

SECTOR Note

ILO and the MFA Forum

In 2005, the Tripartite Meeting on Promoting Fair Globalization in Textiles and Clothing in a Post-MFA Environment adopted conclusions ([Chairperson's summary](#)) in which the ILO was requested “*to cooperate more actively with.... and with multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as ... the MFA Forum*”. As a follow-up, the ILO started collaborating with the MFA Forum.

The MFA Forum is an open network of over 70 participants representing brands and retailers, trade unions, NGOs and multi-lateral institutions, with the participating international organizations listed below.

International Players

AccountAbility	Inditex
Asda George	International Labour Organization (ILO)
Business for Social Responsibility (BSR)	International Textiles, Garment & Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF)
Care International	Jones Apparel
Carrefour	Karstadt Quelle
Com-Mark	Levi Strauss & Co.
Co-op	Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN)
Cotton Group	Marks & Spencer
DATA	Nike
Debenhams	Oxfam
Department for International Development (DFID)	Social Accountability International (SAI)
Edun	Tesco
Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)	Tchibo
Fair Labour Association (FLA)	Traidcraft
Gap Inc.	United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
German Development Cooperation (GTZ)	USAID
Global Business Coalition on HIV/Aids	Walt Disney Company
Global Fairness Initiative	Wal-Mart
H&M	Whitaker group
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR)	Women's Edge Coalition
	World Bank

The aim of the MFA Forum is to promote social responsibility and competitiveness in national garment industries that are vulnerable in the new post-MFA trading environment.

The MFA Forum worked collaboratively to further the understanding of the likely impacts on apparel-manufacturing countries of the phase-out of the MFA and to identify possible courses of action to mitigate its social consequences, based on respect for international labour rights.

Collaboration between the ILO and the MFA Forum has notably developed through the launching of national initiatives, in particular in Morocco and Romania.

In Morocco, where the initiative was launched in 2006, a buyers' group of the MFA Forum, composed of the major foreign buyers in Morocco (Inditex, Mango, Next, Levi's, Marks and Spencer) has been created. With the support of the ILO and the MFA Secretariat, this group is elaborating, along with the members of the Tripartite National Steering Committee of the ILO Programme for "Improving Competitiveness of Textiles and Clothing through Decent Work" and the Bipartite Committee for Textiles and Clothing, a strategy to support the TC sector in its economic and social dimensions.

The first area of cooperation is the Social Upgrading (Mise en conformité Sociale) of garment enterprises through the improvement of the code "Fibre Citoyenne" initially elaborated by the TC employers' association (AMITH). An impact assessment study of the code is under preparation, together with an analysis of gaps between the Code Fibre Citoyenne and the other major codes currently implemented by the members of the Buyers' Group.

In Romania, as in Morocco, the MFA Forum has expressed the wish to discuss the possible launching of an MFA Forum initiative through the tripartite body (Tripartite National Steering Committee) initially established by the ILO for the implementation of a SECTOR Action Programme. Negotiations are under way, with the support of the ILO, to establish the terms of reference of an MFA Forum initiative that has been officially requested by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, currently chairing the ILO Tripartite National Steering Committee.

Furthermore, the ILO became involved with the MFA Forum in Lesotho with the MFAF-convened conference, *Destination Lesotho: On the Road to Responsible Competitiveness* in May 2006. At the conference, a wide-ranging action plan to improve sustainability of the industry was agreed by social partners and other stakeholders, which included a specific request for the local stakeholder to work with the ILO and IFC to develop a project for transparent labour monitoring and remediation system. The ILO has responded to this request, working with the local social partners to develop Better Work Lesotho to improve labour standards and competitiveness in the apparel industry. There has been ongoing communication and coordination between the ILO and the MFA Forum through the Lesotho Working Group throughout the participatory design phase, which continues as the project seeks to finalize funding arrangements and launch in the country.