

High-level 3+5+1 Meeting held on 18 February, 2020 to take stock the progress of Sustainability Compact

Ministry of Commerce (MoC), Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) of the Government of Bangladesh, five development partners EU, UK, US, Canada, Denmark and the ILO forming the high level 3+5+1 platform met on 18 February, 2020 to stock take the progress of the Sustainability Compact commitments. They noted the progress taken place so far but underscored the need for having the same provisions of freedom of association in the Bangladesh Labour Act (BLA) and the Export Processing Zones (EPZ) Act. However, the legislative bar in the EPZ Act laid on TU registration in the EPZ needs to be addressed in compliance with the recommendations from the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) and international labour standards (ILS). The threshold of worker participation in formation and registration of the unions needs to be taken out as per the ILS provisions. A roadmap should be outlined for the actions undertaken in response to C 87 and C 98, elimination of child labour and greater functioning of the labour judiciary.

Importance was laid on reinstatement of the workers dismissed and blacklisted from the last demonstration on RMG wage structure and their involvement in unionism. Compact partners sought an update on the cases filed against workers, effective functioning of the complaint helpline and high rejection of trade unions. They emphasized further on adopting a transparent mechanism to implement the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for union registration as well as building awareness of the stakeholders about it. They underscored the establishment of a legal unit under DIFE with experts to facilitate the process of complaint mechanism.

The Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC), which is currently being revised should include a separate chapter for the RMG industry with regard to its unique structure and load capacity. The relevant codes of the BNBC should be revised through an expert panel.

There should be a clarity about the roles and responsibilities between Industry Safety Unit (ISU) and the RMG Sustainability Council (RSC) and a narrative is required to demystify the operational relations between the two entities. DIFE's regulatory authority on factory licensing, labour inspection and other functions should not be delegated to any private body.

The BGMEA should have active involvement in the trial process of Employment Injury Insurance Scheme (EIS) in 100% export oriented garment industries covering some 150,000 workers and MoLE should endorse it. The ILO and GIZ will provide capacity support, assess the operation and recommend necessary steps for further scale up.