prior to the tea break, speakers pointed out the risk of smaller factories producing as subcontractors, raising the question on who will monitor them while those are not member of any business association.

Alonzo Glenn Suson, Centre for international Solidarity, pointed out the low number of running trade unions in the industry. Out of 136 registered trade unions prior to 2008, only 10 are probably still in operation. However it is encouraging, that over the last 3 months 20 new local level trade unions had filed for registration and have got registered, expressing hope that this trend will continue having 3000 factories in this sector. Regarding the participation in the Tripartite National Plan a number of 45 registered and unregistered trade union federations are not part of the signatory TU structure and he was asking for a way that they could participate.

The presentation by PVH and Ha-meem Group after the tea break described how to minimize the fire risk and to participatory behave in times of fire incident. The fire insurer Sadaran Bima Corporation explained their fire risk assessment and how to determine the insurance policy.

When discussed about the reasons of not correctly addressing the fire risk among all factories, the necessary investment is still often purely regarded as a cost factor and not seen as an important investment. Participants also highlighted that the drive for

improving fire safety shall come firsthand from the manufacturers themselves. However structural weakness has also been raised in the insufficient number of factory inspectors under the Ministry of Labour & Employment with limited incentives.

Following points have been stated by the participants as necessary to address by Government, the exporters' associations, the manufacturers' as well as the buyers':

1. Posting the "National Tripartite Plan of Action for Fire Safety in RMG Sector" on website.
2. Ensuring workers representation/opinion through trade unions in implementation of the policy.
3. All shall come under the one umbrella of the National Tripartite Plan to address the situation effectively and efficiently.
4. Develop a Garment Policy as fast as possible and to shift the factories out of congested area.
5. Invest in the Occupational Health & Safety of the workers.

Mr. Sultan from BILS addressed the floor echoing Ms. Farida Parveen's utterance and urged that manufacturers need to change their mindset. Although Bangladesh is holding the 2nd position in RMG export worldwide but still mountains of challenge are in the way to achieve efficiency in this labour intensive industry. Government realistic planning, implementation, workers' representation and compliant working conditions need immediate attention.

The session has been moderated jointly by Ziaur Rahman, Associate Professor of Dhaka University and by Christian von Mitzlaff, Round Table Organiser and the BSCI Bangladesh Representative. The Round Table is a social dialogue sponsored by BSCI and organized by LIFT Standards e.K.

III. Agenda

“Strategies to reduce Fire Risks in the Bangladesh garments industries.”

held on Thursday 14th March 2013, 9:00 – 14:00 p.m.

at **Ruposhi Bangla Hotel**, Ballroom, Dhaka

followed by lunch.

Programme

08:45	Registration
09:00	opening session: speakers: business associations, Fire Department, labour sector, - EU Delegation: Resolution on Bangladesh by the European Parliament
09:40	Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence, Brig Gen Ali Ahmed Khan
09:50	Buyer’s fire safety initiative -‘Fire Alliance’ by Magnus Schmid, GIZ
10:10	National Plan on Fire Safety (tripartite)by Mr. Mikail Shipar, Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment
10:30	Questions & Answers
<u>11:00</u>	<u>Tea Break</u>
11:30	Factory example fire safety approach by Ha-Meem Group, Brig Gen (retd.) M.A. Mondol, -PVH Corporation and Q&A
12:00	Sadaran Bima Corporation: Fire Insurance, Q&A
12:10	Reaction /Discussion from morning session and open floor dialogue
13:20	Recommendations and conclusion
14:00	Closing and lunch invitation

IV. Address during the Opening Session

Mr. von Mitzlaff, Organizer

It's a pleasure to call the floor for the 11th Round Table, I am very glad that in spite of the political disturbance with hartals these days we were able to hold this 11th session. My name is Christian von Mitzlaff, Organizer of this Round Table and I am thankful to Prof. Zia Rahman from Dhaka University, who consented on short notice to be our moderator today as Prof. Md. Sekandar Khan unfortunately fell sick.

Prof. Zia Rahman, Moderator

Good Morning and welcome to this 11th Round Table session on Social Compliance, sponsored by BSCI. As you know this is a kind of concurrent and continuous effort to reduce risk to improve the healthy environment of the readymade garment industries in Bangladesh, so this is why today's session and as you know the organizers have already been organized different sessions, highlighting different issues related to the problems, constraints of the readymade garment industries. You know that recently we faced two different severe fire accidents, one had happened at Tazreen Fashions Ltd. and another one happened at Smart Tex Garments Ltd. They have actually gave us some impression that we need something to do to save our workers life and this is that kind of efforts and I again will come all participants coming from different sectors, who actually are trying to improve the conditions of the workers as well as the industries.

Mr. von Mitzlaff, Organizer

I welcome Mr. Mikail Shipar, Secretary to the Ministry of Labour & Employment and he is actually the focal person to address the issues of the "**National Tripartite Plan of Action for Fire Safety in RMG Sector**" and we are very happy having him today and to give us information what is currently planned and perhaps very soon to be published. We also are happy to have Brig. Gen. Ali Ahmed Khan, Director General from the Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence Directorate and I would also like to start with giving him small brief address on the fire situation in Bangladesh. We have the European Union Delegation with us and we will hear from them later. We will also have with us Dr. Wajed ul Islam Khan, he is along fellow of the Round Table from the trade union, and we have here Executive Director from suppliers: Ha-meem Group will give us their experience on fire safety project. Today my colleagues from the BSCI Secretariat in Brussels are with us, Ms. Sabine Van Depoele, Manager Stakeholder Relations and Ms. Veronica Rubio, Senior Manager – Strategic Issues and welcome to you in Bangladesh. I would like to call for Brig. General Ali Ahmed Khan, to kindly give us your assessment and activities towards combating the fire risk in the garment industry.



Brig. Gen. Ali Ahmed Khan, D.G. Fire Service and Civil Defence Directorate, Bangladesh:



Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim. Respected secretary Mr. Mikail Shipoar, our moderator Dr. Zia Rahman and organizer Mr. Christian von Mitzlaff and representative from the various organization, Ladies and Gentlemen, As-salamualikum and very good morning. I am Director General of Fire Service, Brig. gen. Ali Ahmed Khan, next few minutes I will narrating the state of the fire incident in the garment sector and

then followed by the steps taken so far and what were the lesson learnt from the major fire incidents and after the discussion then finally I will come on some recommendation later. As you know the readymade garment industries of Bangladesh has witnessed remarkable growth since it's inception, in the late 1970's, within a very short period of time, it has attained great importance in terms of its contribution to GDP, foreign exchange earnings and employment and also as a vehicle of social changes. The most youthful export sector in Bangladesh, the RMG industry, has been earning more than 60% of the foreign currency for the country during the last few years but this sector has been affected by several factors and one of the factors is the fire incident. Though as per the fire statistics, the number of fire incidents in this RMG sector is decreasing gradually, it is also alarming that few fire incidents raised question on fire safety due to unexpected death of some people. The recent two fire incidents in Tazreen fashions Ltd. And Smart Export Garments Ltd. are the eye opener for all concerns and we need to concentrate to further improvement of fire safety particularly in RMG sector which is now a time worthy discussion matter.

State of the fire incidents in the RMG sector as per the statistics of Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence, the number of fire incidents in Bangladesh are increasing day by day. The number of total fire incidents in Bangladesh were around 12.000 in 2009, around 14.000 in 2010, around 15.000 in 2011 and around 18.000 in 2012. It is a matter of great pleasure that though the number of total fire incidents is increasing, but the number of fire incidents in the RMG sector is decreasing remarkably. As per the statistics of Fire Service and Civil Defence, the number of fire incidents in RMG sector in Bangladesh in 2009 was 293, in 2010 it was 220, in 2011 it was 175 and in 2012 it was 97. Besides if we analyze the percentage of RMG fire incidents comparing to the total fire incidents and the number of total deaths in RMG fire incident, we can observe the significant improvement in the fire safety conditions in RMG sector like in 2009 total death toll was 2, in 2010 it was 51, in 2011 it was nil and in 2012 it was 112. The state of major fire incidents in RMG sector in Bangladesh in 2009 Ha-meem Group number of death was 24, in 2010 Garib and Garib Company it was 21 and gain Ha-meem Group in 2010 it was 29, in 2012 Tazreen fashions Ltd. it was 111 and Smart Exports Garments Ltd. in 2013, January it was 7. We can observe that fire incidents is decreasing significantly which indicates the ongoing improvement of fire safety in the RMG sector, the above mentioned fire

incidents drew the attention of all concerns for further improvement of fire safety in RMG sector.

The lessons, I will be covering some of the important points, Fire Service and Civil Defence investigated all the fire incidents to reveal the cause of fire incidents. The investigation committee has not only focused on the cause of fire, but also it recommended some suggestions for improvement of fire safety in all particular incidents. The lessons learnt and common problems of almost all fire incidents in RMG sector are suppose:

- Delayed message to Fire Service and Civil Defence on the fire incidents
- Insufficient fire safety system
- Improper maintenance of fire safety system
- Unauthorized change of building plan system & building use
- Ignorance to the fire alarm
- Lack of compliance of Bangladesh National Building Code during building construction
- Lack of compliance of Fire Prevention & Extinction Act 2003
- Insufficient training on fire fighting, rescue and first aid
- Insufficient fire fighting and evacuation drill as well as inaccessible areas
- Unplanned urbanization
- Unnecessary crowding of general people that is crowd control sometime become problem
- The traffic jam and Scarcity of water
- Inadequate public awareness to the fire safety at all level and
- The narrow road conditions in some of the factories in around.

Steps taken to fire safety, w have taken some plan we have carried out inspections at various levels and action plan will be discussed later on. But those are the major areas I like to just cover and later part, I will come up with some recommendations with the national action plan. Thank you.

Dr. Wajed ul Islam Khan, General Secretary - BTUC

Very good morning and Thank you Mr. Moderator and to present over here, our secretary to Ministry of Labour Mr. Mikail and the respected other guests and obviously noteworthy to be mention, because I am with this Round Table meeting for long time and it is nice to be with Mitzlaff and also with other colleagues, who who came over here. actually we have a long history of trade union movement in Bangladesh, but unfortunately I am with my career with the trade union for more than 43 years, but still then to me if you ask I think we have not forwarded rather we have come back from the things, which we could achieved during our early life now we are out of those facilities, laws implementation, all these things. So in fact if

you think working condition, I must say that it has deteriorated, not improved from the past. This is the beginning that I am sorry to mention this. So regarding to this seminar, it is particularly on the social compliance round table seminar on fire fighting and I think I congratulate Mitzlaff that he has picked up very important agenda we have now facing in garment sector for a long time. It is fire and out of fire lots of life, we have lost and it is very sad that we are losing the people, but we are compensating some money. The money cannot be replaced to a man, so that should be in our mind that has come out of this lack of fire fighting.



What we see as our D.G. of fire brigade here mention that it is decreasing, but I don't want to compare with increasing or decreasing or improving, but if one person died out of fire, it is not good. It is not a question of decreasing or increasing. The loss of life is a big loss, it cannot be replaced by any words or anything. So that should be in our mind, then we can think out how to overcome this

fire incidents, that we can find out how we can overcome.

I come up with the brief because my all other trade union colleagues are that side, they will pick out later on, but at the beginning I want to mention few points that you know in fire in factory, first the building code, they do not go with the building code and they never follow the building code and for that reason when fire comes out many incidents happens, this is uncontrollable. Take the boiler of the factory and godown/warehouse is very important, from where the fire comes out or if the fire comes out from the boiler or godown, it flares sometime everything and that boiler and godown where the raw materials of the garment factory is there, that almost in all the factory it is within the factory. But normally it should be out of the factory area, a few distances to be maintained for this boiler to be setup and also for the godown that is not there. Most of the godown and boiler are in the ground floor of the factory or in the 1st floor of the factory. So that is a big disadvantage that fire starts from the boiler and out of this godown, it spreads out and it goes out of control. but if it is not within the factory and it is a little bit far away/distance to the factory then I think we can protect a little bit from the fire, if comes out from the godown or boiler.

The fire fighting is totally insufficient in almost in all the factory, even in the compliance factory, when the people comes from the buyer side, they display some good fire fighting elements, but it is practically out of nothing means it does not work. Fire fighting is not sufficient at all and it does not work also. there is I don't know whether there is any report to our ministry even that whether there is regular fire fighting staff in the factory or not. So far our knowledge there is no regular staff in the fire fighting to operate the fire fighting instruments, what is the use of showing this fire fighting instrument in the factory? It is the experience that fire fighting regular staffs are not part of the factory, therefore to late when fire breaks comes out.

The Trade Union proposal is always there that workers should get the fire fighting training on how to operate the fire fighting element. But there is lack also, in some

factories there is training but in most of the factories, it is not there. You know there are two gates to out and in, for long time we have discussed on this issue, but it is still there that the gates are always closed. So when the fire starts inside the factory the people cannot come out and they die. Regarding Tazreen factory, you can well understand that we find the workers and we cannot identified the ashes even. This is the situation why it happened? Because they cannot come out, almost all gates were closed. So this thing and the building code which is there in our country, most of the factory they don't follow the building code, say for this Tazreen factory, it was approved for I think four storied building, but they went up up to six or seven floor and government do not take any action on these people, who does not follow the building code or the approval of the building.

Another point is that factory inspectors: our factories are under him, who is supposed to look after the compliance or the essential things what is to be there in the factory to protect the fire, it is not there. It is the duty of the Inspector of Factories, but it is so insufficient, the government and also who are the people recruited, they are not efficient, they don't know or even it is very sad to say that even if they go, they come out without inspecting and give a report that everything is fine. It is out the inspection, they give a report with their mind set-up that things are fine. May be I don't know what is behind this, you can well understand. So lastly I want to say this fire is coming out and we cannot control because of this multi-storied building, almost all the garment industries in our country now are multi-stories building. It is my suggestion and our the parent SKOP (Sramik Kormochari Oikko Parisad), if this garment industry, and government is trying to establish garment village, that a building must not be more than two stories to save escape. In our country almost all the factories were previously one storied, not more than two storied, like in Adamjee Jute Mill where 30000 workers used to work, there had no incident. Even if incident happens in the one storied or two storied building, workers can jump out or they can come out in any form so they can have self-defense to come out of the fire hazard. My suggestion to the Hon'ble Secretary is, in future garment factories should not be allowed to build more than two floors. And in many places the fire brigade cannot enter due to insufficient road, narrow passages and this has to be sorted out.

My most important point I want to stress is, that our country can not be compared with others like China, where multi-storied building are common. We don't have sufficient fire fighting equipment and others and our country situation is totally different. I mentioned that inspector of factories they do not work accordingly to their job description.

My suggestion again is to train workers, regular staff with all those fire fighting element with sufficient equipment. You know in my country - we have to defend ourselves. Who will protect my life in the road? – nobody! I have to take action for my life. Same to face the fire risk in the garment sector. Therefore we need to come up with not more than two stories building because then a worker can be self-resistance, self protection next to the fire fighting. Thank you very much.

Ms. Libuse Soukupova, 2nd Secretary - EU Delegation to Bangladesh



Distinguished guest, ladies and gentlemen, first of all thank you very much for inviting EU delegation to this Round Table. I was asked before on the Resolution of the European Parliament statement and the High Representative. You have probably noticed that during December and January, the group between Bangladesh and Europe, there was a high level of interests from governments, companies and civil society in improving factory safety in Bangladesh and in this regard, on 17th January the European Parliament passed a

resolution, which called for arrange of measures to be taken to improve factory safety in Bangladesh and on 30th January following the fatal fire at Smart Garments factory, the high representative Catherine Ashton and our Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht also make a joint statement on the subject. Let me cover first the joint statement: The European Commission basically said that Bangladeshi authorities have to act immediately to ensure that factories comply with international labour standards including International Labour Organisation conventions. Secondly that the EU is willing and ready to assist the Bangladeshi authorities in any way it can to meet international standards. At the same time, European and international companies need to do more to promote better health and safety standards in garment factories in Bangladesh, in line with internationally recognized guidelines on Corporate Social Responsibility.

We were basically asked to report on the European Parliament Resolution. Let me comment few things that this resolution also contains Pakistan, here I cover the issues on Bangladesh only. The resolution calls for very many specific actions to be taken, which cannot be easily summarized. In spite of that, I try to summarize and talk about actions in relations to three different stakeholders concerns, the Bangladeshi authorities, other European institutions and the tasks by the private sector.

Firstly the European Parliament Resolution calls for action by Bangladeshi authorities and among others emphasizing that the ILO 8 Core Conventions need consistent implementation. Also it says that the government should continue with through investigations into the factory fires and also it should enforce compliance by all manufacturers with the labour act of 2006. Furthermore it should establish an effective and independent system of labour inspections of industrial buildings. The resolution also says that those responsible for criminal negligence and other criminal activity in relations to the factory fires should be brought justice and the local authorities and factory management should cooperate in order to guarantee full access to the justice system for all victims to enable them to claim compensation. The authorities should also investigate torcher and murder of labour right activist Aminul Islam and lastly the authorities should end restriction on trade union activities and collective bargaining. So this is a summary called for actions by Bangladeshi authorities.

Secondly, the European Parliament resolution calls for actions by the other European Union institutions saying that the EU should strengthen and expand its support for improving factories safety in Bangladesh that the EU should promote mandatory responsible business conduct among the EU companies operating abroad and also that the EU delegation should function as EU contact points for its compliance concerning EU companies and their subsidiaries.

The third set of recommendations calls the private sector for action: "The European companies should help to compensate the victims of factory fires. The relevant brands should support the Bangladesh fire and building safety agreement, which aims to improve safety by setting up 'health and safety committees' involving workers in each factory and by establishing an independent inspection system."

Furthermore the stakeholders "should work together to look at developing a volunteer level standard certifying that the product was manufactured in accordance with ILO core labour standards" and finally "more international garment brands should cooperate with their sub-contractors to improve occupational health and safety standards."

To comment, I would like to state that the resolution is not a legally binding instruction, nevertheless will probably all agree, that these calls or comments are the ones that everybody is calling for. I think that further actions probably or fruitfully comments on what the EU is doing in this regard will be discussed later on during the day. Thank you.

Mr. Mikail Shipar, Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment, GoB

It is a great opportunity to be here on this appropriate event to reciprocate my views and ideas on a very important issue Fire safety in Ready Made Garments industry. Thanks should be given to the organizers for their proactive role in organizing such a wonderful event to address the challenges in terms of fire risk in RMG sectors. As you know on November 24 2012, due to devastating fire incident in Tazreen Fashions Limited 112 workers lost their valuable lives and many workers were injured. Further on 26 January 2013 due to fire incident at Smart Export Garments, 8 workers lost their valuable lives and others were injured. We cannot ignore the responsibility lies upon us for these incidents. We deeply saddened at the demise of valuable lives.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As you are aware after the devastating fire incidents the Government has taken various steps to face the situation:

- The Cabinet adopted the condolence proposal of the departed souls of the dead caused by the fire incident and also declared 27th of November 2012 as national mourning day.
- In the fire incident 112 dead bodies were recovered among which 59 identified dead bodies have been handed over to the relatives for funeral. Remaining un-identified 41 dead bodies, DNA sample has been collected by the National Forensic DNA profiling Laboratories for examination. Meanwhile 41 dead bodies have been identified through DNA Test.

- With the financial assistance arranged by the Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund, Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation Fund, BGMEA, Bankers Association of Bangladesh and one Hong Kong based RMG importer Li & Fung. Donated an amount of Tk. 600,000 has distributed to each family of the identified workers of Tazreen. In addition have the families of eight dead workers of Smart Garments been provided with financial assistance over 1 Mill. Taka (10.000 €) each with the financial support of renowned buyers Inditex and NewLook as well as BGMEA and BKMEA collectively.
- Three Factory management personnels of Tazreen and the owner of Smart Garments have been arrested.
- The Chief Inspector of Factories and Establishment filed case with the Labour Court against the owner of the concerned garment factory according to the relevant sections of the Labour law.
- To ensure safe working environment in garment factories, Chief Inspector of Factories and Establishment has formed 23 Inspection Teams of which 20 are for Dhaka Division and 3 for Chittagong Division. In the meantime these Teams have visited more than 1000 factories and submitted their reports. These inspection activities are continuing. The faults that are found during inspection of factories, the inspectors are giving directions to the owners to rectify the faults.
- "Social Compliance Forum for RMG" decided in a meeting headed by Hon'ble Minister for Commerce: The Ministry of Labour and Employment and Fire Service and Civil Defense will jointly identify the garment factories which have not taken safety measure in accordance with the Labour Act, 2006 and to take legal action against those non-compliant factories.
- Owners of all garments factories and 10 mid-level officers of each factory are being trained in prevention of fire and fire-safety through Bangladesh Fire Service and BGMEA under a crash program. The other factory workers and employees will be provided with training on fire-safety by this trained owners and personnel.

Dear Participants, The Government and all stakeholders of RMG sector has taken their utmost effort to rise the total compliance of the Factories. It is felt that there should be exclusive zone for RMG where all complacence factor including fire and other safety measures will present. A committee headed by a Director General of The Prime Minister Office has initiated the task to implement a "Garments Industrial Park" in Baushia area under Gazaria Upazilla in the district of Munshigang. The committee meanwhile met several times with the concerned stakeholders. A high power Cabinet Committee headed by the Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Labour and Employment has been formed to ensure stability in the RMG sectors for its sustainable growth. The committee will give direction to improve the working condition, fire safety, occupational health and safety, factory design, and many more

for the entire gamut of the labour compliance. Apart from it, the Ministry of Labour and Employment has adopted study program on overall situation in RMG sector by GOB fund to determine the number of factories on the basis of locality, the member of workers and service holders and to identify the existing problems and their solutions aiming to promote this sector to number one in the world. We hope it will give us substantive scenario prevailing at the work place. By June 2013 we are expecting to final the study report.

On January 15, 2013 with the technical support from ILO a tripartite statement of commitment was signed by the tripartite constituents- the Government, the Employers and the Workers. Through Join Statement, the Tripartite partners committed to work together to develop a National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire Safety by the end of February 2013, with a view to taking comprehensive action aimed at preventing any further loss of life, property due to work place



fires and fire-related accidents and incidents. To facilitate this plan of action the Ministry of Labour and Employment has set up a Tripartite Committee to identify activities through tripartite partners to ensure an integrated approach to promoting fire safety in Bangladesh, in particular in the ready-made garment sector. The committee has submitted the draft plan of action to the Ministry for final approval. It should be mentioned here that the Tripartite Partners recognize that improving fire safety will require the coordinated efforts of all stakeholders including buyers, brands, Investors, international development organization, donor etc. In this respect we are very much confident that Plan of Action will act as a catalyst and core principles for all stakeholders to work together to ensure its implementation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as you are aware, the Government has initiated substantive work on occupation health and safety. A draft National Occupational Safety and Health Policy is under consideration for adoption. This policy will specify the responsibilities of the Government, social partners and other stakeholders in ensuring occupational safety and health. This will further strengthen the work of the existing National Industrial Health and Security Council formed under the provisions of the Labour Act 2006. The policy once adopted, would be implementing through a National Plan of Action. As part of this exercise, initiatives will be taken to develop National Standards on issues relating to occupational health and safety. Efforts are being made to strengthen the labour inspectorates to monitor compliance with the occupational health and safety regulations. Last but not the least, let us work together to make our place safe for the sustainable development of our ready made garment sector. My Thanks to the organizers for organizing such a wonderful event. Thank you all for your patient hearing.

Mr. Faizur Rahman, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment, GoB, National Plan on Fire Safety



Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak about the draft action plan. Hon'ble Secretary have already mentioned that the Ministry of Labour has formed one tripartite committee to formulate the draft action plan. In that committee the government side, labour side and owners side are the members, we are 13 members. We sat 4 times to formulate the draft and in that draft, we have a thought that the plan of action

activities on three levels: one is **legislation and policy**, second is **administration** and the third one is **practical activities**.

Regarding **Legislation and Policy** we have mentioned three broad points:

1. Adoption of national occupational safety and health policy. Policy should be finalized by cabinet and the Ministry of Labour and Employment should be leading execution body and we have fixed the time needed for it 31st March 2013.
2. Review and where necessary the adjustment of relevant laws, rules and regulations. we have decided that the high power Cabinet Committee for the RMG, will formulate the policy and the leading or executive agency should be the Ministry of Labour and Employment and it will take 30th June 2013.
3. Establishment of task force on fire safety of the cabinet committee for the RMG sector and we have decided that the Cabinet Committee for RMG will decide about the policy and the Ministry of Labour and Employment is the leading or executive agency and the partner organization should be here Ministry of Local Government, Power Development Board, BGMEA, BKMEA and Bangladesh Employers Federation. We have decided that 31st March, 2013 is the time limit.

In case of **Administration**, we have identified five areas:

1. Recruitment of staff to fill currently vacant posts of the Factory Inspection Department, this will be done by Ministry of Labour and Employment and it is possible by the end of this year, 31st December 2013. We know that there are systems, procedures to fulfill the vacant post.
2. The implementation of Ministry of Labour and Employment project to strengthen capacity of the Dept. of Inspection. For this reason, we have a project and this will be implemented by Ministry of Labour and Employment, will take 31st Dec, 2014.
3. Review and where necessary adjustment for factory licensing and certification procedure concerning fire safety including electrical, chemical and environmental safety and this policy should be given by the Cabinet Committee for the RMG. Ministry of Labour and Employment is the executive agency and we need the support from the Fire Service and Department of Environment and also Department of Inspection of Factories. These are the sectors which can help Ministry of Labour and Employment and this will take 30th June 2013.

4. Considering of the establishment of 'one stop shop' for the safety licensing and certifications. We need one policy and Cabinet Committee for the RMG Sector will decide on the policy and Ministry of Labour and Employment will execute the policy and we need support from Fire Service, Dept. of Environment and also the Dept. of Inspection of Factories and Establishment. This will take until 31st Dec, 2013.

5. The 5th activity regarding administration, development of an introduction of unified fire safety checklist to be used by all relevant government agencies and this will be done by Ministry of Labour and Employment will take help from Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Public Works and this will take 30th April, 2013.

Practical Activities, we have indentified twelve activities:

1. Factory level fire safety need assessment, this will be done by BGMEA and BKMEA. It will take 31st March, 2013 and they have already started the works, BGMEA is working on it.

2. Development and implementation of a factory fire safety improvement program, this will take help from Ministry of Home Affairs and BGMEA will be the leading agency for this and they will take BKMEA, NCCWE and Li & Fung. This will take 31st December, 2013.

3. Development of a transparent and accountable industry sub-contracting system. We need policy and this will be done by Ministry of Labour and Employment, the leading agency should be BGMEA and BKMEA, they will take help from Buyers Forum and buying houses. This will take time until 30th June 2013.

4. Delivery of Fire Safety Crash Course for mid-level factory management and supervisors. Policy will be formulated by Ministry of Home Affairs and the executive agency will be the BGMEA and BKMEA and they will take help from the Fire Service and this will take until 30th June 2013.

5. Development and Delivery of Specific Training on fire safety for union leaders and the policy will be formulated by Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Home Affairs and this will be done by NCCWE and BNC and they will take help from BGMEA and BKMEA and also fire service and this will take 31st December 2013.

6. Development and Distribution of Mass Worker Education Tools. The leading agency Ministry of Labour and Employment and ministry will take help from NCCWE, BNC, BEF, BGMEA and BKMEA. This will take until 31st Dec 2013.

7. Establishment of a Worker Fire Safety Hotline. This will be done by Ministry of Home Affairs and they will take help from Fire Service, NCCWE, BNC, BGMEA, BKMEA and this will take until 30th June 2013.

8. Development and Delivery of Specific Training on Fire Safety for the factory inspectors. This will be done by Ministry of Labour and Employment and they will take help from Department of Inspection, Director of Labour and Fire Service, 30th June 2013.

9. Development of Guidelines for the Establishment of Labour Management Committees on Occupational Safety and Health on Fire Safety. This will be done by MoLE and they will take help from Dept. of Inspection, NCCWE, BNC, BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA. - 30th June, 2013.

10. Development and Dissemination of Self Assessment and Remediation Tools on Fire Safety. This will be done by MoLE and Ministry of Home Affairs and they will take help from Dept. of Inspection, NCCWE, BNC, BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA. - 30th June 2013.

11. Development of a Tripartite Protocol for Compensation of the Families of Workers, who died and for workers who injured as a result of occupational accidents and diseases, which may was mention by Dr. Wajed. There should be a policy and the policy will be developed by Cabinet Committee for RMG and executive agency should be MoLE and they will take help from BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA, NCCWE and BNC. - 30th June 2013.

12. Last but not the least, Establishment of a Public Discloser Website on Fire Safety in RMG factories and this will be done by BGMEA, BKMEA. They can take help from Ministry of Home Affairs and MoLE. - 30th June, 2013.

Those are the activities in the draft action plan.

Mr. Manjur Morshed, Sr. Social Compliance Advisor, GIZ (PSES)



As-salamu Alikum and very good morning to everybody. I am very sorry because Mr. Magnus Schmid was really interested to join this seminar today, but unfortunately due to an urgent appointment with Netherland Embassy, he could not come. On behalf of him, I took the apology for that. Before I start I like to inform that our project is PSES, which Project for Promotion of Environmental Standards in the Industry. Our project has three components and one component is social standards, which is actually mainly funded by EU and the German Government. From our component Social Standards, we have wide varieties of activities to improve the social standards in the RMG Industries and especially we have several of training programs for the workers, middle management and a awareness program for the owners as well. All our training program always include a one module on fire safety at the training program for factory compliance officers, middle management, BGMEA and BKMEA monitors, private consultants and auditors. Beyond we strengthened the capacity of BGMEA and BKMEA fire safety cell. The fire safety cells of BGMEA and BKMEA have already trained more than 10.000 workers and factory compliance officers and middle management in their member factories as well as developed fire safety manual in Bengali language for the training of the workers over there. Also we have actually developed a number of consultants and trainers and auditors on electrical safety and there are a few consulting companies, who are ready to provide the consultancy, auditing and training services on electrical safety as well.

I actually like to share with you that after the Tazreen incident, GIZ has been continuously approached by different stakeholders to support the fire safety initiative in Bangladesh. in that case from our side, we are highly interested to support with the National Initiative, which is tripartite initiatives on fire safety facilitated by ILO. If there is an opportunity for GIZ, we can extend the co-operation and participating in

supporting this initiative, especially in the practical level where there must be huge scope for providing the trainings, fire safety audit and consultancy and also the institutionalization of the fire safety initiatives in the RMG industry. A draft plan is with me and when interested, I can get into the details of our proposed action plan to support the tripartite initiative on fire safety. Thank you.

Mr. von Mitzlaff, Organizer

Thank you. I don't know who can give us some idea about what the fire alliance stands for? Be mentioned that this idea originated from GSCP and GIZ. Who can give us an idea about it.

Mr. Manjur Morshed, Sr. Social Compliance Advisor, GIZ (PSES)

Well, so far my knowledge concern, on 22nd March there will be a Round Table discussion in Berlin and which is initiative by the Hon'ble German Ambassador and he has already taken the initiatives to unite all the German brands over there, especially German brands but also the European brands as well to make an alliance for the fire safety initiatives in Bangladesh and Mr. Magnus Schmid will also attend in that Round Table discussion and then they will actually discuss that in what form in to what extent to initiate something to support the national initiative in Bangladesh.

Mr. von Mitzlaff, Organizer

Thank you. I think this is important, I won't say a piece of puzzle, but then more than a piece. If it is under the German leadership, unfortunately we don't have them here at present. It's quite an effort to integrate all this with other donors or brands. Beside GSCP, I heard of the American Apparel and Footwear Association too. I wonder where is the best forum to exchange about all the activities? It will remain a big task and challenge to group and to bring them hopefully under the broad tripartite national plan. This would be a masterpiece of donor co-ordination. Those of you, who are dealing with donor coordination know the challenges. Perhaps you like to discuss after the tea break next steps as I see this a fortunate opportunity being together here today, with raising awareness come up with effective coordination of the tripartite parties + the brands, donors and others.

Again, I like to express my thanks to have heard details of the drafted National Plan.

Mr. Manjur Morshed, Sr. Social Compliance Advisor, GIZ (PSES)

Mitzlaff, just one information to share with you is that actually we GIZ have been approached by a number of brands and other individual initiates. But our stand is that we actually like to support a national tripartite initiative on fire safety in Bangladesh. That should be the figure umbrella under which all the initiative should work together. So that rather than having any scattered initiatives and supports over there. This is our strength and we are in close cooperation with ILO, MoLE and other brands so that we can support this national tripartite initiative. Thank you.

Mr. von Mitzlaff, Organizer

Thank you for reiterating your expressed interest and your willingness and I hope the same will reach out to other brands and buyers as well, who are going

individually so far. May be invite those, who would like to give their concern on the topic wanting to contribute also to want to react what we have as presented this morning. We have an open floor to point out, who are present with us, there is a good community of manufacturers here. I will accept to postpone your questions after the tea break, if all of you give me the promise that you will not disappear during tea break. This morning our table is still complete and I wish we will find the respective person to answer or to address your comments when everyone is still present. Right, let's then continue after tea break.

Open Floor Dialogue

Md. Towhidur Rahman, President - BAWF

I have one question, recently we have seen if any fire accident had happened, BGMEA and BKMEA owners associations are try to say this factory is not our members! This is what happening in the country that what action will be taken by whom? We are working in the grass root, we have seen lots of factories started recently 1,5 year ago. Simply two General Managers of their prevoious employer start their own factory with just 15-20 machines and taking sub-contracts from good factories. Who will monitor and check this type of factories productions, labour law implementation? If not member of the BGMEA, or BKMEA, those factoriesare not liable, they will simply say 'this is not our liability'! At first, this is the new problem in our sector. Second, our labour law: we have a good labour law. I appreciate the National Building Code draft plan, but we have lot of good labour law clauses. The problem is, we have not accept our labour law in positive manner / attitude. Some of owners do not agreed to follow the law and Government are also not interested to monitor correctly the labour law or the other laws. This is our main problem in our RMG sector. Thank you.

Dr. Wajed ul Islam Khan, General Secretary - BTUC

Since the floor is open, I just want to clarify with Towhidur that he is not right that the existing labour law is a very good labour law. I don't know how he speaks in this way, because we have lot of reservation with this existing labour law. In addition is the labour law going to revised and for years after years, we are working to revise this labour law. I strongly differ with his statement, having a good labour code: this is not a correct opinion.

Alonzo Glenn Suson, Country Program Director - American Center for International Labour Solidarity



Hello, I am Alonzo Suson from the American Center for International Labour Solidarity. First, I just want to stand our support the Solidarity center will be interested to work under this national tripartite committee. The secretary have mentioned that whatever support we can do to implement part of the plan, we will do that. Our point of view is that the successful fire safety program should have a strong workers involvement to it and that means Freedom of Association is probably important to

that considering that out of 136 registered unions, prior to 2008 probably 10 of them are still in operation. In the last three months, over 20 local level plants have filed for legal certification and 10 have been registered and got their certification. That's a very good thing and I appreciate that the registration of trade unions of local level plant are growing. But that still a very small considering that there is over 3.000 factories, so hopefully that trade unions and those unions that have been registered will be able to collectively began bargaining fire safety committees on those factories. The other concern is that it's good that BNC and NCCWE¹ are taking part of this, but there are 45 registered garment federations. There should be a way, so that they could participate like the BNC and NCCWE and there should be an opening for all this federations to participate so that we could really involve the further unions/federations in the garment industry. Thank you.

Mr. Qazi M. Ashraf, HR Manager - Tiffany's Wear Ltd.



I like to share something in this regard, if we go on with cross talk, there will be many talks and the whole day can expire. But, from my side I feel today's burning issue should be incommensurate to the Tazreen Fashions and Smart Garments. What we did, what we are doing and what we shall do to save the lives of worker to protect the factories and to save myself, this should be the burning issues. Now government is doing at

their own, BGMEA is doing at their own, but in between Tazreen and Smart fire - it was only a one months matter! If we wait for the government, the BGMEA decision, we cannot sustain our business.

I feel that we should take protection by ourselves within our limitation, I thank this man (Mr. Towhidur Rahman, President BAWF), he has mentioned about the owner. Owners do not agree to spend such money to protect factories and all other. This is my suggestion, to save our factories and lives, we make our maintenance department perfect and their work feedback to be monitored. If we can restrict on this, I feel that fire risk will be reduced. Many of our factories having maintenance department, but practically they are just on the checklist.

From the electrical default, 90% fire hazard occurs, but if we get ensure about our factories electrical, maintenance side, I believe fire hazard will reduce. In this regard, instead of waiting orders from BGMEA, BKMEA and government, we should develop our compliance with the auditors. As much we have developed, it is only because of buyers. Buyer auditors are coming, giving our findings and we are rectifying and I believe if we are strict on this, we can develop. From my side, I can say the factories which don't have at least two stairs, government should cancel their license. Our CSR

¹ Education, National Coordination Committee for Workers' Education is a united platform of 14 major national trade union federations in Bangladesh. Affiliated with International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and World Federation of Trade Union (WFTU) and with the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF).

auditors, when they go for audit, they should check thoroughly the fire, maintenance and also should be very much strict on this. Then we can be rectified and now as a management we are doing regular job, but practically we are not free here. When I am working, if I feel these people are not giving feedback accordingly, that means there is some disturb and I should get the feedback and I should monitor the thing whether they are working perfect or not. Is my generator room is perfect or not, is there are loose electrical cables, plugs, sockets or not? We should get the feedback, likewise if we can be strict on the maintenance, monitoring or feedback, I feel that we can reduce our fire.

One system has given by the H&M, which is to establish management system. In every subject, commitment, objective and what we are doing, implementation, monitoring feedback for the maintenance and for this fire safety are required. If we can follow this structure and inspecting it actually, fire risk will be reduced. Another point is cautiousness, awareness. Worker died on this fire hazard, so if we go on workers awareness recurrently, they will not die. If we have two stairs minimum and workers are aware, they will not die on the fire hazard. Not monthly, but twice in a month we shall go on evacuation drill regularly and unannounced drill and with the fire team along with WPC members involving, then workers will get cautious and fire risk will be reduced.

Another thing is that we are doing all this, but our production sometimes do not let the worker join counseling, awareness and for evacuation drill. Sometime they are telling like in this month, there should not be any fire drill, rather make it later after two or three months. The owners and management must sit twice in a month at least for fire drill and unannounced drill and such rule should be in the factory. We are doing all, we are making the paper, but practically we are not doing 100% ok. Instead of waiting for the government, order of the BGMEA, their checklist, we should make our checklist, we should develop our management system and we should implement the thing, we should give the feedback, even buyers auditor should get the feedback from our factory. Because I know whatever the development, we got, that is only due to buyer and CSR, CoC Audit, not by the government, BGMEA. Mr. Towhidur said 100% correct that BGMEA people come and put 'yes, yes' and sometimes they took two pants or shirts and go. We should be practical to save our life, workers, the factories and to sustain our business. Thank you very much.

Mr. von Mitzlaff, Organizer

Mr. Qazi M. Ashraf from Tiffany's Knit Wear Ltd. is a manufacturer and he is giving his example, view point of what he proposes. The management system, I think this is very much what we all looking for. Actually we have after the tea break the example from a manufacturer, we will hear from Ha-meem Group, how they have responded to the fire risk in their factory by the management system looking to fire risk and I am looking forward to hear their presentation after the tea break. we also have after the tea break an fire insurance company with us and this is Sadharan Bima Corporation and I invited a fire insurer to give us their procedures on assessing the fire risk as well as how do determine the insurance policy, we are hearing also this from and also we are likely to hear from one of the buyer about their project on fire improvement. With this outlook, I invite you for a cup of tea or coffee.

Mr. Mostan Hossain, Deputy Secretary – Ministry of Labour & Employment, GoB

It been more interactive session, if the BGMEA, BKMEA were invited here for discussion. Because the fire risk in the RMG sector, BGMEA and BKMEA are the appropriate person to answering these questions. I don't know whether they had been invited or not?

Mr. von Mitzlaff, Organizer

I like to react. I might say, it is unfortunate we having this question at almost every Round Table and today at our 11th session again. In other words, we do our best efforts to invite them by writing letter, fax, emails and follow up over phone. BGMEA and BKMEA in Dhaka knows about our round table agenda. Eventually even confirming their participation at Dhaka, but we are missing their presence. That is unfortunately the experience in Dahka for the last 3 years. I fully agree, they need to be here, but I don't know, who in Dhaka will make them attending?

– End Opening Session –

– Tea Break –



Minute of silence in memory of the fire vicims at Tazreen Fashion and Smart Export Garments factories during the morning session.

V. Secod session

Presentation

- Capacity Building Project on Fire Prevention & Electrical Safety by PVH Corporation
- Factory example fire safety approach **by** Ha-Meem Group
- Fire Insurance by Sadharan Bima Corporation

Mr. von Mitzlaff, Organizer

We are going to continue with our working session after the tea break and I have been requested to give another two second to our friend Dr. Wajed first, as he has to leave pretty soon and wanted to give the comments and then we will hear from Ha-meem Group.

Dr. Wajed ul Islam Khan, General Secretary - BTUC

Sorry dear brothers and sisters that I am taking floor again and I have to leave because I have another meeting at 12 o'clock. I have explained the points, which I mentioned before. But one thing I want to mention now that in case this strategy to reduce fire risks in the garment sector. To reduce the fire risks I have mentioned many other points, but one point I left only that is the proper trade union. The proper trade union is internationally accepted throughout the world, not only in Bangladesh, the proper trade union can resolve lots of issues in any sector, particularly in the garments. So if there is a proper trade union, it is not replaceable by the participation committee, what the employers are telling, it is not replaceable by the workers committee, but which is established throughout the world as per ILO Convention 87 and 98. We think the proper trade union can reduce lots of risk factors in garment sector in fire side also. Thank you very much.

Dr. Zia Rahman, Moderator

Welcome to this working session and we will start with the individual factory experience as we know that Bangladesh has developed a very peculiar system that individuals, owners roles are replaced by the BGMEA. I think this is a new tradition and some individual companies developing their own strategies to handle all source of problems related to workers conditions and upholding workers interest. In this regard, I would like to request Mr. Mehub, who represents PVH Corporation, a reputed buyer with brands like: Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger and others.

Mr. Mehub Hossain, Sr. Compliance Officer – PVH Corporation

I am Mehub Hossain from PVH Corporation, I am going to share about a concept of Capacity Building Project on Fire and Electrical Safety, that we tested last year. In late 2011, we did a field study in our factories to understand and observe their practices about maintenance and monitoring of fire and electrical safety. After doing that study, we came up with three major findings:

1. There is a lack of co-ordination, many departments are responsible for monitoring and maintenance like compliance, cleaning department, electrical department,

maintenance department, but in most cases these departments work in a disjointed manner. So they are missing the synergistic effect that they could had have a proper co-ordination among them.

2. The lack of system of monitoring on a regular basis. Many factories do the monitoring and maintenance work on a piece meal basis all through a small team, for example: maybe one or two fire safety officers responsible for monitoring the fire extinguishers in the factory, which leads lot of room for error.
3. The majority of the workforce in a factory is actually the production related workforce, starting from workers to senior level management. Lacking the understanding of necessary involvement in monitoring and maintenance the responsibility is not only with maintenance, electrical or compliance department, having only a partly role here.



Having this learning with us, we tried to connect all these dots to bring up with a system that can give a better synergistic effect in all their reports. In early last year, we started a project with some of our supply chain partners. We shared with them the concept that I am going to share with you. The main thing is assign small, small additional responsibilities to everybody so that they can have a better result. for example, there will a small responsibility for the workers may be a sewing machine operator, who is coming everyday cleaning

his/her sewing machine the cover part and the machine oil area, can also clean the cover of the motor. She or he can look at the electrical connection to see whether there is any loose wire or not, whether the socket or plug has been broken or not. Definitely she will not clean it or repair it. But if she can find a problem, she can inform the designated person. Instead of waiting for the electrical department coming and checking - if that information goes back to the electrical department, that makes a lot of help.

Then we build the system of having a three level monitoring systems. The first level will be the people from the poor level staff including the supervisors who is working through his line all the day. If he takes daily 15-20minutes to check this along with may be the fire extinguishers in his line whether the pressure is good or not, whether the physical condition is good or not, that's a help. Then we can co-ordinate with the maintenance and the compliance team to replace it or repair it if needed. The second level team with the management can play a bigger role in it, they can check the whole floor. The electrical in-charge of that particular floor can check the electrical load condition, we know that lot of electrical incidents happens because of misbalance of the electrical load. They can check that, if they can do it may be on a weekly basis and they can do the feedback, give report and work in co-coordinately to resolve the issue. Sr. level management, they can not only monitor the whole factory, may be in a month, but they can arrange the training for the other level team members and the workers for their responsibility in this regard.

This synergy effect works, giving a better feedback mechanism that helps them to reduce a resolve the problem in a more proactive manner. We shared this with our supply chain partners, we tested with them through eight months and with their

enormous help and support, we have been able to successful build this capacity in their factories.

Now we are implementing the same concept in all our factories in Pakistan. We have a plan to implement also at all our factories in Bangladesh and India. That's all what I wanted to share with you. Thank you for your patience.

Major (retd) Khairul Basher, Director (Compliance) - Hameem Group



Hon'ble moderator Prof. Zia Rahman and Mr. v.Mitzlaff, Organizer LIFT Standards, thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to speak about our experience and our actions from the fire safety. Actually regarding fire safety we all are working. it's not only the factories, the wonderful Round Table today, this a very demanding subject right now a days, the government, BGMEA, BKMEA, buyers, factories, NGO's, trade unions all are working on this line thinking how to improve. I do agree with Dr. Wajed that not a single person should die due to

fire incidents that should be our aim and we mean it and from the factory side from Ha-meem Group, we do it. You will be very happy to know that there was some discussion over here that the owners are not involving themselves in fire safety. But I can tell you that Mr. A.K. Azad, the owner of 25 factories Ha-meem Group, he also visits the factories frequently to see this safety standard and he also advised. They all are very much concerned now a day, so far fire safety is concern. Now I will touch at my later stage regarding the PVH pilot project about the safety, but before that actually what we have done to improve upon the safety standards of our factories, I like to highlight.

First of all, we did the electrical assessment of most of our factories by the 3rd party and in one electrical assessment they took for one factory more than one month. You know electricity is a vital factor, if there are some problems, or any loopholes in electrical sight, then there may be incident. To check our factories, we spend on these electrical assessments. Now I like to take some of the points actually what they found out. During the assessment they found 100's of points in our factories like: fault in the circuit breaker, cable, loose plug, temperature problem, loose connection, imbalance loads, loose holder of fuse, terminal loose, undersized cable, improperly fixed cables, loose nut-bolts, no separator used, insufficient ventilations were the major defaults. Once detected, we resolved almost all the issues.

Fire safety assessment was also done by SAI (Social Accountability International) at one of our factory and found some defaults. Suppose, they had an observation on the exit signs, electrical equipments inspections, fire extinguisher not matching with the place where kept, dust on the various electrical equipments, electrical channels, pipelines were not marked, combustible substances in the electrical control room, no lighting rod, shaft for electric condors pipe between the floors not isolated. This means, if it is not isolated this is a fire hazard on one floor and with the temperature

it can go to other floors and may ignite fire. SAI also suggested for a sprinkler system.

These are the points we could gather from the SAI and we have almost corrected those in all in our factories. Moreover we also organized a fire safety audit by 3rd party, which is Bureau Veritas and they also had number of observations on our factories, which we corrected almost. We also installed a gas leakage sensor for the generator and boiler room - very important. One of the speaker told this morning something about the generator and boiler, which are isolated at our factory and in none of our factories they are within the factory buildings.

We then replaced the normal fire hose into hose reels more easy to use and save handling time during fire. Very important: we procured mobile fire car with a fire engine, on in Ashulia and one at our Tongi zone. With the fire mussel we have employed retired fire department officers. This is given us a big boost and lot of capacity as it takes time until the fire department arrives at the factory. We also dug huge ponds at our two zones with the capacity of 50 lakh gallons of water. In case of fire, our mobile fire engine can use these ponds and the fire department can use this water. In addition, we are having water underground water reservoirs with the capacity of 20,000 gallons, a huge volume. Actually, water is the main requirement during the fire fighting. A fire hydrant is very important and we are in the final stage of installing in all our factories. Regarding the fire rated doors, suggested by SAI, we are working with a Chinese company to install those fire rated doors at our factories making our exits safe from smoke and heat. Workers can then getting out in case of any incidents at the factory. Regarding the sprinkler system, we have decided to install at all our critical area like: bonded ware house, finished goods stores and finishing section. We are installing auto-sprinkler system auto-starting water at a given temperature and prevent the fire spread.

One of our speaker Mr. Wajed, told not to build factories with more than two stories. We are having factories six, seven even 10 floors factories. What we did: we had six staircases in one of our factories and adding more two staircases, a total of eight staircases. However, the law does not states the number of staircases above two.

Actually we need to minimize the evacuation time and therefore crucial is the width of each staircase of 45 inches (legal requirement). Our staircases are 100 inches, even 120 inches wide. We are confident that workers can get down through many staircases if there is any incident. One major decision: we have started shifting our bonded warehouse outside off the factory building. In addition we are fixing steel ladders around the factory building, also a suggestion from one of the 3rd party and we found to be fruitful, instead of a rope ladder, which is not safe and decided against fixing steel ladders.

Very important is the lint condition. We found lint in the factory in the Busbar equipments, which can give scope of igniting the fire. So we have taken it very seriously and we actually monitor this daily. We have the compliance team and additional team with cameras. If there they find any issue, so far lint is concerned in may be in the machine motors or in any other electrical equipment, they take this photograph and we just work with the factories on first condition.



The leftover and rejected goods out of the production were kept together. We have developed a system minimising to keep in the factory and reducing the risks to fuel fire risk. Fire equipment training is incorporated to new workers training. Recruited workers training start after employment and is mandatory to train fire equipment and we will cover 100% of our workers. By now 80% of our workers

are trained in using the fire equipments. Fire fighters are trained by the Fire Department. Beside BGMEA is and Fire Department are also offering training.

Buyers accept the training of the Fire Department, but I want to touch the point that there are limitations with the Fire Service and the BGMEA in terms of trainers. If we write to them for training request it takes six to seven months until we receive the training. Here, I request to increase their capacity. Whenever a factory requires training, it should be possible to conduct in shorter time.

We also have started involving the local fire brigade during the fire evacuation drill and we found this is very useful. Take the example of Tazreen incident, when no factory management were around in time of the fire started. When the fire brigade arrived not knowing the layout of the factory, where the reservoir is, where is the water source located and how to get behind factory building? We started practicing with the local Fire Department, call them when we practice, which facilitate they familiarize like, where is our reservoir, our layout, our building condition and so on. In case of fire incident Fire Department is already oriented and this is very important in my view.

In order to deal with the migration in the garment factories, we have involved permanent staff when forming the fire fighting team. The workers with the permanent staffs are given priority when forming fire fighting team and given more responsibility.

Next, I like to touch on the fire safety pilot project, which is running at one of our factory with PVH and found to be very effective. I like to thank Mr. Mehub and PVH for orientation of this pilot project and meanwhile we started this approach with all our factories starting last January. Mr. Mehub already pointed out the team levels of teams working at the factory according to the pilot project: 1st level team, 2nd level team and 3rd level team. On each floor, we have 3 levels of team: 1st level team - 10-15 members of line chiefs, supervisors, mechanics, electricians, general workers, health and safety committee members. They check daily the safety arrangement of the floor with a checklist with 23 issues to be checked by each team member. This 1st level team have primary and secondary responsibilities: 1. To check particular fire equipments and fire safety arrangements at the work station and 2nd the to check the entire floor. If violations found, he/she has immediately report it to the respective team leader and the team leader will report to the second level team. Included in those 23 check points are the exits, exit paths, exit doors (do they open outward or inward), sliding doors (locked or unlocked), emergency lights, fire alarm, fire extinguishers, fire hoses, gas mask (availability), smoke detectors (whether smoking

policy is followed), combustibles (controlled or not), flammables (kept in cabinet or not), electrical equipment overheating. Those and others are the checkpoints by the first level team on daily basis.

The second level team validate those issues reported by the first level team whether the eight to twelve members reported consistently like: maintenance in-charge or supervisors, electrical in-charge or supervisors, compliance officers, welfare officers, health and safety committee members with a total of 38 checking points including the 23 checking points of the first level team. Randomly checked from the first level team of 23 points and in addition to check electrical the panel board, wiring, maintenance of elevator, unauthorized electric connection, evacuation plan, evacuation drill (whether conducted or not), fire water arrangement, efficiency of the fire fighting team, workers handling on fire extinguishers, gas sensor, fire hydrant, electrical over-heating, blow off switch or any problem with circuit breaker, inspection & maintenance records of generators and boilers, air-condition, motors. Those points are checked weekly. The core team consists of six to eight members, team leader is the Executive Director with the overall responsibility to ensuring fire safety overseeing the 1st and 2nd level team as well as general workers. Workers are motivated to involve themselves in fire safety.

I like to highlight over here that we think about a fire safety electrical horn. But we have taken the case of sabotage very seriously and employed a Sr. retired army officer to take care of high security alert at our factory. We are giving high importance and we have installed close circuit cameras in all of the factories, roughly more than 200 cameras, monitored by the security personnel. During the off-period, the CC Cameras are playing a vital role. Moreover prior to close down the factory, we thoroughly check the factory by the team, which takes one to two hours in order to be alerted on any incident or sabotage attempt. Thank you.

Mr. Nazim Uddin, Manager, Sadharan Bima Corporation

Thank you very much to give me the floor.

I am Nazim Uddin, Manager, Sadharan Bima Corporation. Our business is to take risk by payment of premium. This premium generates our income and we pay the claim according to the insured policy. Today the topic is how to reduce the risk especially for fire.

We analyze the general causes of fire, the causes of accident or fortuitous fire, which damage the insured property. Some examples of typical fire causes are: People behaviour, Process, Heating system, Lighting and power system, Waste, Materials, Trade process.

We identified some major causes of fire:

- Heating and industrial processes
 - 1) Suitability of the heater or machine for the function it has to perform
 - 2) The location in which it is cited
 - 3) The way in which it is used
 - 4) The attention paid to its maintenance and repair
- Spontaneous combustion

- Smoking
- Electrical apparatus- over load, lack of maintenance, power lead external factor, environment
- Static electricity
- Arson

Poor housekeeping system contributes to the fire incidents:

- Untidy premises
- Congested premises
- No proper division between different trade process
- Allowing waste to accumulate
- Unsuitable storage of flammable liquids
- High piled storage

For the fire hazards materials used in industry, we classify into two categories:

- 1) Basic hazards –flash point, auto ignition temperature
- 2) Peculiar to storage, handling and processing

Fire hazards of building construction materials includes:

- Minimize the contribution to fire from the building fabric
- Restrict fire to the room of origin
- Preserve the structure
- Restrict external fire spread
 - Distance between the boundaries
 - The area of exposure-door, windows
 - Occupancy type
 - Presence of combustible materials

Structural Hazards includes:

- Vertical spread of fire
- Horizontal spread of fire
- Site planning

Method of fire protection includes:

- Building construction as per existing Building Code
- Fire extinguishing appliance hydraulic hose reels, fire bucket etc
- automatic fire alarm linked by telephone to fire alarm station
- automatic sprinkler installation
- external drenchers
- private fire brigade

Types of property, which may be insured are:

- Building, Machinery, stock
- Raw material
- Wip
- Finished goods



Insurance as safety shield against:

- Losing orders/customers
- Losing income/profit
- Ongoing lost – rents, rates
- Having to pay salary & wages

Mr. von Mitzlaff, Organizer

Thank you Mr. Nazim Uddin. I might want to ask whether the loss of salary can also be insured. For example, if the factory is closed for two or several months and the workers would still need to be paid, can this be part of the insurance policy?

Mr. Nazim Uddin, Manager, Sadharan Bima Corporation

Yes, in our government rule, workers compensation it is only one year policy and then it may be renewable like: workmen compensation, personal accident, etc. it is the root level, suppose it's a people personal accident is a project, here the insurance is 100,000Tk. We also have personal accident insurance, group insurance, etc.

Open Floor Dialogue

Mr. Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmmed, Asst. Executive Director - BILS



Thank you Mr. Moderator and distinguished participants. Just I would like to draw the kind attention of the house, if we go to agenda that is "Strategies to reduce fire risks" and if you consider that now a situation where government do a tripartite committee is making a national plan, which is a huge achievement for us after these incidents. So we need to give some input for the national action plan, which can be incorporated, still the government official is here and on that issue actually there are many aspects of fire safety. One is technical and infrastructural, which was detailed, discussed and I don't want to mention this again. But I would like to draw that there is a cultural and environmental dimension also. We need to create a situation where everybody working in a factory, have a mindset, sense of safety that we are secured. if we cannot ensure it, we cannot actually make an improvement only through making technical improvement. Everybody we are

talking like this, but nobody mentions how many person died by fire and how many person died by stampede or by locked gates?

Actually, very few people died by fire, the major casualty happened from since 1990's to till Smart Garments actually were because of locked exit and very poor exit strategy, either it is staircase or whatever it is. How we can remove this, even a very well equipped factory, if it is locked. You can have many training for the workers, lots of fire fighting equipment and everything, then also what will happen? What happened in Tazreen factory? How many workers died out of this 112 by fire? Workers died first under locked by fume and then they burnt. That things need to be consider very clearly, otherwise all the discussion about technical improvement will be failed. So, this is my kind approach to all of you and for that three or four initiatives are to be taken.

One is workers participation in safety improvement measure in all aspects through their proper representation. Already we discussed that workers need to be represented by the trade union because an individual worker, whoever he or she is, may be very aware, courageous, knowledgeable, but he or she cannot represent properly to his/her employer. According to Bangladesh Labour Law, if worker informed the employer that we fear for accident and then the accident happen, the compensation will be double. But we have no instance that in any factory, workers have that courage to inform direct the top owner regarding the safety condition of the factory. Hence workers should have the scope to be represented by their elected representative.

Second the safety committee by proper participation of the workers is essential. Each and every factory should have safety committee and according to law, we have the National Industrial Health and Safety Committee (tripartite). But we don't find any representation anywhere, even in government national action plan. But according the labour law 2006, a National Industrial Health and Safety Committee exists now in Bangladesh. This is my second humble submission, that the Safety Committee should be formed with proper participation of the workers. Otherwise workers cannot think that they would be safe in at workplace.

Third, the example should be create that law will be prevail and any responsible person violating the law, cause any damage of life and property, will brought into book of law, which we found a major lacking in our country. A business association can challenge the state and the law not to allow the law enforcing agency to arrest the responsible person, seriously violating the law and send him for the court. We are not saying that an innocent person should be punished, whether he is owner or supervisor or anybody else. But when everybody knows that there is serious violation of law, the gate was locked, there are shutting gates, which is not allowed by the law. According to law, factory should have the door, which can be open from the inside to outside and even after this catastrophe. We found the whole nation see that the main principal responsible person has not brought to the law. Even the compensation, which we are now saying everybody with all the loud voice will eventually receive 600.000 Tk. or 1.000.000 Tk (6.000 or 10.000 €); this is not a compensation!

This is a strategy where we are transferring the responsibility from the owners to other people, government and buyers, which is very damaging and dangerous strategy presently practiced in Bangladesh. If we cannot stop it now, we will find a

situation where everybody will just ignore the law. Because everybody will know, if there is an incident, then buyers, government, insurance and foundations will come and provide compensation. This can only be in addition and should be very clearly stated that the first responsibility lies with the owners to ensure the safety and also their first responsibility to pay the compensation by the owners. This is the law, which passed in the Bangladesh Parliament.

In addition to, everybody can compensate, help and support. That's need to be ensured, otherwise it is a very dangerous game, we are playing in Bangladesh that responsible is me and compensation is given by someone others. In this process, workers are not involved anywhere. Where is the owner when the compensation ceremony is going on? Even other workers are giving the money, among the 600.000 Tk. paid to Tazreen victims 100.000 Tk. is given by the workers of other factories. This money is given by the workers Welfare Foundation is not government money or owners contribution. It is money collected from other sources, like Bangladesh workers, government and buyers, who are donating but not the employer - who is basically the responsible for giving the compensation. Isn't this strange?

Again, these are my simple statements and I don't want to take more time. But as the Fire Brigade Director (operation) is here, I still like to say: Whether we can introduce some low cost and local strategy? I found that many people died actually when jumping. Could you introduce in our law or safety plan the requirement of a jumping net in the factory? In case of fire, support from outside can set the safety blanket for possible escape workers can jump. Smart Garments is only a two stories building and no way to exit from the factory existed – the reason why 7 people died! Doors, locks and windows should be open. I don't want to go further, but I would like to say that improving the cultural and environmental situation are very important and we need to create a culture, where everybody should feel working in a safe environment. This implies any negligence the responsible person will be brought in the book of law and will be punished. Only by this, we can make a nice, healthy and safe working place. Thank You.

Major Mohammad Mahboob, Director (Operation & Maintenance), Fire Service and Civil Defence Directorate



I want just to give some correction about my previous speaker comments. Tazreen Fashion, I was present there from 8 pm up to next day 12 pm and have been the commander for that fire fighting unit. You mentioned several times about the locked gate. I need to correct this a bit as I saw some locked gate has been showing in some printing media. But actually the door was not locked. Nowadays we are somehow happy that all the garments

factories are usually not locked. But there may be some factories, although we hope that there are no locking system nowadays. At Tazreen all the doors were open and numbers of workers they went to the rooftop and jumped from there. There were

about 1.100 to 1.200 workers there and each could have been evacuated, only 100 died by fire and about 1.000 or 1.100 workers escaped easily. But the 100, who were burnt to death, it has been the problem with the mid-level management! This morning our Hon'ble Secretary informed that they are already under custody as they restricted the workers to leave the factory and consequently these deaths happened. Therefore we should not directly say that the gate had been locked as you give a wrong message to our foreign friends, donors and buyers. This is my observation.

Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmmed, Asst. Executive Director, BILS

I am giving the explanation: I am not speaking only of Tazreen. Since 1990's we all have researched in depth on that. The people who escaped from Tazreen, they dropped from the ventilation, roof and the exits were locked. If they were not locked - what about this collapsible gate? Is it allowed by the law? We are saying that since 1990's, if we examine all the deaths is not because of fire, it's absence of a exit strategy, staircases, all locked and these have been the main reason. We are very grateful to the fire department as they are actually the department, working day and night for the safety of workers. But the ex. Director General of Fire Service, he made a statement in the parliamentary committee hearing and I had been present as a participant. He said that workers actually died by fume first. Hence, it's not correct that there had not been a lock or does anybody wants to confuse the buyers?

This RMG industry is our industry and this industry has grown due to numerous contributions of owners, workers and the nation. It is the nation, who would loose their subsidy of taxes and would sacrifice a lot. Workers also sacrifice and owners fighting for the business internationally. This industry is not anybody's personal business, rather it is a national business and we are responsible to protect it. Here, don't blame anybody, we would want to confuse the industry in front of buyers. I am saying that the strategy today shall be to prevent a situation, where owners can escape. No owner is our enemy, but responsible person should be in the book of the law. According to law, owner is the main responsible person, not the mid-level management.

Major Mohammad Mahboob, Director (Operation & Maintenance), Fire Service and Civil Defence Directorate

I am speaking specifically about the Tazreen Garments incident. It is not because off the locked collapsible gate why 111 people died. It is because the numbers of workers entered on the rooftop and more than 1.000 workers had been lead by the aisle. But there are some restrictions and problems with the mid-level executives. It is not our intention to save the owner. We are repeatedly telling that owners are storing their goods in wrong places like at the reception area. All the three exits finally had been leading over here. If the goods would not have been stored there, then these incidents would have not happen. You see, we are not trying to save, rather we are saying the facts. Thank you.

Adv. Farida Yesmin, Law Practitioner, Bangladesh Supreme Court

I like to say something in my local language. {I am Adv. Farida Yesmin and thank I Major Mahboob to speak on the Tazreen. It is apparent that our buyers are present here and in no way, we want to hamper our country business. Also we do not want that any of our workers die due to our internal fault. I have a question to the D.G. Fire Service: On 31st Oct, 2010 Tazreen authority completed the construction of 2 storied building and the next year extended from 3 floor to 7th floor with an issued license for this extension, partly by the Fire Service authority. After the tragic incident, the Fire Service authority stated that the alley/road leading to the Tazreen Fashions had not bee wide enough for the fire service vehicle access and the Tazreen Fashions didn't have a water reservoir. Here my question: On what basis had the licence been for Tazreen Fashions been issued?



Another question: Last Fire License for Tazreen Fashions Ltd. expired on 30th June 2012 and the accident took place in November same year. What were the initiatives taken by the fire service in the meantime? If a factory does not comply with the relevant requirements, how does the Fire Service renewing the license? After we lost 112 workers, then the fire service is speaking about problems of a narrow road, missing water reservoir, etc.

I am sorry to say and inspite buyers are present, you cannot give such statement, which hides the truth. The whole country knows about the facts here and how the workers died in locked. We are very much sympathetic to those victims. I support the three points highlighted by Mr. Sultan and I strongly emphasize on changing the mind set up of our employers, government employees, workers, BGMEA, BKMEA and the Fire Service officials.

Dr. Wajed mentioned earlier that there are many loop-holes in our existing labour law. We, the labour side usually cannot express our position in this type of Round Table due to the language barrier. I would like to request the organizer to keep a translator, especially for the labour sector representatives, so that we can easily speak out of our problems and those can be translated accordingly. Although we have many loop-holes in the existing law, it was a result of our long run effort behind this and we also got a building code to follow. Implementation of both the existing law and the building code are very much important. May be revised law will be taking time but at least let us implement the existing one. I also thank the government that at least we have developed a national action plan and if this action plan works properly, the future fire accident risk will be minimized greatly. Why we need to think about the word 'if', it is because every time we see that although having something good, implementation is zero. I think we need to emphasize on the implementation and also need to form an immediate committee to look after the implementation of laws, policies, etc. Through the entire discussion, one thing is clear that in a modern factory like Tazreen Fashions, 112 workers died only due to

the problem of the mind set-up, although having the fire equipment present. Inspection and monitoring these issues should be strict from now on.

As a lawyer, I feel very ashamed that every time our owners are escaping from the law without having any reasonable punishment. They forgot the term 'CSR'! Why don't we set up an example to abide by law? I will request everyone that present here to look for something effective and on which we can work together. Our action plan shall be monitored and our views shall be reflected over there. This action draft can be made public through website, relevant peoples then can go through on it easily and comment on developing ideas. I like one thing of this existing draft very much and it is that for the first time there are deadlines mentioned on each activity. We need to be careful so that those deadlines work ultimately.} Thank you.

Major Khairul Basher, Director (Compliance), Ha-meem Group

I like to say something regarding the exit. My office is located on the 12th floor of a factory building and our Managing Director is sitting on the 10th floor of the same factory building. We don't want to die due to locked exit, actually in earlier exit used to be locked, but now a days I think the situation have improved a lot. We have told our workers that "As you don't want to die, so if you find any exit locked, just break it" and also the workers see in the media that due to the locked exit, workers are trapped and dying.

We all must make our own workplace safe and it is taken very seriously by Ha-meem Group. I think other factories have also taken it seriously that exit should not be locked in any condition and I think at present days the workers, managements are also aware about the safety regulations. I have visited the tazreen Fashions Ltd. and found that the exits of that factory were leading to the 'Bonded Warehouse'. Actually the fire spread into that bonded warehouse and may be for that the workers were trapped on the floor, they were late to respond the fire and meantime the fire has already spread out. I have seen that construction work was going on at Tazreen Fashions Ltd. and there were bamboos around the factory building and luckily lot of workers managed to get out of the factory building by climbing down those bamboos.

Mr. von Mitzlaff, Organizer

I have one thing came to my mind on the locked door issue. We talked about collapsible gates and just seek a clarification from the Ministry of Labour, as they published a circular banning the collapsible gates at the factories on the last month. Shortly after we have seen BGMEA came up with a circular also in this regard. Could you give us some clarification here?

Mostan Hossain, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment

In our Labour Act 2006 it is very much clear that there should not be any obstacle at any exit path, passage and exit point. To make it more effective, we have issued the circular and also have instructed BGMEA, BKMEA and the other factory owners that they should strictly follow this regulations on keeping the exit path open and obstacle free always, otherwise they will be brought under law. Although 'open and obstacle

free exit paths' are very clearly mentioned in the labour law, implementation of this law is not seen properly. Therefore recently the government have issued the circular. Another point Mr. Sultan had very nicely uttered that there should be proper representation and I full agree with him. Also Ms. Farida Yesmin very nicely



mentioned that we must have positive mind set to address these challenges. On government side, it is absolutely very hard to make all the workplace safe from fire and other incidents. But as we have ratified the ILO Convention 144 Tripartite Constituencies, thereby the government, workers and employers shall sit together to address these issues together on tripartite basis. The government in particularly the Ministry of Labour & Employment is committed to extend the necessary co-operation to reach a consensus on tripartite basis and we always maintain it very meticulously. Thank you.

Brig. Gen. Ali Ahmed Khan, D.G. Fire Service and Civil Defence Directorate

With due respect to those victims of Tazreen Fashions Ltd. I want to say some points on the Action Plan, which had been taken up by the Fire Service and Civil Defence. Fire Service and Civil Defence is the first responder to any kind of fire and diaster. This department has been updated its approach for the improvement of fire safety by shifting the concept 'Response Measures' to the 'Preventive Measures'.



Following that Preventive Measure, after the Tazreen Fashions fire incident, we have spread out our inspections. Around 1000 garment factories at Ashulia, Savar, Mirpur, Bangsal, Keraniganj and Narayanganj area have been inspected by our internal inspection teams and we have categorized that around 30% are in category 'A - Good category', 30% are in 'Average category that needs improvement' and rest 30% of

the factories are 'Below average category'. Some of the factories from this 'Below average category' are neither BGMEA nor BKMEA member. We have also taken follow up measures based on the findings identified during the inspections, the concerned garment factories have been advised to take necessary steps to improve the safety conditions within a month. Lawful action will be taken against those who would be failing to comply with the suggestions and advises that we have been provided to them. This inspection drive will be continuing on the regular basis.

We have also introduced the mobile court operations. Regular mobile court operations are enforced to take legal action against those, who violates the fire safety regulations and also we have established a confidential hotline mechanism for the workers or any other people to convey us the message on irregularities or lacking of any fire safety measures in the garment factories. Fire Service has also made a public notice through the national media, newspapers and electronic media regarding on these issues. Inter ministerial inspection committees which is headed by the respected Labour secretary Mr. Mikail Shipar and the high level Fire Service

Committee, headed by the D.G. Fire Service, randomly inspects the garment factories to check the fire safety conditions and other related issues.

BGMEA is providing fire fighting, risk and evacuation training to the mid-level officers for the member factories and two documentary films on fire safety, which were made by 19 international fashion brands in collaboration with the Fire Service, BGMEA, BKMEA are also being displayed to the factories. These are very helpful and appreciating measure to minimize the fire hazards in the factories. I also would like to highlight here some of the recommendations as well:

1. All factory building should be constructed according to BNBC rules and existing Fire Acts,
2. Ensure the use of standard electrical fittings;
3. Initiatives to be taken to establish garment villages away from the city with all available fire safety installations;
4. Give more preference to the horizontal establishment construction than the vertical one;
5. Shifting out the congested factories to the safer areas;
6. Establishing Fire Hydrant system and also keep provision of fire water tender in the big industries. As at present industries are in cluster form, so two or three garment owners can have common fire tender and hydrant network system, to help each other till the fire service unit arrives at the spot;
7. Provision for narrowing utility services like water, electricity and gas connection, for those who do not follow the building code. It can be like that the utility service connections will be provided to the constructed building after getting clearance from the Fire Service or RAJUK;
8. Moderating efforts at present by the BGMEA and BKMEA should be more tighten.

These are the few recommendations. Thank you for giving me the floor. *

Mr. Manjur Morshed, Sr. Social Compliance Adviror, GIZ (PSES)

With due respect to Mr. Basher from Ha-meem Group, I want to repeat one thing that is we must not expect the workers to break the lock in case of fire. Rather we must expect that as per the law, all exits should be unlocked during the working hour. I want to repeat that this is definitely very good as few of the brands are taking some good effective initiatives, but if we consider the holistic improvement and bigger impact on the whole industry nets, then isolated initiatives must not bring that huge improvement or impact, we really look for. So all of us actually should work under an umbrella and we find that National Tripartite Initiative can be that umbrella. So whoever has contacted with us with various approaches, we have told them that we are waiting for having a bigger platform initiative and we encourage everyone to come under that umbrella to really think on the effective, sustainable improvement in respect to the fire safety. May last point is likely a little proposal to Mr. Nizam Uddin from Sadharan Bima Corporation, is that in Germany actually it is the insurance company who is more concerned on the workplace safety than the factory. Because it is the insurance company who is ultimately responsible to pay the compensation after any incident happens. So, in Germany it is insurance company who have their own monitoring system to monitor the factories on regular basis and also have own training system as well. So, in future whether it is possible that the

insurance companies also come up with the programs like: regular monitoring and training programs for the workers of the insured factories? Thank you.

Mr. Qazi M. Ashraf, Manager, Tiffany's Wear Ltd.

Now a day we need emergency basis fire safety training, but we are not getting the required trainings from the Fire Service and Civil Defence. We are getting training from BGMEA likely once or twice in a year. But due to frequent workers migration in the factories, we are losing the fire trained persons. As result we cannot keep sufficient fire trained workers in a team. So, I like to give a proposal that both BGMEA or government authority can take an arrangement that from every factory they will make two or three pre-trainer for the factory, so that we can train our workers continuously and if possible also make a provision that the pre-trainer can issue certificate to the trained workers. Thank you.

Adv. A.K.M Nasim, Sr. Legal Conselor, Americal Center for Int'l Labour Solidarity



I want to mention two minor issues and my comments are towards the Fire Service Department. In September 2011, Fire Service Department issued one directives towards the factory owners that all the tinshed constructions from the factory rooftop should be removed by December 31, 2011. Then later we came to know that a high level committee takes the decision that 75% of the tin-shed can be exists there and 25%

should remain of it. My question to the Fire Service Department is that by giving such relaxation to the owners, whether your fire safety efforts have been compromised? I seek your opinion on this and another issue is that we know fire occurred in big factories like Tazreen, Ha-meem and instantly managements take care of the injured workers and paid all the medical expenses although there is no such requirement in the law to provide medical expenses for the injured workers. So, in this area, there should be an amendment in the law that in case of a fire or any other accident occurs, if workers get injured, their medical expenses should be paid by the owners. Another last point I want to say that the D.G. of Fire Service mentioned that the government has engaged mobile courts to look after the fire safety issues. We know that the mobile courts are authorized to enforce the labour law provisions in the garment factories, but we haven't heard anything since then. Is there any statistics like mobile courts have detected some lacks in the factories and punished the factories for violating the fire safety provisions?

Major Mohammad Mahboob, Director (Operation & Maintenance), Fire Service and Civil Defence Directorate

After one or two fire incidents in earlier, it was decided that all the factory rooftop should be open so that the fire service can evacuate the employees easily from there. So initially it was decided that the rooftop should be open, but the factory owners were strongly requesting that they only use the rooftop as only for administrative purpose, dining and prayer facility. Following request from them, it is the Labour & Employment Ministry who have finally decided that 75% of the rooftop can be used as for administrative, praying and dining purpose only and 25% space should kept open towards the road side face so that fire service vehicles can enter and evacuate the victims. Regarding the mobile court, since 2010 we have started our own mobile court operations because it was very clumsy job for the Fire Service officers to go to court against any owner, so we have decided to get the authority to enforce mobile court. From 2010 up to today, we have enforced about 335 mobile court operations in RMG sector and we have penalized about 14.9 million TK to the different garment factories.

Mr. Martin Dietschi, Project Manager (Supplier Qualification Project), Swisscontact – South Asia Regional office (SARO)

I want to know that will this initiative be continuing or is a time bound affair or what's the future? You talked about couple of hundred factories now but there are around 5000 factories roughly and following the discussion around the room, one of the key issues seems to be the enforcement of laws. We have systems in place, but we need enforcement. Will this mobile court operations continue to long term or is this something like just for six months and then close the set up?

Brig. Gen. Ali Ahmed Khan, Director General, Fire Service and Civil Defence Directorate

This is a continuous process, we normally get some magistrate from the local administration and with that composite team, we usually carry out this sort of mobile court operations. After the incident the intensity of the mobile court operations had been enhanced and we have brought a certain plan.

Mr. von Mitzlaff, Organizer

I try to summarize little bit the impression that I have received so far from this morning. We have heard a lot on manythings and also partly quite details about the technical issues as well. We have also heard how tripartite parties try to respond to the fire risk situation and we got the skeleton of the national plan. We know that individually some activities are taking place in terms of approach to involve workers participation, like the example in Ha-meem Group and perhaps which is supported by PVH. We have also heard notably the German Ambassador is trying to scope at least the German Companies to come together and I assume that is also advocating for German Companies to link up and come under the national plan. From the other side, there is also possibility to harmonize may be among the European level and in

spite of all these activities, efforts and recognition, I still heard some frustration due to lack of implementation and also due to missing link from the workers participation side. Even to that extent the committees (health and safety) are not the in part of building up and developing this tripartite plan. There is a question, although workers shall be represented through the tripartite, still not to a mentionable extent. So, I fear if we talked about rightly the word 'strategies to reduce' and I still feel that there are expressed situations from the civil society but definitely that has been set for the worker representative are not fully on board regarding setting up the plan or even allocation or implementing on this. So first my question is to express sort of feeling which you share, second what are the potentials of feel with the upcoming co-ordination and implementation of that broad and comprehensive activities we expecting and what is very interesting is to see the time bound and also there are many activities which we heard from Joint Secretary this morning, are in time line by March 2013. We have the second group of activities by 16th June, 2013 and another one is by the end of this year and few are later in the end of 2014. But I wonder these are lot of revisions and specifying the guideline, so I still fear that procedure of the practical step to get into implementation might face something different. The civil society, worker representatives on board, something which is a big unknown factor, may be a larger challenge. Would you like to comment on that impression and what needs to be specified or go into procedure steps to avoid those things?

Mr. Martin Dietschi, Project Manager (Supplier Qualification Project), Swisscontact – South Asia Regional office (SARO)

I think the key question is what to be the incentives for the producers and others to make improvements? Now one possibility is that this tripartite agreement has enough bite, they have the legal back off and you can push this thorough. Then you can talk about the enforcement again and the other thing is financial incentives. You can do this through the buyers as like PVH is working with their producers. Also you can do some financial incentives through insurance by saying as you are paying for this insurance, if something happens it will be your money and thereby you are creating some sort of incentives. And the word 'How' - do not seem to me a key problem, because as the Ha-meem and some other donors, buyers and associations project have shown that it is possible to make improvements. We heard a whole list of improvements that someone like Ha-meem has made. So, to a large extent some people will obviously want to meet the required improvements and others may need to be forced. I believe there are only two ways of forcing people, either enforcing the law or with financial incentives. Thank you.

Dr. Zia Rahman, Moderator

I like to say something from the academics point of view, because I am working in this area and I have some observations and also I opted my higher degree specifically on 'Labour Union and Labour Movements'. So, I think I have some observations especially in terms of the role of state and employers. I totally agree that some concrete suggestions are given by Mr. Martin. That is fine, but I think we have some structural weakness also as Adv. Farida Yesmin mentioned on it, which is 'mind-set'. It is really a problem from both the states and employers point of view.



Employers think that they are providing employment to the poor women and also they think that if they hadn't given the women this sort of employment opportunity, then female workers might had to work in the domestic arena. So, to be very honest my observation is that most of the employers don't care actually about labour law and I also encountered many owners who even don't think that they should abide

by the labour law. They have some mid level management and in some cases these mid-level management are the real evil for this industry. I talked with many owners, who don't even visit their factories regularly and I think this is not a very good and fair industrial relation system. In terms of the role of the state, I must say that state always patronize the employers and there is a kind of unholy alliance between the owners and state and this is a very old discussion that many academics figured out. I went through many international research related to third world countries export oriented industrialization and I specially mention Ronaldo Mann, the famous academics from Ireland mentioned that Bangladeshi owners are still carrying out those sort of old 'Dolores Approach'. They are selfish and don't care about the workers welfare. To be straight always, I totally agree with Mr. Sultan that we didn't see any punitive measures against those peoples, who were responsible for all those deaths and accidents. There is a recommendation that if the state actually works neutrally and takes real measures, then we might get some healthy working environment. You all are aware about the illegal building of BGMEA, this is a kind of symbol of power relations for the elite class or ruling elite. Though we all know that this is an illegal building, nobody dare to destroy the building even we have a big project surrounded by BGMEA building. So, that is actually some of my critical observation and we all present here want a good and healthy industrial relation system. Sometime there is another gossip and discourse that those elite, media and some state controlled organizations always make some story that this academics, labour leaders are against the industry. That's bad thing and not correct at all. Thank you.

Brig. Gen. M.A. Mondol (Retd), Executive Director, Ha-meem Group



I want to say that if you make generalization with all garments, then it would not be ok. We all are talking about the garments and sweaters, thinking that all garment owners, RMG industries are on same standard. It's not like that, therefore I would request to talk on specific issue, rather making a common generalization. There had been some discussions like that owner are unaware of the factory auditing results, I think this is not right. As we fail to bring the BGMEA, BKMEA here, so we should not talk in their absence. We can talk only on those issues, which the hired

managements are violating in the factories. The industries whether garments or sweater are not being run without any rules and regulations. I think all of you know that our buyers auditors are very expert and when they go to the factory they spend in cases even one, two or three days and also they are very uncompromising people. So, therefore to those which are the compliance oriented factories, I think when we talk we must be give some due respect. Another type of factories are there who works for sub-contract, because of not fulfilling the requirements of compliance and are not approved by the buyers. They go to compliance oriented factories to get contract and run business like that. Another thing is that there are some 3rd category industries installing 10 or 15 machines and they are destroying us. I can be an owner also by installing 15 machines and employ 10 girls and can easily become 'Mondol & Company'. But, this 'Mondol & Company' cannot be like the Opex Group, so my suggestion and humble request to the audience is that let us differentiate the three categories of garments and do not generalize all. If we make common generalization, then compliance oriented garments (who are doing better and looking after the safety and other issues for workers), will be frustrated. So, I humbly request you to do justice to people, who deserve it. Thank you.

Mr. von Mitzlaff, Organizer

From 2007 to 2013 many years have passed, so hopefully we have a good one and I also acknowledge that it is good to differentiate. Luckily we have fore-comers and we take Ha-meem as example of implementing and doing in effort and also have had the factory visit and discussion with you trying to emphasize on mind changing of all. It not only with the top and mid level management may be the lower level management also are difficult to chase, I fully appreciate that effort. What I would like is to take some recommendations out from today on what is you expectation after furnishing the tripartite national plan? Let's try to generalize who are sourcing from Bangladesh, what are the expectations towards the manufacturer, labour sector - either structured in terms of trade union? Please give your contributions to whom are you expressing the expectation to improve the situation and please keep in knowledge that there is a national plan which will be put on table very soon. There are other initiatives or activities, some of them we have mentioned and others we don't know. So, we may be grouping our expectations what needs to be done next in order to get stratified implementation of fire safety improvement? Anyone would like to come up with an expectation, please state to whom of the group you are expecting for: the government, buyer community, suppliers, labour sector?

Mr. Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmmed, Asst. Executive Director, BILS

We actually spend lot of time today with narrative discussion, but I would like to request few things. Actually expectation from the government is that government should make a multi-stakeholder implementation committee or advisory committee to monitor the implementation process and that should not be restricted only within the tripartite, but tripartite plus those who want to participate like: buyer groups, civil society experts and manufacturer groups and that also should be represented properly. Here frequently we are taking about BGMEA and BKMEA and I am sorry to refer it that one of our participants said that they are not here, but still the manufacturer representatives are here. We should keep in mind that BGMEA is not

legally responsible for a briefing. We depend on many things for BGMEA, BKMEA and mostly they pretend that they are responsible for many things, but in the end if it is challenging court, then BGMEA is just an owners association. BGMEA is a trade body, it is not registered under the Bangladesh Labour Law to represent the owners group in the tripartite forum. I am sorry to mention it, still they act and it is good that they act, but it need to be legalize, regularize, otherwise if they punish one of their member for violating their instruction and if that member go to the court, then court will simply laugh at what is happening? BGMEA is regulating under the commerce ministry and tripartite system regulating under labour ministry, there are two different ministry, two different regulations and registration acts. I am not saying that we exclude BGMEA, but don't depend on many things to BGMEA, which is not



their authority and which is not their responsibility also. It is fine that they are with us, but BEF (Bangladesh Employers Federation) is the authority to represent. Same as for the trade union, who is the representative? I am saying that it should be tripartite, but in addition we should be plug who would like to participate in this process. I would like to request the government there should be a budget to implement that action

plan and all the international initiatives are in severe need of co-ordination, which my younger brother Morshed also mentioned very nicely. My experience is that this is 3rd time I am sitting on Ruposhi Bangla and Sonargaon to discuss on fire safety after Tazreen and all are international programs. At every program our high officials, ministers are there and other than the three, there are many programs in the Purbani and other places as well. So, we need to put all our effort to one place, it is good that the government is now on the boat. So there should be a budget and we can put our all expertise, suggestions, efforts and budgets to this place. There will be many consultants and organizations, those are earning through a discussion program, training program or creating some awareness program. We don't want to spend the money in this issue on like that. Every single money should be utilized considering it is a question of life of the workers, owners and anybody else. If you have an online communication on what should be the expectation from the trade unions, employers and others, then it is good also. I would like to see coordination as very important. Especially in the international effort, I know everybody wants to help us, I am not questioning on anybody's intention, but that support should channelized in a way that is realistic and make results. Thank you very much.

Mr.Kowsar Uddin Chowdhury, GM (HR & Admin), Dekko Group

I just request to government and other respective department that you know many incidents happen not only in the industrial area, but outside as well. Government has to take initiative to declare one industrial zone and about the factories outside of the industrial zone that also has to be gradually shifted to the industrial zone.

Mr. Mostan Hossain, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment, GoB, GoB

Regarding the implementation of tripartite action plan on fire safety particularly in RMG sector, MoLE secretary uttered that a high powered cabinet committee is formed headed by the Hon'ble Minister of Labour and Employment. Once the national plan of action to fire safety is finalized, it will be placed before the committee and then this committee will decide on how to be implemented and also we need technical and financial assistance from buyers and others international organizations. Of course government will provide necessary assistance, but we need technical assistance from our international buyers and organizations in implementing the program. Actually I would like to mention here that we should work together through synergy on how to implement this plan of action. We will not allow any single individual should burn in the fire incident or things like that, that should be our motive and commitment. From the government side, I can say government is very much transparent and as a facilitator we will extend our cooperation through coordinated way and we look forward to work together for its proper implementation.

Mr. Khairul Basher, Director (Compliance), Ha-meem Group

Actually from the factory side, we want to be monitored. Because we are supposed to be abide by the law and follow the buyers' code of conduct and to be audited accordingly. Now the monitoring means I want to say from the government side and also from the fire department side. What I feel is that at the moment we are having 4000 to 5000 factories, with the present capacities of Fire Service and government it is very difficult to monitor all the factories. So the government and Fire Department need to extend their capacities. Once we ask training from BGMEA or Fire Department, it takes too much time to receive response due to poor capacities. Moreover as smaller factories who do not have required license from respective authorities, which are mainly sub-contracting factories, they do not face any audit from the buyer side or any 3rd party, so actually no one is there to monitor them and those sorts of factories should not be allowed to run. Thank you.

Mr. Lejo Sibbel, Sr. Design Advisor (Better Work), ILO



I joined here before the tea break in the middle of the discussion. As ILO we would expect the government to develop laws, policies and implement those laws, policies in line with the international labour standards that the government has ratified and is also bound by because of its membership to the ILO. We would expect both employers and unions to act in line with these laws whose are parts in these laws.

Sometime I find it little bit battling that we are talking about these things and obviously enforcement is a problem, nobody should be forced to follow the law. This

is a legal obligation that an employer should implement the law and also just as being a worker should abide by the law. We are talking about rights and responsibilities here and even without a functioning enforcement system, employers should follow the law and not having a functioning enforcement system should not be an excuse. So we have these expectations and also at the same time I would like to volunteer that the tripartite partners should expect every possible assistance from the ILO in improving their activity for furthering fire safety in Bangladesh. We are talking about a massive coordination effort as any single entity cannot do this alone by itself. We all have to work together and as long as we get entangled in discussions on who is responsible and who is involved on what, I am afraid that this going to mess with the co-ordination effort, making it too difficult. Everybody might have to take a step back and say I may not like what the government or employer or unions are doing, but this is more important than the individual interests. People are dying in the factory fires and that should transcend other interests and unless, until everybody works together, no changes will be made. Thank you.

Mr. Zillul Hye Razi, Trade Advisor, EU Delegation to Bangladesh



What I am saying please don't take it from the EU perspective and it is entirely from my perspective. I am a Bangladeshi, so I have two head, right here at the moment I will talk as a Bangladeshi. I think the sheer size of this sector makes it very difficult, I agree with Lejo from ILO that this really needs a massive coordination. Think of Dhaka traffic, its size and the other factors. You have rules, regulations and also

enforcement surgeons are moving around, but what is the situation in Dhaka traffic? The size itself is a big challenge. Think of everything going perfect, the ILO, government and the others making this tripartite agreement, everything comes up in book, enforcement is ensured technically, then you have old part of Dhaka city and also other parts in the city, where there are many garment factories are located as well. Those factories are there because they have trade license from the municipalities and if you look at the government approach to the whole issue, there is no LGED in this inter-ministerial scenario. I am really worried because the size itself also makes you confuse on the whole issue. Now I am expecting that something will come up as Mr. Lejo said the issue is so serious and the business are at stake and RMG is the biggest backbone of the economy. So I am hopeful on that ground that somebody, people are sensitized on the whole issue and that will bring some good things out of it. But as I said the challenge is enormous just because of the size of factors. Thank you.

Mr. von Mitzlaff, Organizer

Thank you. Just reminded about the dimension of tasks which are there and we are coming to the end in this. I would like to give Ms. Sabina from BSCI secretariat in Brussels to say few words. We are thankful to BSCI to support and to give actually

the funding for this Round Table and on the other side, BSCI as trade association grouped large number of corporate and buyers. So, you might say something.

Ms. Sabine Van Depoele, Stakeholder Relations Manager, BSCI

I just like to say that my colleague Veronica and I am all through pleased that we had the opportunity to share this meeting with you and it was also important to discuss this topic today. We discussed it already two years ago at one of our Round Table that we see there is still room for improvement and I am happy to see that today there already concrete steps are taken.

Also from the other companies they have already emerged it, which is nice to see, but the most important thing is that to proceed with the program. The draft will be finished quite soon, which is very important because we are willing to support it. I hope most of the colleagues around the table have the same feeling because what I learnt is that if we work together and create synergy, only then we can see the achievement and BSCI is very happy



that we can support the synergies of having Round Table, because we have always very fruitful discussion and we can learn a lot of it. This is an initiative exists today from ten years back and we are drafting an impact study and we hope next time we can share with you the achievements, so far we have achieved over the lasting years and I hope by the time we can also adopt the first achievement which is the framework of fire safety. I like to Thank you all for coming and participating for expressing your point of view and we hope that this really hot topic can be solved as soon as possible.

Mr.von Mitzlaff, Organizer

I don't want to add or talk of what have being said, because the challenges are on the table, the activities are to be planned and published and also the efforts to align or coordinate involving the labour sector into the monitoring system have been clearly expressed. We will make the documentation on this and hopefully anyone can take this requesting further for the steps and will see who is taking the lead into the coordination. Perhaps it might be the Ministry of Labour calling for such a coordination meeting. But I am sure whatever the ministry will be doing, will also be closely coordinated with the ILO and they will have an impact in it. So, we are looking to the government and our second eyes go to the ILO. With those words, you are invited to join us for lunch and table talk. The final closing will be made by Dr. Zia Rahman.

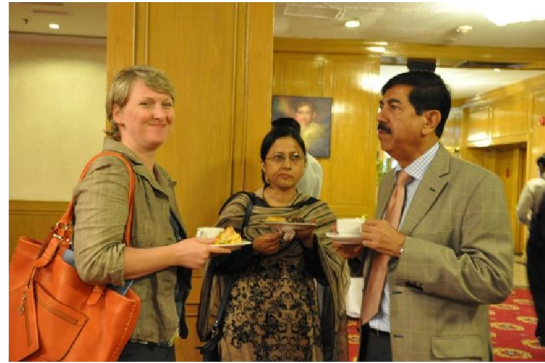
Dr. Zia Rahman, Moderator

Thank you everybody to have nice contribution for the development as whole for the industry. We all are happy that we got many voices from the different corners and points of views. So, I request the organizer that apart from the government and

buyers' initiative, if we just continue this process concurrently, marginalized people can raise their voice and many different other groups like women groups could have been participated. I thank you again to arrange such a nice Round Table and I think that you will be continuing with your effort. I now just formally close the session and request you to join us in the lunch. Thank you.

VI. Pictorials





VII. Media Coverage

March 15, 2013

The Daily Star

Step up factory compliance

Roundtable speakers call for full-scale effort to improve labour standards



From left, Christian von Mitzlaff, Bangladesh representative of Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI); Ziaur Rahman, associate professor of sociology at Dhaka University; Mikail Shipar, secretary of the labour and employment ministry; and Sabine Van Depoele, stakeholder relations manager of BSCI, attend a meeting on compliance in the garment sector, at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in Dhaka yesterday. Photo: Star

Bureaucrats, rights activists and representatives of western brands yesterday called for compliance of labour standards in garment factories to stop the preventable deaths of workers in fires. "We cannot ignore our responsibilities for the fires," said Mikail Shipar, labour and employment secretary. The two recent deadly blazes could be a wake-up call the country needed to reassess the occupational and health safety measures at factories and bring in the necessary changes, he said. "The government has already felt the need for establishing full-scale compliance at factories. A comprehensive action plan is needed to avoid a repeat of fires at factories," Shipar said. His comments came at a roundtable on social compliance at the garment sector, organised by the Brussels-based Foreign Trade Association as part of the Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI).

Ali Ahmed Khan, director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence, said the number of fires in the garment industry has gone down in recent years due to improvements in fire safety standards at factories. In 2009, there were 293 fires at garment factories, while in 2010, 2011 and 2012 it was 222, 175 and 97 respectively, according to Khan. He said many factories are negligent to building code, fire-fighting measures and training of staff on how to use them and awareness programmes among workers, all of which contributed to the rising number of deaths. Wajed-ul Islam Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Trade Union Kendra, echoed Khan's views. "It does not matter whether the number of fires in the apparel industry has gone down or not. Workers are still being killed in such incidents."

Participatory trade unions could sort out any issue and reduce many of the risks to the garment sector, Khan said.

Faizur Rahman, a joint secretary of the labour and employment ministry, told the roundtable that the government-appointed committee has submitted a draft to the ministry outlining action-plan for all stakeholders relating to the garments sector. The draft "National Tripartite Plan of Action for Fire Safety in the RMG Sector" has specified time-bound responsibilities in detail to prevent the recurrence of fires, said Rahman, who is heading the 13-member committee. Libuse Soukupova, second secretary of the European Union (EU) delegation to Bangladesh, said the EU has already called for immediate actions from all stakeholders including the government and the western brands to protect workers from preventable deaths. The EU has also urged European companies and brands to stand by the victims of fires and compensate them, she said.

Alonzo Glenn Suson, country programme director of American Centre for International Labour Solidarity, said any labour safety programme should have strong labour participation and the workers should be allowed to form associations. Christian von Mitzlaff, BSCI representative to Bangladesh, said repeated fire tragedies with high number of deaths and injury to workers, namely at Tazreen Fashions and Smart Export Garments, question the safety measures at factories. "This has raised national and international attention and calls for an effective response — to limit and control these hazardous risks." Towhidur Rahman, president of Bangladesh Apparels Workers Federation, said: "Whenever any fire hits the garment sector, BGMEA or BKMEA most often says the affected factory is not their member. It is very unfortunate." "On the other hand, the government does not take appropriate action in line with the laws," Rahman added.

A local representative from a top buyer said if factory owners take action on their own to minimise fire risks, instead of looking to the government, the BGMEA or the BKMEA, then many problems would go. The absence of representation from BGMEA or BKMEA raised questions at the roundtable. "We invited them in the last three years, requesting them to send representatives, but they did not take part," said Mitzlaff of BSCI

'Compliance can cut RMG fire tragedies'



There is no alternative to ensuring 'compliance' to reduce fire tragedies at the readymade garment factories in Bangladesh, industry stakeholders say. They recommend enforcing the law to improve compliance, constructing buildings according to the code, keeping adequate fire-fighting equipment and training factory workers on fire-fighting system. The suggestions came from a roundtable discussion on 'Strategies to reduce fire risk

in the Bangladesh garment industry' in Dhaka on Thursday. The round table was attended by the representatives from labour sector, buyers, suppliers, Fire Service and Civil Defence, insurance corporations, relevant ministries, European Union and other stakeholders.

The Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI) organised the roundtable that was moderated by Dhaka University teacher Prof Zia Rahman. Labour and Employment Secretary Mikhail Shipar emphasised government initiatives to ensure fire safety at the factories and that such incidents never occur. "The government has taken initiatives to reduce fire accidents in the RMG sector. A tripartite committee consisting representatives from the government, owners and workers has been formed. This committee is conducting a survey to determine the implementation of compliance in readymade garment sector and improving the security system," he said. Shipar said the government was taking stern measures to implement the initiatives and added that six officials from the relevant government inspection body had been temporarily suspended for negligence of duty.

Fire Service and Civil Defence Director General Brig Gen Ali Ahmed Khan said, "The factories do not follow the building code in most cases. One of the reasons of fire is the use of low-grade electrical materials. On the other hand, the buildings do not have enough fire fighting equipment and the workers do not get proper training." Bangladesh Trade Union Centre Secretary General Wazed Ul Islam alleged that the government was not taking measures against such irregularities. Libuse Soukupova, Second Secretary of Human and Social Development at European Union delegation to Bangladesh, said the EU also wished to see more developed safety systems and implementation of labour rights. The Ministry of Labour's Joint Secretary Faizur Rahman said a draft of the policy and work plan to ensure fire safety and compliance in RMG industries will be finalised by Mar 30 and placed in Parliament afterwards for approval. Manjur Morshed, Senior Social Compliance Advisor from GIZ, Germany's international cooperation agency, said his agency generally provided training to the workers of this sector, mid-level staff and factory owners to improve the working environment. "After speaking with everyone, we have found that there is lack of awareness."

At least 293 incidents of fire outbreak took place in 2009 in Bangladesh. The number reduced a little to 222 in 2010 while 175 fire tragedies occurred in 2011. The number was 97 in 2012. Of the recent incidents, more than 100 workers of Tazreen Fashions Ltd at Ashulia on the outskirts of capital Dhaka were burnt alive in a fire on Nov 24 last year.



March 15, 2013

'Suggestions made to become more active on RMG compliance issues'

BGMEA and the government are in lack of initiatives to ensure social compliance issues on the RMG industries in Bangladesh. Especially after the fatal fire accidents in Tazreen Fashions Ltd. and Smart Garment Tex Ltd. no proper and effective measures were taken yet. The remarks came from the speakers of a Social Compliance Round Table highlighting Fire Safety Issues. Mr. Mikail Shipar, Secretary to the Ministry of Labour & Employment said that the fire incidents at Tazreen and Smart Garments lead to significant development to the RMG sector. He also informed the audience that compensation had been paid to the



victims and also law enforcing agency arrested the culprits, responsible for that. The Round Table took place on yesterday at the Ruposhi Bangla Hotel and was organized by BSCI.

Apart the Labour Secretary, others present at the Round Table were Ali Ahmed Khan - Director General of Fire Service and Civil

Defence, Libuse Soukupova – Second Secretary to the EU Delegation to Bangladesh, Manjur Morshed – Sr. Compliance Advisor from GIZ, Alonzo Suson – Country Program Director from American Centre for Int'l Labour Solidarity, Dr. Wajed ul Islam Khan – General Secretary from BTUC. But there were no representative present from BGMEA & BKMEA. The Round Table was moderated by Prof. Zia Rahman, Associate Professor from the University of Dhaka.

আংশিক নয় পুরো মত **বালের কর্ত**

March 15, 2013

'Garment Industries do not follow building code'



Fire cause death of many workers in the Bangladeshi RMG industries. Fire at the Tazreen Fashions Ltd. and Smart Export Garments Ltd. caused massive casualties as well. This raised global concern about the Fire Preventive Initiatives in Bangladesh. Negligence of garment owners to obeying the Building Code is a major reason behind the fire in the industries. Tazreen

Fashions Ltd. had approval of a three storied building, but the owner without paying any concern to the law, extended two more floors on it. Even the factories do not have sufficient fire fighting equipments. The speakers were talking on these issues in a roundtable on yesterday at the Ruposhi Bangla Hotel titling "Strategies to reduce Fire Risk

in the Bangladesh garment industry". LIFT Standards organized the Round Table having financial sponsor from BSCI.

Mr. Mikail Shipar, Secretary to the Ministry of Labour & Employment was the special guest to this Round Table and Prof. Dr. Zia Rahman, University of Dhaka moderated the session. Mr. Shipar informed the audience about the recent initiatives taken by the government to prevent further fire accidents in this RMG sector. Dr. Wajed ul Islam Khan, General Secretary from BTUC (Bangladesh Trade Union Centre) had told that usually no one is concerned to the social security of the RMG workers and often garment industries ignore the relevant building codes.

Documentation: LIFT Standards e.K.