**Open Statement Concerning the Need to Renew the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety**

We are legal practitioners and academics, and experts on business and human rights and corporate social responsibility, concerned about the strong risk that the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh (The Bangladesh Accord) is to expire without renewal or replacement on 31 May 2021. Prompted by the Rana Plaza disaster of 2013, involving the collapse of a garment factory that led to more than 1100 deaths and more than 2000 injuries, the Bangladesh Accord has proved to be an innovative and successful development in holding multinational garment retailers and brands accountable for the working conditions in garment suppliers working out of factories in Bangladesh.

On signing the Bangladesh Accord, brands and retailers accepted legally binding obligations to comply with the Accord’s provisions, including requiring their suppliers to participate in an inspection and remediation programme, and to ensure that remediation is financially feasible. Suppliers are subject to independent inspection by the Bangladesh Accord Chief Safety Inspector. Failure to comply with any notices and warnings issued by the Inspector may ultimately lead to the supplier being made ineligible to produce for Bangladesh Accord brands. Bangladesh Accord brands must also guarantee the financial feasibility of factories to complete remediation.

Since it began, the Bangladesh Accord has created trust among workers, has helped prevent accidents and protected workers dismissed unfairly for raising safety concerns. Global union federations, who are also Accord signatories, are able to bring charges against brands and retailers that fail to fulfil commitments under the Bangladesh Accord, which has led to two cases being brought to the Permanent Court of Arbitration and resulted in effective settlements to upgrade factory remediation.

The Bangladesh Accord is an excellent example of how businesses can help operationalise the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) through the use of remediation measures and by introducing a non-judicial grievance mechanism. It also contributes to the further awareness of human rights risks in supplier factories, in line with recent trends towards the adoption of mandatory corporate human rights due diligence laws applicable to multinational firms’ global production and supply chains. It would be a very negative step for the participating businesses, many of which have developed human rights policies based on the UNGPs, to let this historic instrument fall by the wayside. They must act now to adopt a successor agreement that replicates, and improves upon, the Bangladesh Accord model.

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