We would like first of all to clarify that we have responded directly to Global Labor Justice and Asia Floor Wage Alliance on the 8Th June.

We are happy to provide you with more clarifications on the issues that were raised. Different topics were presented and we would like to, as much as possible, provide you with the most clear and transparent answers possible.

Concerning the ILO Convention and Recommendation on Gender Based Violence, we understand that the 107 session of the ILO has made substantial progress to put forward proposals for a Convention supplemented by a Recommendation. We understand also that there are still important points to be fully discussed, such as a definition of “Worker”. We also see that the scope of the present work is to address the topic from a prevention perspective, but also to recommend specific tools to address specific cases. We hope that at the next session of the ILO conference next year there will be substantial progress. We support the efforts and impulses towards addressing the issue of violence and harassment in the world of work, taking into account the responsibility of tripartite constituents, and we stand ready to play a positive role in this direction.

Concerning the report regarding H&M that Asia Floor Wage Alliance has recently published, we are deeply concerned by the disturbing findings and conclusions contained in it. Our teams in the countries concerned are starting the relevant investigations. In our role as a business, we do believe that the empowerment of women economically and socially is a way to prevent gender-based violence. Our position is very clear and we actively support such a development within the global textile industry, by working to enable freedom of association, strengthening workers’ voices and the right to join or form a trade union, as well as bargain collectively. These are fundamental rights of workers addressed within the Global Framework Agreement we signed with IndustriALL. Besides from requiring all suppliers to have an anti-abuse and harassment policy in place and following our thorough investigations on individual harassment cases, we are working to find more ways to address gender based violence in the workplace proactively, through more training, improved grievance mechanisms and dialogue in the factories, also working with external stakeholders.

In order to better address the specific cases that were outlined in the report, in our reply to Global Labor Justice and Asia Floor Wage Alliance we have also explicitly said that we are open to meeting with these organizations, also in the perspective of discussing other initiatives that might be conducive to the empowerment of women, such as the one mentioned in their letter. We support, and we will keep supporting, a multi-stakeholders perspective, and in this logic we are already collaborating with a number of other organisations, such as ILO, Better Work and other NGOs on the ground. We also believe that workers committee and trade unions should be empowered to be able to bring up, discuss and help solve cases of harassment, and for this reason we are also addressing these cases through the Global Framework Agreement we have with IndustriALL.

Finally, concerning the specific case related to Karnataka Garment Workers Union (KOOGU) Union dispute with one of the factory in India we are working with, I would like to assure you that our team on the ground is actively involved in playing a proactive role to find a solution. Since the beginning, in early March, we have been in contact with the management of the factory, the workers directly involved in the accidents and the trade unions. We are trying our best to facilitate the dialogue between the parties involved to get to a solution and I can assure you that we are extensively using all our leverages. Our position is that the right to join or form a trade union and bargain collectively is a fundamental right of workers. We also believe that the safety and the well-being of the workers should be a priority. Workers representatives shall not be discriminated against this and shall have access to carry out their representative functions in the workplace. Even in absence of a trade union in factories, workers should have means of speaking their voice to raise employment related issues.

I hope that these comments might be helpful to better understand the level and scope of H&M commitment towards the many issues related to the workplace in our supply chain.