CCC’s Rejoinder, 23 June 2021

This communication is in response to ALDI SOUTH and ALDI NORTH’s identical reactions from 21 May 2021 to the Unfinished Business report published on 29 April 2021.

We reiterate that the figures showcased in the Unfinished Business report reflect the status of unverified remediation at ALDI NORTH and SOUTH’s suppliers. Based on Accord publicly available data, the installation of fire alarms had not been completed (i.e. verified as completed to standard) at 92 and 107 factories at the time of research (mid-April) in ALDI NORTH and ALDO SOUTH’s supply chains in Bangladesh respectively, which means that in case of fire, workers’ lives are in danger. This is both undeniable and extremely worrying.

We acknowledge the disruptions in the inspections and verification work that Covid-19 has produced. However, as noted by the Accord, in 23% of verification inspections, the engineers find that the remediation has not been completed to standard[[1]](#footnote-1). It is therefore erroneous to claim that remediation items marked in the factories’ Corrective Action Plans as pending verification by engineers have already been corrected. Moreover, we want to raise attention to the fact that based on publicly available remediation data at ALDI SOUTH’s suppliers, the overall remediation corrected rate was 87% at the time of research, while at ALDI NORTH the rate was 88%. ALDI SOUTH and NORTH both state in their responses that their remediation is 94% corrected. We invite them to provide evidence to substantiate this.

As the Unfinished Business report shows, the safety remediation work in Bangladesh has made a lot of impressive progress, but is not yet completed. The work of the Accord is not yet finished. We are very pleased that ALDI SOUTH and NORTH express their commitment to factory safety in Bangladesh. We trust that ALDI NORTH and SOUTH, having been signatories to both the 2013 and 2018 Accord agreements, and having acknowledged the safety progress achieved in the RMG industry in Bangladesh since 2013, understand what distinguishes the Accord from voluntary initiatives that have in the past been unable to prevent the Rana Plaza collapse and many other horrendous workplace accidents in Bangladesh and other garment exporting countries.

The Accord has been successful because it is legally-binding and the brands and workers’ representatives have an equal voice in its governance. The fact that the Accord is enforceable on individual brands has helped the brands use their collective leverage to drive safety remediation: all Accord signatories supplying from the same factory are required to ensure that the factory completes the remediation and it has the financial means to do so. Had the Accord not been in place, ALDI SOUTH and NORTH could not have achieved as much as they did in terms of workplace safety at their factories.

The RMG Sustainability Council (RSC), which ALDI NORTH and SOUTH refer to as sole avenue for future safety work, was established to take over the Accord operations on the ground, but it was never intended to replace the Accord model or to substitute for the brands’ obligations under the Accord. Without a legally-binding agreement that creates brand liability for the quality and independence of the work delivered by the RSC, the RSC is nothing more than a voluntary CSR initiative, with only brands and factory owners participating in an unenforceable initiative.

Most of the brands sourcing from the Rana Plaza factory had in place codes of conduct committing to safe working conditions; yet, these voluntary codes had not been able to prevent the over 1,000 unnecessary deaths.

**Aldi expressed hope that the global unions and their Bangladeshi affiliates will remain members of the RMG Sustainability Council (RSC). It should be noted that the unions and affiliates have already announced that absent a legally-binding agreement between unions and brands, they will** [**withdraw from the RSC**](https://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/global-unions-withdraw-unenforceable-garment-factory-safety-scheme-bangladesh)[[2]](#footnote-2). Without worker representation and participation, the RSC will therefore become a brand-factory led voluntary initiative, with no accountability and enforcement mechanisms to hold brands accountable for their commitments.

We were extremely pleased when in September 2020 ALDI NORTH and SOUTH expressed their [public commitment](https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/eu-mandatory-due-diligence/) to mandatory due diligence[[3]](#footnote-3). However, walking away from the legally-binding model of the Accord - with the German due diligence law having just been voted into legislation - questions the sincerity of its commitment.

We therefore call on ALDI SOUTH and NORTH to follow the lead of fellow German companies [KiK](https://twitter.com/KiK_presse/status/1405516593535279107)[[4]](#footnote-4) and [Tchibo](https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/bangladesh-tchibo-becomes-second-accord-signatory-brand-to-commit-to-new-legally-binding-agreement-on-garment-worker-safety/)[[5]](#footnote-5), and publicly express its support for a new legally binding and individually enforceable agreement with independent oversight to underpin the ongoing safety remediation work in Bangladesh and expand the successful Accord model to its other production countries.

1. <https://cleanclothes.org/file-repository/unfinished_business__april_2021_.pdf/view> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/global-unions-withdraw-unenforceable-garment-factory-safety-scheme-bangladesh> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/eu-mandatory-due-diligence/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://twitter.com/KiK_presse/status/1405516593535279107> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/bangladesh-tchibo-becomes-second-accord-signatory-brand-to-commit-to-new-legally-binding-agreement-on-garment-worker-safety/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)