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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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on behalf of the S&D Group

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 the EC-Bangladesh Cooperation Agreement of 2001,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on Bangladesh, particularly that of 17 January 2013 on recent casualties in textile factory fires, notably in Bangladesh¹,
- recalling its resolutions of 25 November 2010 on human rights and social and environmental standards in international trade agreements² and on corporate social responsibility in international trade agreements³,
- having regard to the report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) entitled ‘Globalising Social Rights: The International Labour Organisation and beyond’,
- having regard to the ILO report entitled ‘Labour in the Global South: Challenges and alternatives for workers’,
- having regard to the ILO report entitled ‘Globalisation, Flexibilisation and Working Conditions in Asia and the Pacific’,
- having regard to the conclusions of the ILO’s high-level mission to Bangladesh of 1 to 4 May 2013,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 March 2011 on an industrial policy for the globalised era⁴,
- having regard to the updated OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (2011),
- 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 to their respective recommendations (R-197); having regard also to the Labour Inspection Convention (1947, C-081), to which Bangladesh and Pakistan are signatories, and to its recommendations (R-164),
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘A renewed EU strategy 2011-2014 for Corporate Social Responsibility’ (COM(2011)0681),

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0027.

² OJ C 99 E, 3.4.2012, p. 31.

³ OJ C 99 E, 3.4.2012, p. 101.

⁴ OJ C 199 E, 7.7.2012, p. 131.

- having regard to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,
 - having regard to the Joint Statement by HR/VP Catherine Ashton and EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht following the recent building collapse in Bangladesh of 30 April 2013,
 - having regard to the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, of the Bangladeshi Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry, signed 13 May 2013,
 - having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas on 24 April 2013, 1 127 people died in the garment factory collapse at the Rana Plaza building in Dhaka in Bangladesh, making it the worst tragedy in the history of the global garment industry; whereas at least eight people also perished in a factory fire in Dhaka on 9 May 2013;
 - B. whereas the owner of the Rana Plaza and eight other people were detained, on the grounds that the building had been constructed illegally and had developed massive structural problems, but workers were forced to continue working despite their fears over safety;
 - C. whereas conditions in such textile factories are often poor, with little regard for labour rights such as those recognised under the main ILO conventions and often with little or no regard for safety; whereas owners of such factories have in many cases gone unpunished and have therefore done little to improve working conditions;
 - D. whereas the European market is the largest export destination for Bangladeshi apparel and textile products, with prominent Western companies admitting that they had contracts with Rana Plaza factories for the supply of garments;
 - E. whereas there are more than 5 000 textile factories in Bangladesh, employing approximately 3.5 million people, and whereas Bangladesh is the world's second-largest exporter of ready-made clothes, next only to China;
 - F. whereas rising labour costs in other parts of the world have pushed low-skilled manufacturing jobs into India, Pakistan, Cambodia, Vietnam and, in particular, Bangladesh, where clothing now accounts for 75 % of exports;
 - G. whereas exports of garments from Bangladesh total as much as EUR 18 billion per annum; whereas those working in the Rana Plaza were paid as little as EUR 29 per month;
 - H. whereas, according to the 'Clean Clothes Campaign', labour costs in this sector account for a mere 1 to 3% of the final price of a product;
 - I. whereas certain prominent Western brands have stopped production of merchandise in Bangladesh in response to the spate of fatal factory accidents, in order to bolster safety standards in their supply chain;
 - J. whereas several major Western firms have now signed up to a legally binding accord agreed by local labour organisations which aims to ensure basic standards of workplace safety in the 5 000 or more garment factories in Bangladesh, following widespread

criticism of international firms working with local garment producers;

1. Expresses its sorrow at the loss of life suffered in the recent factory collapse and fires; extends its condolences to the bereaved families and to those injured; reiterates the total unacceptability of the high numbers of deaths of workers in textile factories in recent years, in Bangladesh and in South Asia in general;
2. Calls on the Bangladesh authorities to act immediately to ensure that factories across the country comply with international labour standards and with the ILO conventions;
3. Recalls that Bangladesh benefits from duty-free and quota-free access to the EU market under the 'Everything But Arms' (EBA) scheme of the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP), in the framework of the incentivisation of responsible management of supply chains involving developing countries; emphasises, therefore, that Bangladesh is bound to ensure the effective implementation of a number of core UN/ILO conventions relating to human rights and labour rights under the EBA scheme;
4. Calls on the Commission to investigate Bangladesh's compliance with these conventions; considers that tariff preferences should not be granted if labour conditions are not improved;
5. Calls on the Government of Bangladesh to press ahead with a full investigation into the recent events and to implement measures to prevent any recurrence of the tragedies, including full compliance by all manufacturers with health and safety legislation (notably the Bangladesh Labour Act of 2006) and the establishment of an effective and independent system of labour inspections and inspections of industrial buildings;
6. Expects those responsible for criminal negligence or otherwise criminally responsible in relation to the latest tragedy to be brought to justice; also expects local authorities and factory management to cooperate in order to guarantee full access to the justice system for all victims, so as to enable them to claim compensation;
7. Welcomes the action of those European retailers who have already contributed to compensation schemes and signed up to the legally binding accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, in order to help finance fire safety and building improvements in the factories they use; deeply regrets the fact that prominent Western retailers including the Wal-Mart group, Gap, NKD, Metro and Ernstings have chosen not to sign the agreement;
8. Calls once more on major international garment brands to critically investigate their supply chains and cooperate with their subcontractors in order to improve occupational health and safety standards; calls on retailers, NGOs and all other actors involved, including the Commission where appropriate, to work together with a view to developing a voluntary labelling standard certifying that a product was manufactured in accordance with ILO core labour standards across the whole supply chain;
9. Calls on Business Europe and on European retailers and companies active in Bangladesh, directly or through subcontractors, to sign a voluntary agreement for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on the basis of the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises

and to implement the standards concerned;

10. Welcomes the decision of the Government of Bangladesh to allow the country's 4 million garment workers to form trade unions without prior permission from factory owners; notes the important role that can be played by workers and trade unions, for example through the continued development of worker-led safety committees in all factories and by educating workers on how they can protect their rights and safety, including their right to refuse unsafe work;
11. Calls on the Commission to actively promote mandatory responsible business conduct among EU companies operating abroad, with a special focus on ensuring strict compliance with all their legal obligations, in particular international standards and rules in the areas of human rights, labour and the environment;
12. 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 to support the establishment of international judicial procedures to ensure, where necessary, that breaches of the law by companies are punished;
13. Welcomes the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Agreement, reached between a number of trade unions, NGOs and multinational textile retailers and aimed at improving safety standards at production sites and agreeing to pay for such measures, in particular by establishing an independent inspection system and actively supporting the creation of Health and Safety Committees involving workers' representations in each factory, which are obligatory in law but are rarely operational; calls on all relevant textile brands to support these efforts;
14. Calls on all stakeholders to step up efforts to combat the corruption which is apparent in the supply chain in many of the countries of South Asia, including collusion between safety inspectors and factory owners; recalls the need for consistent implementation of the eight core ILO conventions; underlines the importance of robust health and safety provisions for workers, irrespective of the country in which their workplace is located;
15. Calls for full and active consultation and involvement of representative organisations, including free and independent trade unions, in the development, operation and monitoring of companies' CSR processes and structures; calls on such representative organisations to work with employers to promote quality employment and decent working conditions;
16. Welcomes the initiatives currently being delivered by the Commission with the aim of providing support for improving factory safety in Bangladesh, for example through the 'Promotion of Labour Standards in the RMG sector' project and through joint work with the Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence Directorate; calls for such cooperation to be strengthened and extended to other countries in the region, as appropriate;
17. Calls on the European External Action Service to ensure that EU officials responsible for

trade, if based in EU delegations, receive regular training on CSR issues, in particular with respect to the implementation of the UN's 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework, and that EU delegations function as Union contact points for complaints concerning EU companies and their subsidiaries;

18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the governments and parliaments of Bangladesh and Pakistan, and the Director-General of the ILO.