Resolution on the state of play of the implementation of the sustainability compact in Bangladesh

2017/2636(RSP) - 14/06/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on International Trade on the state of play of the implementation of the Sustainability Compact in Bangladesh.

Members stated that **the high-quality garment sector is essential for economic and social development in Bangladesh**. Its expansion has allowed large numbers of workers, especially women, to move from the informal to the formal economy.

The sector currently employs 4.2 million people in as many as 5 000 factories and indirectly supports the livelihoods of as many as 40 million people – about a quarter of Bangladesh's population.

Conclusions of the successive reviews of the Compact following the Rana Plaza disaster showed that tangible improvements were achieved by the Bangladeshi authorities in some areas. Although the Compact has led to a slight improvement in health and safety in factories and working conditions in the garment sector, there has been **no substantial progress** in the area of workers' rights in recent years.

Responsible business in Bangladesh: Parliament stated that Bangladesh needs to **make sizeable efforts in the long run** in order to achieve sustainable and more inclusive economic growth. Structural reforms leading to increased productivity, further diversification of exports, social justice, workers' rights, environmental protection and fighting corruption would be essential in this sense.

The Government of Bangladesh is called upon to:

- enhance its level of engagement as regards **improving safety and working conditions** and workers' rights in the garment sector and enhance the implementation of the legislation on building and factory safety;
- guarantee a **legislative framework for labour matters that is in full conformity with international standards**, notably in full compliance with ILO Conventions 87 and 98 on freedom of association and collective bargaining, and that is effectively implemented;
- pursue remediation work for all export-oriented ready-made garment factories and to ensure that repairs and other inspection follow-ups are undertaken and transparently monitored by the relevant public authorities, recognising the usefulness of the funds mobilised by donors and the importance of effective financial support;
- immediately reconvene the **minimum wage** board and institute a shorter frequency of wage review.

Contribution of private-sector initiatives: Parliament called on the international brands and retailers and the Bangladeshi private sector to **stay engaged** in order to respect the labour laws and implement corporate social responsibility measures, and to improve their record as regards responsible business practices, including ensuring decent working conditions for Bangladeshi garment workers.

Members also called on the parties to the **Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety** to prolong their engagement by means of it for another period of five years, before the current agreement comes to an end on 12 May 2018.

The EU and the international community - shared responsibility: Members expressed their support for follow-up activities to the Bangladesh Sustainability Compact and the enhanced dialogue of the Commission and the EEAS with Bangladesh on labour and human rights.

Parliament supported the Commission's examination of a **possible EU-wide initiative on the garment sector**, with voluntary initiatives and strict codes of conduct as its key principles. It also underlined the importance of **raising awareness among consumers** so as to increase transparency, as well as supporting the efforts for better labour and environmental standards, product safety and sustainable consumption.

The Bangladesh Sustainability Compact, in which the EU is a key player, could **serve as a paradigm for the establishment of similar partnerships** with third countries.

The resolution warned against initiatives that could lead to the disengagement of EU and other businesses from Bangladesh and would be damaging not only for the country's reputation but, most importantly, for its future development prospect.