

Platform on Sustainable Textile of the Asian Region

I. An executive summary (maximum 1 page) with a description of the achievement, including approach, objective, methodology, and (expected) results.

The Platform on Sustainable Textiles of the Asian Region (the STAR Network) was established by producing associations of the textile and garment industries of several Asian countries, the platform provides an opportunity to share information in the field of sustainability standards, to increase transparency within the industry and to learn from innovative initiatives tackling sustainability issues.

The globally agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are setting the framework for producers and workers, for buyers and consumers and for political players alike: Ensure sustainable production and consumption patterns (Goal 12). In this regard, the platform is a response to the ongoing globalization and complexity of textile and garment supply chains. It supports a better understanding of the mechanisms within the industry with the aim of jointly shaping its future towards sustainability and long term growth.

As a platform for dialogue, the network helps members find solutions to the challenges they all face. The platform is used to announce relevant dates for the industry and publish information on good practice from pioneering factories on subjects such as workplace health, affirmative action for women and waste management.

The STAR Network is also co-organizer of the conference series "Asian Dialogues on Sustainable Production in the Textile and Garment Sector". The Asian Dialogues are a platform where representatives of the Asian textile industry, government bodies, buyers and employees discuss challenges and opportunities on the way towards sustainability and develop a more cooperative relationship.

II. A short biography of the participants including, i.e., the applicant's contact data, career achievements and history, education, list of publications, etc.

The members of STAR Network are 9 industrial associations in 6 main textile manufacturing countries and a think tank. They are Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), China National Textile And Apparel Council (CNTAC), Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia (GMAC), Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association (MGMA), Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PHMA), Pakistan Textile Exporters Association (PTEA), Towel Manufacturers Association of Pakistan (TMA), Vietnam Textile and Garment Association (VITAS), and Promoting Sustainability in the Textile and Garment Industry in Asia (FABRIC)

1. The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA, www.bgmea.com.bd) is one of the largest trade associations in the country representing

the readymade garment industry, particularly the woven garments, knitwear and sweater sub-sectors with equal importance. It has over 4300 member factories. Around 40% of them are knitwear and sweater manufactures, and the rest 60% are woven garment manufactures. BGMEA member factories account for 100% woven garment exports of the country.

2. Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers & Exporters Association (BKMEA, www.bkmea.com), is a trade body to represent solely the knitwear sector of Bangladesh. BKMEA started its journey in 1996 with the all-out efforts of a few knitwear manufacturers. Today it is an organization of about 2296 knitwear manufacturers and exporters that represents the largest export earning sector of the country.

3. The China National Textile And Apparel Council (CNTAC, www.ctei.cn) is a National textile association. It is a non-profit organization formed on a voluntary basis. The mission of CNTAC is to improve the self-regulation system of the industry; protect the rights and interests of members and enterprises; promote the sound development of China's textile and apparel industry, etc.

4. Established since 1996, Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia (GMAC, www.gmac-cambodia.org) is the apex trade body that represents the garment and footwear industries in Cambodia. In September 2017, GMAC has a total of 467 export oriented garment factory members, 57 footwear factory members and 25 travelling bag factory members, as well as 43 associate and sub-contract members. Together, its members employ more than 700,000 workers making us the largest industry in Cambodia.

5. The Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association (MGMA, www.myanmargarments.org) is committed to supporting its factory members by providing valuable technical training services and supporting them in finding business opportunities. Together, its member factories provide jobs and livelihoods for approximately 230,000 workers. The MGMA facilitates responsible foreign investment in the sector.

6. Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PHMA, www.phmaonline.com) is the premier trade organization representing the hosiery and knitwear industry accelerating and providing growth in all sectors of the economy, generating immense employment and promoting national self-reliance. Established in 1960, its main object is “to promote, develop, protect, stimulate and encourage the hosiery, knitwear and all made-ups, fabrics, home textile products of cotton, wool, silk or man-made fibers and to raise the standard of their production and enhance exports.”

7. Pakistan Textile Exporters Association (PTEA, www.ptea.org.pk) is the premier organization of textile manufacturers and exporters in Pakistan. Established in 1985, PTEA has been actively engaged in debate and legislation that affects textile trade and community planning. Membership of the Association has grown over the years with present strength more than 250. Members of the Association earn 3 Billion Dollars foreign exchange through export of textiles.

8. The Towel Manufacturers Association of Pakistan (TMA, www.towelassociation.com) started

as a group in 1965. After covering some stages, the Towel Manufacturing Group was formed locally at Karachi and got recognized by the Ministry of Commerce in May 1972. Later on TMA was recognized by Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry and converted into the full-fledged “A” Grade Association in 1976.

9. The Vietnam Textile and Apparel Association (VITAS, http://www.vietnamtextile.org.vn/vitas_p1_1-1_2-2_3-615.html) is a member-based, independent and non-governmental umbrella association working in the field of textile and garment industry in Vietnam. VITAS works closely with enterprises and the government on strategies and development program for the textile and apparel industry. During nearly 20 years of operation, VITAS has attracted nearly 800 members who are individuals, businesses, domestic and foreign partner organizations. The VITAS has 7 local branches located in all regions of the country.

10. The project FABRIC (Fostering and Advancing Sustainable Business and Responsible Industrial Practices in the Clothing Industry in Asia, <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/34136.html>) is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, which works on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Acting as a think tank, the project creates a pool of knowledge from successful sustainability initiatives in individual countries and disseminates that expertise across the wider region. It works with industry stakeholders towards adopting a joint position on sustainable production criteria. The FABRIC project supports the Asian textile industry in its transformation towards fair production for people and the environment.

Table 1: Participating members and contacts

STAR Network Members	Represented by	Title
Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA)	Mr. Miran Ali	Vice President
Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA)	Mr. Fazlee Shamim Ehsan	2nd Vice President
China National Textile and Apparel Council (CNTAC)	Dr. Xiaohui Liang	Chief Researcher
Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia (GMAC)	Mr. Ken Loo	Secretary General
Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association (MGMA)	Ms. Khine Khine Nwe	Secretary General
Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PHMA)	Mr. Junaid Makda	Deputy Chief Coordinator
Towel Manufacturers Association (TMA)	Mr. Muzzammil Hussain	Secretary General
Pakistan Textile Exporters Association (PTEA)	Mr. Azizullah Goheer	Secretary General
Vietnam Textile & Apparel Association (VITAS)	Mrs. Hoang Ngoc Anh	General Secretary
FABRIC, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH	Mr. Marc Beckmann	Project Director

III. A description of the exceptional achievements (maximum two-pages) containing the following information:

a. Which aspects of textile manufacturing does the achievement focus on?

The textile industry plays a major role in the economy of many Asian countries. While the underlying conditions vary considerably between countries, the challenges they face are similar – to ensure decent conditions for workers and reduce environmental impacts. To overcome these challenges while continuing to expand, the industry needs to be more socially, environmentally and economically sustainable. This can be done, but it requires collaboration: Strong networks and regular knowledge-sharing can help the industry to implement sustainable business models across the board.

b. Which challenges were taken on, what was the pursued aim?

The cooperation of STAR network mainly involves the following sustainable development agenda areas:

SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere. By focusing on the economic areas where most of the poor are active, such as small and micro enterprises, the private sector can create employment opportunities and promote the economic growth of the poor. This is an important prerequisite for cooperation between industry organizations and partners.

SDG 5: Gender equality and women empowerment. Providing women and girls with access to education, health care, decent work and participation in political and economic decision-making will promote sustainable economic development. The main objective of the work of textile industry organizations in this field is to promote gender equality through women's economic empowerment.

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth. Creating more decent jobs, actively building harmonious labor relations, and improving employment and labor protection mechanisms are all the ways for enterprises to achieve this goal.

SDG 12: Sustainable consumption and production. Sustainable consumption and production refers to promoting the efficient use of resources and energy, building sustainable infrastructure, and giving all people access to basic public services, green and decent work and improving the quality of life. Its implementation will help to achieve the overall development plan, reduce future economic, environmental and social costs, strengthen economic competitiveness and reduce poverty.

SDG17: Strengthening means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership. Inclusive partnerships are based on principles and values, shared vision and shared goals. The success will rely on the new agenda to stimulate and mobilize the strength of important actors, new partnerships, key stakeholders and broader global citizens.

c. Which was the methodical approach? Is the achievement related to a process or product? What were the key steps to success?

1) Regular conferences: To strengthen regional exchange, a conference series called “Asian Dialogues on Sustainability in the Textile and Garment Industry” is initiated, providing a platform to discuss opportunities and challenges on the way towards sustainability, to share regional experiences and to learn from innovative initiatives tackling sustainability issues in the different producing countries.

The conference series brings together industry representatives from brands, suppliers, workers, and civil society and government bodies from across Asia. The conferences are organized by members of the STAR Network in cooperation with FABRIC project, a network of business associations in the region, and other local partners. The latest seminar is *The Impacts of the Pandemic on Overseas Chinese-invested Textile and Apparel Enterprises’ Operation and Social Responsibility*. It was also the launching meeting for the study report implemented by CNTAC on Chinese-invested overseas companies and their social responsibility management in the background of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 130 participants from 12 countries and regions attended the meeting.

2) Cooperation on industrial study:

In order to better understand the current situation of Asian textile and garment supply chain, members of STAR network cooperated to study the industries of several Southeast Asian countries from different angles. For example, CNTAC implemented research of *The Overseas Investment of the Chinese Textile and Garment Industry and Its Social Impacts: Field Study Reports in 4 Asian Countries (Myanmar, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Viet Nam)* with the support of GIZ FABRIC and STAR network members in 2017. The research is to understand Chinese outbound investments in the textile sector, especially companies’ commitment to social responsibility. The series of reports provides well-rounded overview of implementation of responsible business practices and sustainability amongst Chinese textile and garment enterprises overseas, as well as to act as references for policy formulators in the future.

3) Capacity building:

The social responsibility performance of textile and garment enterprises in Asian regions is often closely watched by international stakeholders. The best way to solve the problem is to enhance the soft power of the enterprises through capacity-building.

In 2018, CNTAC held seminar activities in Myanmar and Cambodia with the theme of "promoting corporate social responsibility, gender equality and promoting labor relations". The two-day training activity, jointly sponsored by CNTAC, Giz, and local partners., gave a detailed presentation on the latest development trend of overseas corporate social responsibility, corporate gender equality, business environment in Myanmar and Cambodia, the latest labor law in Myanmar, health, safety and environmental protection and other laws and regulations. In particular,

the communication and management mechanism based on local culture and the promotion of enterprise labor relations dialogue have been comprehensively and professionally interpreted. Many enterprise representatives participating in the training believe that the training activity is an important platform and window to learn from and learn from excellent enterprises in the industry, which helps to improve the awareness and ability of social responsibility of Chinese enterprises.

4) Joint Statement on Responsible Purchasing Practices amid the COVID-19 Crisis

During this unprecedented time of global outbreak of the COVID-19, responsible business has become more important than ever for the whole world to survive and recover from the crisis. Especially, responsible purchasing practices of brand companies, retailers and traders of the global textile and apparel supply chains, will bring enormous impacts on the fundamental rights of millions of workers and the livelihood of their families in the supplier end. It is time for global businesses to uphold and honor their commitment to labor rights, social responsibility and sustainable supply chains. With this in mind, STAR network members call on global brand companies, retailers and traders to: 1. Carefully consider all potential impacts on workers, small businesses in the supply chain when taking significant purchasing decisions; 2. Honor the terms of purchasing contracts, fulfill obligations therein, and not re-negotiate price or payment terms; 3. Make practical plans to take responsibility of the suspended delivery or shipment, as well as the goods already produced or currently in production, proceed with payment as agreed upon, and not cancel confirmed orders which are already in production; 4. Offer fair compensation to suppliers (100% FOB) if production or delivery has to be suspended or stopped, or offer salaries directly to workers of suppliers; 5. Put no responsibility on suppliers for delay of delivery or shipment and claim no compensation for such delays; 6. Put no further improper pressure on suppliers by additional costs, rush orders or unnecessary visits and audits; 7. Make all efforts and engage with local stakeholders for a better understanding of the local situation and contexts; 8. Always resort to dialogue and collaborative settlement to ensure mutually acceptable solutions to disputes; 9. Support business partners on supply chain as much as possible, and aim at long-term strategy of business continuity, supply chain unity and social sustainability.

After issuing the statement, star network has won unanimous praise from the industry. It is generally believed that the production end organizations of textile and garment transnational supply chain work together to make a common voice, which is conducive to urging the purchasing end to turn to a more responsible procurement mode, safeguard the legitimate interests of production enterprises and industrial workers, and maintain the continuity of supply chain business.

5) Asian producer associations joining forces for better purchasing practices in the textile and garment industry

In January 2021, STAR network starts a new initiative calling for better purchasing practices in the textile and garment industry. The Sustainable Terms of Trade Initiative (STTI) is a manufacturer¹ driven initiative, focused on creating fairer purchasing practices in the textile and garment industry. It is set within a fiercely competitive, enormously globalized industry. This is

exacerbated by the fact that the predominant business model in the fashion industry is rather inefficient and wasteful: Short-lived and trend-driven demands on part of the consumers create high uncertainty in the fashion supply chain. However, the resulting economic risks are often borne entirely by the manufacturers.

Until March 2021, the associations will work together in five working groups, defining their “red lines”, requests and recommendations on topics such as payment and delivery practices, planning and information exchange and third-party negotiations. Based on the output of the working groups, the second phase of the initiative will drive the roll-out in the industry. Many industry organizations and networks have already pledged support to the initiative. They will be involved as experts, supporting the working groups or as part of an industry advisory board. However, before brands, buyers and other stakeholders are joining the discussion table, manufacturers and associations will use the “safe space” of their new initiative to develop joint requirements and recommendations, to then communicate them with one voice.

After all members confirmed their commitment, STAR members joined forces with the International Apparel Federation (IAF) to build this purchasing practices initiative. IAF is already in contact with further IAF-member associations who are planning to join the initiative.

d. Quantify the benefit of your approach leading to the achievement.

As estimated, the STAR network represents over 60% of all global apparel exports by manufacturers, and over 47 million of workers. The STAR network has brought the impact, not only to the seven major textile and garment producing countries, but also to the other end of the supply chain. Take the regular conferences for example, since 2016, more than 1,400 participants attended the 13 conferences on different sustainability topics and exchanged on their experiences and lessons learned in driving more sustainable production. On the other hand, the main beneficiaries also include hundreds of factory workers and managers. Through participating in relevant training, they have improved their understanding and management ability of social responsibility.

e. Describe how your experience will promote further advances in your respective field or beyond.

UN SDG 17 emphasizes strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development. In achieving sustainable development goals, STAR network combines the objectives with the context of the industries, to discuss the ways and methods to achieve SDGs with open and inclusive dialogue.

STAR network will always advocate and support the textile and garment industry in Southeast Asia to carry out responsible corporate behavior and sustainable development in all links of the value chain. In order to meet the challenges of labor, human rights, fair competition and environmental protection in investment, production, circulation and consumption, the textile and garment industry and its stakeholders must take coordinated governance strategies and joint

actions, and establish necessary public-private partnership mechanisms and regional coordination mechanisms to achieve the sustainable development goals in the value chain.