

## **Textile Partnership: cooperation with ACT initiative kicks off internationalisation – partnership initiative for chemicals management starts implementation in producer countries**

**(15 December 2017, Bonn/Berlin) On the path to improve the conditions in global textile supply chains, the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles has now taken key steps towards a stronger internationalisation. Strategic cooperation with the Action, Collaboration, Transformation (ACT) initiative will exploit synergies in order to encourage payment of living wages in the textile and clothing industry. That for members of both initiatives plan to share their experience of purchasing practices and to cooperate on implementation in producer countries. In Asia, the partnership initiative on chemicals management is advancing common commitment and concrete implementation in the producer countries. 15 members of the partnership have now enshrined their cooperation in a formal agreement.**

Back in November, the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles decided to place a stronger focus on the topic of a living wage. This decision will now be underpinned by the new cooperation with ACT. Yesterday the two partners signed a joint declaration to promote the payment of a living wage in the producer countries of the textile and clothing industry via industry-wide collective agreements, and by adapting purchasing practices. The parties share the view that a solution to the existing challenges in the sector requires a systematic approach.

Dr Jürgen Janssen, head of the Secretariat of the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles, stressed the relevance of the new focus in the partnership: ‘Until now living wages have generally been the exception rather than the rule, especially in the textile industry. A large number of players must come together and facilitate systemic change for being successfully implemented everywhere. For this reason, our cooperation with the ACT initiative is such an important lever.’

The ACT initiative consists of 17 brands and trading companies, along with the IndustriALL international trade union federation. Dr Frank Hoffer, Executive Director of ACT, emphasised the importance of sector-wide collective bargaining combined with adapting the purchasing practices, saying ‘It has to be possible to negotiate wages under the same conditions right across a country – irrespective of the individual factory and the client it is supplying. This should also be made possible under the terms of appropriate agreements with global brands and retailers.’ He added that this would need a broad-based partnership. ‘We are therefore delighted to have found such a committed and ambitious partner in the German Textile Partnership.’

The cooperation enshrined in the new agreement is a key element in tackling the topic within the partnership, and at the same time marks the beginning of efforts to strengthen the internationalisation of the partnership.

Furthermore, the newly enshrined partnership initiative for chemicals and environmental management should greatly reduce the use of problematic chemicals in wet processing in the textile production. The initial focus is on China and Bangladesh. Additional regions are expected to follow, and negotiations have already commenced with Myanmar, Ethiopia and Pakistan. This week 15 partnership members signed a memorandum of understanding. This represents a commitment on the part of ALDI Nord, ALDI SÜD, BEPI, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, BSI, Brands Fashion, Deuter, Hej Support, KiK, the Otto Group, the Rewe Group, Sympatex, Tchibo, the German Environment Agency and ZDHC to work on a broad-based training programme and give financial support. By the end of 2019, not only will workshops, training courses and dialogue events have raised awareness of sustainable chemicals and environmental management in production facilities. Supported with extensive training materials, courses in factories with wet processing operations will lead to a significant increase in knowledge and help in the gradual substitution of harmful chemicals. In addition, the creation of structures for cooperation with universities, research facilities and the chemical industry will consolidate the processes further and ensure broad-scale impacts.

The formal agreement now takes the partnership initiative out of the planning stage to the implementation phase. Other partnership initiatives will follow next year with systematic and specific impacts that generate further improvement in the producer countries.

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***The Partnership for Sustainable Textiles***

*The Partnership for Sustainable Textiles is a multi-actor partnership with members from companies, unions, non-governmental organisations, and standards organisations, as well as the Federal Government. The actors united in 2014 with the common aim to establish improvements along the entire textile supply chain. In order to achieve this, they agreed upon ambitious social and ecological goals. The actors are pursuing these targets practically by the means of individual measures by members and joint Partnership initiatives in the production countries.*

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