

**National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire Safety
for the Ready-Made Garment Sector in Bangladesh**

**Ministry of Labour and Employment
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**

March, 2013

**National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire Safety
for the Ready-Made Garment Sector in Bangladesh**

Background

Following the fire of November 24, 2012 at Tazreen Fashions Limited in which 112 workers lost their lives and many others were injured, the Tripartite Partners (Government, employers and workers) adopted a Joint Statement of Commitment during a meeting organized jointly by the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) on January 15, 2013 (Annex 1). Through the Joint 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, limb and property due to work place fires and fire-related accidents and incidents. A further factory fire on January 26, 2013 at Smart Export Garments, in which 8 workers lost their lives and others were injured underlined the need for urgent tripartite action in this respect. To ensure the timely development of a National Tripartite Plan of Action, the MoLE established a Tripartite Committee, which met four times with the assistance of the ILO.

Objectives

The objectives of the Plan of Action are:

1. To identify activities that the tripartite partners agree fall within their individual and/or collective responsibility and need to be implemented to ensure an integrated approach to promoting fire safety in Bangladesh, in particular in the ready-made garment (RMG) sector; and
2. To provide entry points for other stakeholders (buyers/brands, international development organizations, donors, etc.) that wish to support implementation of the Plan of Action, as well as to provide a platform for coordination for stakeholders that wish to initiate additional fire safety promotion activities.



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Activities and Monitoring

In order to ensure an integrated approach to the promotion of fire safety, the Plan of Action foresees activities on three levels:

1. legislation and policy;
2. administrative; and
3. practical activities.

The Plan of Action also identifies the respective social partner(s) responsible for the implementation of the activities, as well as a timeframe for implementation. The full Plan of Action can be found in Table 1.

To ensure implementation of the activities in the Plan of Action there will be a High-Level Tripartite Committee with a mandate to:

1. monitor progress in implementation of the activities in the Plan of Action;
2. review and update the Plan of Action as necessary, including for activities to be carried out in 2014 and 2015; and
3. develop ways through which other stakeholders can support implementation of - and coordination with - the Plan of Action.

The High-Level Tripartite Committee (Annex 2) will be chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Employment and will report to the Cabinet Committee on the Ready-Made Garment Sector established by the Government on February 7, 2013. The Committee will meet on a quarterly basis, but the Chairperson can call for any additional meetings if deemed necessary. All partners which have committed to the implementation of any activity in the Action Plan, will report to the Committee on a quarterly basis, and upon completion of the activity, on progress made in implementation. It should be underlined, however, that the Plan of Action is not meant to be an exclusory document and the Tripartite Partners welcome the development and implementation by any stakeholder of any other activities that would constitute a meaningful contribution to improving fire safety in Bangladesh. The Committee will use the good offices of its Members and the organizations they represent to encourage and assist partners in the implementation of the activities in the Action Plan. The Committee will provide recommendations to the Cabinet Committee for action to be taken. All activities will be coordinated through the MoLE.



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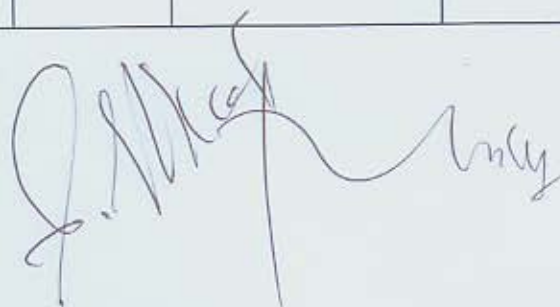
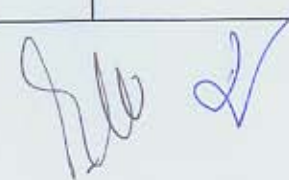


Table 1: National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire Safety

ACTIVITY	POLICY AGENCY	LEAD EXECUTING AGENCY/ ORGANIZATION	PARTNER AGENCIES/ ORGANIZATIONS	EXPECTED DATE OF COMPLETION
LEGISLATION AND POLICY				
<p>1 Adoption of National Occupational Health and Safety Policy.</p> <p>The Government of Bangladesh has developed a draft National Occupational Health and Safety Policy, in consultation with the social partners and with the assistance of the ILO. This Policy is currently undergoing final review by the Government before adoption.</p>	Cabinet	MoLE	---	30 April 2013
<p>2 Review and, where necessary, adjustment of relevant laws, rules and regulations.</p> <p>Fire safety (including related issues such as building, electrical and chemical safety) is regulated through different legislative and administrative instruments. It is considered necessary to review all relevant instruments to ensure they are up to date and any gaps and/or overlap in legislation and administrative authority can be addressed.</p>	Cabinet Committee for the RMG Sector	MoLE	DCIFE, FSCD, Power Cell of Power Division, DB, Rajuk	31 December 2013



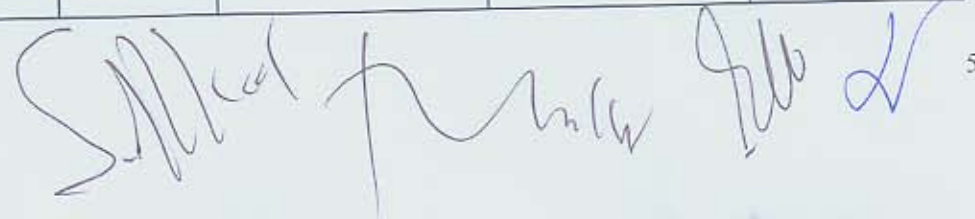
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ACTIVITY	POLICY AGENCY	LEAD EXECUTING AGENCY/ ORGANIZATION	PARTNER AGENCIES/ ORGANIZATIONS	EXPECTED DATE OF COMPLETION
<p>3 Establishment of a Task Force on Fire Safety of the Cabinet Committee for the Ready-Made Garment Sector.</p> <p>It is considered that the establishment of a Task Force on fire safety will ensure due attention is paid to this issue by the Cabinet Committee, especially with regard to upgrading relevant industry infrastructure, including electrical systems, street hydrant points, approach roads, number of fire service stations, relocation of unsound factories, establishment of specific RMG zones, supply of electricity and gas on priority basis, etc.</p>	Cabinet Committee for the RMG Sector	MoLE	MoRDM, MoLGRD, FSCD, Power Cell of Power Division, Energy and Mineral Resource Division, BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA, NCCWE, BNC	30 May 2013
ADMINISTRATIVE				
<p>1 Recruitment of staff to fill currently vacant posts (Factory Inspectors and support staff) in the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments.</p> <p>To improve the capacity of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments it is considered a priority to ensure that posts of factory inspectors and support staff that are currently vacant are filled.</p>	---	MoLE	DIFE	31 December 2013
<p>2 Implementation of MoLE project to strengthen capacity of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments.</p> <p>On January 8, 2013, the Planning Commission approved a project to improve the capacity of the Department of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Establishments. The project has a budget of Tk 24 crore, 82 lac (approximately USD 3 million) and foresees the development of infrastructure and recruitment and training of 98 additional staff, including 33 Factory Inspectors. It will run up to 31 December 2014.</p>	---	MoLE	DIFE	31 December 2014



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ACTIVITY	POLICY AGENCY	LEAD EXECUTING AGENCY/ ORGANIZATION	PARTNER AGENCIES/ ORGANIZATIONS	EXPECTED DATE OF COMPLETION
<p>3 Review and, where necessary, adjustment of factory licensing and certification procedures concerning fire safety, including electrical, chemical and environmental safety.</p> <p>The factory fire safety licensing system, including electrical, chemical and environmental safety, is divided between a number of different government authorities. It is considered that the relevant procedures need to be reviewed to ensure they are up to date and any gaps and/or overlap in legislation and administrative authority can be addressed.</p>	Cabinet Committee for the RMG Sector	MoLE	FSCD, Department of Environment, DCIFE	30 September 2013
<p>4 Consideration of the establishment of a one-stop shop for fire safety licensing and certification.</p> <p>Within the framework of the mandate of the Cabinet Committee it is felt necessary to consider whether or not the establishment of a one-stop shop for fire safety licensing and certification would improve administration and monitoring of fire safety at factory level.</p>	Cabinet Committee for the RMG Sector	MoLE	FSCD, Department of Environment, Department of Explosives, DCIFE	31 December 2013
<p>5 Development and introduction of unified fire safety checklist to be used by all relevant government agencies.</p> <p>Fire safety inspection is currently undertaken by a number of different government agencies. It is considered that the development and use of a single fire safety checklist would improve the quality, transparency and predictability of fire safety inspection services.</p>	---	MoLE	DCIFE, FSCD, Rajuk,	30 April, 2013
PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES				

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ACTIVITY	POLICY AGENCY	LEAD EXECUTING AGENCY/ ORGANIZATION	PARTNER AGENCIES/ ORGANIZATIONS	EXPECTED DATE OF COMPLETION
<p>1 Factory level fire safety needs assessment.</p> <p>Following the Tazreen Fashions fire, the BGMEA initiated a pilot needs assessment programme within which members of the Alumni Association of Architects of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology are undertaking a comprehensive fire safety review of 10 garment factories. See also under 2.</p>	---	BGMEA, BKMEA	FSCD	30 April 2013
<p>2 Development and implementation of a factory fire safety improvement programme.</p> <p>Based on the findings and recommendations from the needs assessment (see 1), as well as other sources of information, the BGMEA and BKMEA intend to take the lead in the development and implementation of a tripartite+ fire safety improvement programme.</p>	MoLE, MoHA, MoHPW	BGMEA, BKMEA	DCIFE, FSCD, Rajuk, NCCWE, BNC	31 December 2013
<p>3 Development of a transparent and accountable industry sub-contracting system.</p> <p>Given the consensus that the lack of transparency and accountability within the current sub-contracting system is a major contributing factor for the existence of sub-standard fire safety conditions in relevant factories, it is considered that a new system needs to be developed.</p>	MoC, MoLE	BGMEA, BKMEA	NCCWE, BNC	30 June 2013



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<p>4 Delivery of fire safety "crash course" for mid-level factory management and supervisors.</p> <p>Because of the role played by mid-level managers and supervisors in the Tazreen Fashions factory fire, the BGMEA initiated a one-day fire safety "crash course" for mid-level managers and supervisors. All BGMEA and BKMEA members, and all other RMG employers have to participate in this one-day course. Training is provided by the FSCD in cooperation with the BGMEA and BKMEA and relevant development organizations and partners.</p>	MoHA	BGMEA, BKMEA	FSCD	30 September 2013
<p>5 Development and delivery of specific training on fire safety for union leaders.</p> <p>In recognition of the fact that unions play a vital role in promoting fire safety, it is considered that union leaders need access to fire safety training so that they are better able to identify fire safety risks and remediation measures, as well as raise awareness of union members.</p>	MoLE, MoHA	NCCWE, BNC	BGMEA, BKMEA, Fire Service	31 December 2013
<p>6 Development and delivery of mass worker education tools.</p> <p>To raise awareness of workers regarding fire safety risks and prevention, it is considered necessary to develop and delivery mass worker education tools. Such tools could include tv and radio spots and dramas, street theatre, and print materials. Given that the Industrial Relations Institute has a legal mandate to educate workers, the MoLE was assigned as lead agency.</p>	---	MoLE	NCCWE, BNC, BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA, DoL, DCIFE, FSCD	31 December 2013

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<p>7 Establishment of a worker fire safety hotline.</p> <p>To enable workers to report fire safety risks in factories they work at, the Fire Service will establish a hot line combined with a system to follow-up on any information received through the hot line. This hot line will be different from the general fire emergency alarm number.</p>	---	MoHA, BTCL, BTRC	FSCD, NCCWE, BNC, BGMEA, BKMEA	30 June 2013
<p>8 Development and delivery of specific training on fire safety for Factory Inspectors.</p> <p>To improve the capacity of the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments it is considered necessary to ensure that Inspectors have access to training that will enable them to identify fire safety risks and remediation measures, as well as provide advice to employers, unions and workers on how to address fire risks. The Industrial Relations Institute has the mandate to train Factory Inspectors, in this respect. The MoLE, ILO and GIZ are currently cooperating in the implementation of a MoLE Compliance Capacity Building programme that includes Inspector training.</p>	---	MoLE	DIFE, DOL, Fire Service	30 June 2013
<p>9 Strengthen the capacity of the FSCD</p> <p>It is considered necessary to strengthen the capacity of the FSCD by modernizing equipment, increasing the number of Fire Inspectors, providing necessary training, and increasing the number of fire stations in industrial RMG areas.</p>	MoHA	FSCD	---	30 September 2013



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ACTIVITY	POLICY AGENCY	LEAD EXECUTING AGENCY/ ORGANIZATION	PARTNER AGENCIES/ ORGANIZATIONS	EXPECTED DATE OF COMPLETION
<p>10 Development of guidelines for the establishment of labour-management committees on occupational safety and health and/or fire safety.</p> <p>The Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 requires the establishment of labour-management Participation Committees in every establishment with 50 or more employees. To encourage the establishment of specific occupational safety and health and/or fire safety sub-committees, it is considered necessary to develop guidelines for employers, unions and workers as to how this can be done.</p>	---	MoLE	DCIFE, FSCD NCCWE, BNC, BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA	30 September 2013
<p>11 Development and dissemination of self-assessment and remediation tools on fire safety.</p> <p>To enable employers, unions and worker representatives to identify fire safety risks and remediation measures it is considered necessary to develop and disseminate self-assessment and remediation tools.</p>	---	MoLE, MoHA	DCIFE, FSCD, NCCWE, BNC, BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA	31 December 2013



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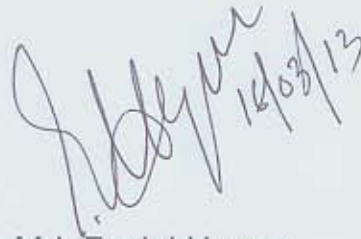

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<p>12</p> <p>Development of a tripartite+ protocol for compensation of the families of workers who die and workers who are injured as a result of occupational accidents and diseases.</p> <p>To ensure that compensation for families of workers who die and workers who are injured as a result of occupational accidents and diseases in the RMG sector is provided in a transparent and equitable manner, it is considered necessary to develop a tripartite+ protocol outlining legal entitlements to compensation, as well as procedures for compensation provided based on other considerations. The development of this protocol will include a review of the appropriateness of the level of current legal entitlements to compensation, bearing in mind the concept of loss of earnings and the provisions of ILO Convention No. 121.</p>	Cabinet Committee for the RMG Sector	MoLE	BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA, NCCWE, BNC	31 December 2013
<p>13</p> <p>Establishment of a public disclosure website on fire safety in ready-made garment factories.</p> <p>To improve transparency and enable the development of an industry fire license expiry notification system, the BGMEA and BKMEA will establish and maintain a website which will contain information related to fire safety for each of their members. At a minimum, information will include fire and other relevant licenses, dates and frequency of fire drills, and information on relevant management and worker education and training provided.</p>		BEF, BGMEA, BKMEA	FSCD, DCIFE	31 December 2013

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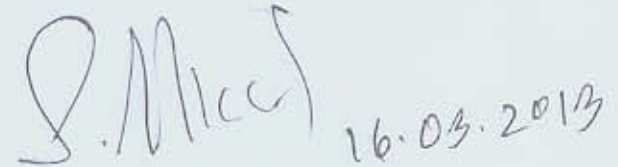
16.3.2013

Mr. Mikail Shipar,
Secretary,
Ministry of Labour and Employment
(MoLE)



16/03/13

Mr. Md. Fazlul Hoque,
President,
Bangladesh Employers Federation
(BEF)



16.03.2013

Mr. Sukkur Mahmud,
Chairman,
National Coordination Committee
for Workers' Education (NCCWE)



Mr. Faruque Hassan,
Vice President,
Bangladesh garment Manufacturers
and Exporters Association
(BGMEA)



16/3/13

Mr. Mohammad Hatem,
First Vice President,
Bangladesh Knitwear
Manufacturers and Exporters
Association (BKMEA)



Mr. Roy Ramesh Chandra,
Secretary-General,
Industrial Bangladesh Council
(IBC)
Former Chairman,
Bangladesh National Council (BNC)

16 March 2013

FIRE SAFETY IN BANGLADESH

TRIPARTITE STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Adopted in Dhaka on 15 January 2013

Greatly saddened and humbled by the loss of the lives of 112 workers who died, as well the injuries suffered by workers, as a result of the fire of November 24, 2012 at Tazreen Fashions Limited;

Conscious of the number of workers that die or suffer injuries every year in work place fires and fire-related accidents and incidents, and necessity of concerted tripartite actions to prevent similar occurrences in the future;

Recognising our individual and collective responsibility to ensure fire safety in every work place in Bangladesh;

Recognising that the promotion of occupational safety and health requires the full involvement and recognition of workers and their representatives in conformity with national and international labour standards so as to ensure sound industrial relations and social dialogue;


Noting the need to respect and promote the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), and other instruments of the ILO relevant to the framework for occupational safety and health;

We, the representatives of the Government, Employers' Organisations (BEF, BGMEA and BKMEA) and Workers' Organisations (NCCWE, as a representative body of national trade union federations, and BNC, as a sectoral union federation) of Bangladesh, hereby commit to fully abide by all relevant laws, regulations and procedures aimed at ensuring fire safety at the work place.

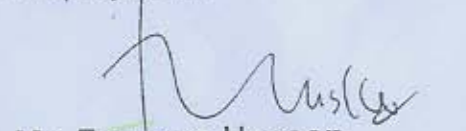


We also commit to actively develop, promote and implement collaborative, participatory, and transparent mechanisms to ensure fire safety in Bangladesh. As a first step, we affirm to work together to develop a National Tripartite Action Plan on Fire Safety by the end of February 2013, with a view to taking comprehensive action aimed at preventing any further loss of life, limb and property due to work place fires and fire-related accidents and incidents.


We call upon our international and national partners and stakeholders, including international development organisations, brands/buyers, donor agencies, and non-governmental organisations, to assist us in implementing the National Tripartite Action Plan on Fire Safety, once finalised. In this respect, we request the International Labour Organization (ILO) to assist us in organising the necessary consultation meetings and technical support.



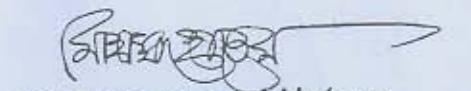
Mr. Mikail Shipar
Secretary,
Ministry of Labour and
Employment



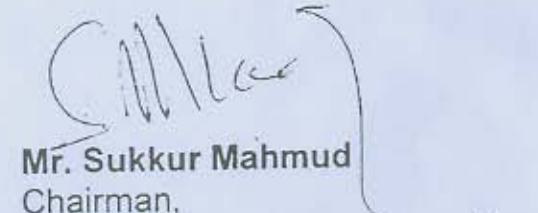
Mr. Faruque Hassan
Vice President,
Bangladesh Garments
Manufacturers and Exporters
Association



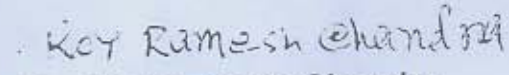
Mr. Md. Fazlul Hoque
President,
Bangladesh Employers
Federation



Mr. Mohammad Hatem
First Vice President,
Bangladesh Knitwear
Manufacturers and Exporters
Association



Mr. Sukkur Mahmud
Chairman,
National Coordination Committee
for Workers' Education



Mr. Roy Ramesh Chandra
Chairman,
Bangladesh National Council

Annex 2

The Members of the High Level Tripartite Committee will be (not according to seniority):

1. Joint Secretary (Labour), Ministry of Labour and Employment;
2. Director of Labour, Department of Labour;
3. Deputy Secretary (Labour), Ministry of Labour and Employment;
4. Chief Inspector, Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments;
5. Chairperson, Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (RAJUK);
6. Director General, Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defense;
7. President, Bangladesh Employers Federation;
8. President, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters' Association
9. President, Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters' Association;
10. Chairperson, National Coordination Committee for Workers' Education
11. Chairperson, Bangladesh National Council

The Committee can co-opt any tripartite representative as a Member of the Committee and invite any person as an advisor and/or observer.

Annex 3

List of Acronyms (in alphabetical order)

BEF:	Bangladesh Employers Federation
BGMEA:	Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters' Association
BKMEA:	Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters' Association;
BNC	Bangladesh National Council for Textile, Garments and Leather Workers
BTCL:	Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd.
BTRC:	Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission
DCIFE:	Department of the Chief Inspector for Factories and Establishments
DOL:	Department of Labour
FSCD:	Fire Service and Civil Defense
ILO:	International Labour Organization
MOC:	Ministry of Commerce
MoFDM:	Ministry of Food and Disaster Management
MoHA:	Ministry of Home Affairs
MoHPW:	Ministry of Housing and Public Works

MoLE:	Ministry of Labour and Employment
MOLGRDC:	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives
NCCWE:	National Coordination Committee for Workers' Education
PBD:	Bangladesh Power Development Board