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B7-0232/2013

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on labour conditions and health and safety standards following the recent  
factory fires and building collapse in Bangladesh  
(2013/2638(RSP))

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Karima Delli, Yannick Jadot, Malika Benarab-Attou,  
Elisabeth Schroedter, Nicole Kiil-Nielsen, Raúl Romeva i Rueda,  
Franziska Katharina Brantner, Ulrike Lunacek, Ana Miranda,  
Sven Giegold, Claude Turmes, Judith Sargentini, Helga Trüpel,  
Nikos Chrysogelos**  
on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

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*United in diversity*

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**European Parliament resolution on labour conditions and health and safety standards following the recent factory fires and building collapse in Bangladesh (2013/2638(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Bangladesh, in particular those of 17 January 2013<sup>1</sup>, 6 September 2007<sup>2</sup> and 10 July 2008<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to its resolutions of 25 November 2010 on human rights and social and environmental standards in international trade agreements<sup>4</sup> and on corporate social responsibility in international trade agreements<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to the Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and the People's Republic of Bangladesh on Partnership and Development<sup>6</sup>,
- having regard to the Joint Statement of 30 April 2013 by VP/HR Catherine Ashton and EU Trade Commissioner Karel de Gucht following the recent building collapse in Bangladesh,
- having regard to the ILO Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health (2006, C-187) and the Occupational Safety and Health Convention (1981, C-155), which have not been ratified by Bangladesh and Pakistan, and their respective recommendations (R-197); having regard also to the Labour Inspection Convention (1947, C-081), to which Bangladesh is a signatory, and its recommendations (R-164),
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled 'A renewed EU strategy 2011 2014 for Corporate Social Responsibility' (COM(2011)0681),
- having regard to its resolutions of 6 February 2013 on 'corporate social responsibility: accountable, transparent and responsible business behaviour and sustainable growth'<sup>7</sup> and on 'corporate social responsibility: promoting society's interests and a route to sustainable and inclusive recovery'<sup>8</sup>,
- having regard to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which set a framework for both governments and companies to protect and respect human rights, endorsed by the Human Rights Council in June 2011,
- having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0027.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 187 E, 24.7.2008, p. 240.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 294 E, 3.12.2009, p.77.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 99 E, 3.4.2012, p. 31.

<sup>5</sup> OJ C 99 E, 3.4.2012, p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> OJ L 118, 27.4.2001, p. 48.

<sup>7</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0049.

<sup>8</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0050.

- A. whereas the EU has good, long-standing relations with Bangladesh, including through the Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development;
- B. whereas Bangladesh has become the second largest exporter of garments in the world after China, with the lowest garment wages, the textile sector providing for almost 80 % of the country's exports, with the EU being its major export market, and whereas the production pressure in the international textile market, characterised by low costs and quick turnaround, make Bangladesh's work force a particularly vulnerable target;
- C. whereas on 24 April 2013 the Rana Plaza, a building in Savar, outside Dhaka, housing several garment factories collapsed, causing the death of over 1 000 people and leaving some 2 500 people injured;
- D. whereas the collapsed building was constructed illegally and did not meet safety standards, and whereas the factory owners insisted on sending the workers back to work despite cracks having been discovered the day before and the consulted engineer having warned that the building should remain evacuated;
- E. whereas this disaster was preceded by a fire at the Tazreen Fashion factory in Ashulia in November 2012, in which well over 100 workers died and many more were injured, and whereas, a few days after the Savar drama, on 8 May 2013, a fire in the Tung Hai garment factory in the Mirpur district of Dhaka cost the lives of eight people;
- F. whereas, although a government enquiry committee formed by the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Labour Ministry came to the conclusion that criminal charges for unpardonable negligence should be brought against the owner of the Tazreen factory, he has not been arrested; whereas a petition was filed at the Bangladesh High Court on 28 April 2013, accusing the authorities of inactivity and seeking his arrest; whereas, in the case of Rana Plaza, the factory owners and building owners have been arrested and criminal charges have been filed against them;
- G. whereas on 16 May 2013 the roof of a shoe factory collapsed in Kampong Speu province, Cambodia, causing the death of at least two people;
- H. whereas the high number of casualties in all cases has been blamed mostly on the absence of minimal safety measures, illegal and dysfunctional building construction and the lack of workers' rights to defend their own interests;
- I. whereas according to Bangladeshi newspaper reports, Bangladesh has only 51 inspectors to control around 5 000 ready-made garment (RMG) factories and other industrial plants in the country;
- J. whereas according to information published by the International Labour Rights Forum more than 600 garment workers have died in factory fires in Bangladesh since 2005, while according to reports by human rights organisations none of the factory owners or management have ever been brought to trial;
- K. whereas the reluctant acknowledgement of certain Western retailers that the concerned factories were producing their garments demonstrates the lack of transparency and

accountability in the supply chains of the international textile industry;

- L. whereas competition in the globalised economy, with ever shorter cycles and higher output of production and consumption in the apparel and footwear sector, leads to unsustainable pressure on production and labour costs, and takes unacceptable tolls on the safety and health of the workers; whereas clothing costs in the UK have fallen by 20 % since 2005, according to information provided by the Bangladeshi Government;
  - M. whereas textile and clothing is now the world's second-largest economic activity in terms of intensity of trade, and whereas the textile industry is considered one of the most polluting industrial sectors; whereas spinning, weaving and production of industrial fibres undermine air quality, and dyeing and printing consume vast amounts of water and chemicals and release numerous volatile agents into the atmosphere that are particularly harmful to workers, consumers and the environment;
  - N. whereas according to the Worker Rights Consortium it would add less than 10 cents to the factory price of each of the 7 billion garments that Bangladesh sells each year to Western brands if the country's 5 000 garment factories were to be elevated to Western safety standards within 5 years;
  - O. whereas there is a joint responsibility stretching from the end customers in Europe to the retailers and to factory management and governments at all levels of the production and supply chain to make efforts towards improving the work and safety standards in the garment sector for the benefit of the workers;
  - P. whereas inhumane working conditions, exploitation of workers and environmental devastation are not confined to certain regions of the world or to certain industrial sectors but must be combated worldwide, as shown by the recent drama in Manolada, Greece, in which, on 17 April 2013, 28 mostly Bangladeshi strawberry pickers were shot and wounded by farm supervisors when they demanded their six months of outstanding salary;
1. Expresses its deep sadness at the loss of lives and the many injured in the Rana Plaza tragedy, one of the most devastating industrial disasters ever, and extends its condolences to those injured, mutilated or killed as well to the bereaved families;
  2. Calls on all European retailers whose orders were being processed at the time of the collapse to support the local authorities and involved social partners in setting up an adequate and transparent compensation scheme for the victims and their families as well as contributing to such a system; considers that such a system should cover the loss of income and damages for the injured and families of the dead, as well as provide free medical rehabilitation for the injured and care and education for deceased workers' dependent family members;
  3. Welcomes the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh between the trade unions, NGOs and about 40 multinational textile retailers, finalised on 15 May 2013, which aims to improve safety standards at production sites (and which covers the arrangements for paying for such measures) in particular by establishing an independent inspection system, including public reports and mandatory repairs and renovations, and actively supporting the creation of 'health and safety committees' involving workers'

representatives in each factory; calls on all other relevant textile brands to support this effort, including textile retailers Walmart and Gap, which continue to reject any binding agreement;

4. Welcomes the action plan adopted by the government, employers, workers and the ILO on 4 May 2013, which commits the parties notably to reform the labour laws, allowing workers to form trade unions and to engage in collective bargaining, to assess the safety of all active export-oriented ready-made garment factories in Bangladesh by the end of 2013, to relocate unsafe factories and to recruit hundreds of additional inspectors;
5. Hopes that the action plan will be implemented in full; welcomes, in this connection, the decision of the Bangladeshi Government to raise the minimum wage in the coming weeks, which will affect some 4 million, mostly female workers, and urges the Bangladeshi Government to sanction companies that are undercutting this wage; encourages the government to keep reviewing the minimum wage in order to reach the level of a living wage; expects employers' associations to honour their commitment to redeploy the workers that were rendered unemployed by the accidents as well as rehabilitated workers, and calls on the government, additionally, to pass legislation in order to protect trade union members from being sacked for pursuing legitimate union activities by their employers;
6. Welcomes the steps taken by the Bangladeshi Government to support the victims and their families and to bring those responsible for the high number of casualties to justice; calls on the authorities to oblige the management to make available to the authorities a full record of the names of all the workers who have been affected by the disasters and to guarantee full access to the justice system for all victims, in order to enable them to claim compensation;
7. Calls on all businesses, notably garment brands, that contract or subcontract to factories in Bangladesh and other countries, to adhere fully to internationally recognised corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices, in particular the recently updated OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the ten principles of the United Nations Global Compact, the ISO 26000 Guidance Standard on Social Responsibility, the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and to critically investigate their supply chains in order to ensure that their goods are produced exclusively in factories fully respecting safety standards and labour rights;
8. Acknowledges that employment in the garment sector has helped millions of poor rural women in Bangladesh and elsewhere to escape deprivation and dependence on male support; considers, however, that certain minimum safety and labour standards should be the norm worldwide, including in the EU; calls, in particular, on the Bangladeshi Government to enforce compliance by all manufacturers with the Labour Act (2006);
9. Believes that increasing the prices paid for end-products by consumers may form a necessary part of the improvements, and that the time is ripe to negotiate a minimum wage for the garment sector industry worldwide; believes that proposals for the improvement of the situation of the textile workers, such as that put forward by Nobel Peace Prize Winner Muhammad Yunus to create a Garment Workers Welfare Trust, merit consideration;

10. Calls on the Council and the Commission to include a binding CSR clause in all bilateral trade and investment agreements signed by the EU, on the basis of principles of CSR as defined at the international level, including in the 2010 update of the OECD Guidelines and in the standards defined by the UN (in particular the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights), the ILO and the EU; suggests that this clause should harmonise existing standards and concepts in order to ensure comparability and fairness and that it should contain measures for the monitoring of the effective implementation of these principles at EU level;
11. Calls on Council and the Commission to introduce legislation obliging companies that wish to operate on the European market under EU law to provide information about the entire supply chain of their products, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which include transparency of the supply chain down to the production facility, and looks forward to the Commission's communication on the matter;
12. Welcomes the Commission's intention to assist Bangladesh in improving occupational safety and health and corporate social responsibility;
13. Requests that, in future EU trade agreements with third countries, occupational safety and health be afforded a more prominent place as part of the decent work agenda and that the EU provide technical support for the implementation of these provisions;
14. Calls for a system of transnational legal cooperation to be set up between the EU and third-country signatories to bilateral trade agreements in order to ensure that victims of breaches of social or environmental legislation, or of failures to honour CSR undertakings or fair exchange practices by multinationals and their immediate subsidiaries, have effective access to justice in the country where the breach took place, and, in support of the establishment of international judicial procedures, to ensure, where necessary, that breaches of the law by companies are punished;
15. Strongly condemns the violent attack against migrant workers in Manolada, Greece, and expresses its sympathy with the victims; welcomes the steps taken by the Greek authorities to bring the violators to due justice and to offer redress to the victims; calls on the Commission to support the Greek authorities in all possible ways in their struggle against the wave of racist acts and the maltreatment occurring in Greece at the moment;
16. Encourages the VP/HR and Commissioner De Gucht to include the ratification of core ILO standards on health and safety inspection and freedom of association in discussions with Bangladesh on continued access to the EU's generalised scheme of preferences;
17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Government and Parliament of Bangladesh and the Director-General of the ILO.