

PLAN OF ACTION

PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE TEXTILES

CONTENTS

A. PREAMBLE	3
B. Objectives	5
C. Implementation strategy	6
D. Cooperation structures	8
E. Conditions of participation	9
ANNEX	13

A. PREAMBLE

Tragedies such as the collapse of Rana Plaza in Bangladesh in 2013 have brought the issue of social and ecological standards in global textile production to the forefront of our consciousness. Although responsible companies, trade unions, civil society actors and German development policy are already engaged in working to bring about significant improvements in social and ecological production conditions in many ways, much remains to be done.

This is why the German Government, the textile and clothing industry, the trade, trade unions and civil society are pooling their expertise and joining forces in a Partnership for Sustainable Textiles (Textile Partnership). A collective and cooperative approach on the part of all members of the Partnership is indispensable. The overarching objective of the Textile Partnership is to demonstrably improve social, economic and environmental conditions along the entire supply chain in the textile and apparel sector. Supply chains for textile and clothing products are extremely complex, highly diversified on a regional basis, and involve a scrupulous division of labour. The social, environmental and economic challenges to be mastered are then equally complex. Planned social, environmental and economic partnership standards for the entire value chain of raw material production and textile and clothing production have already been drawn up jointly. Partnership members have undertaken to comply with a mandatory process to realise these joint measures, and thus achieve the objectives and standards of the Partnership. The Partnership sees itself as a platform which the involved actors can use to jointly review progress made towards achieving the agreed objectives, as well as sharing experience and best practices, and learning from one another.

To pursue the goal, the Textile Partnership specifies implementation requirements and backs these with ambitious deadlines¹. The interaction and interconnectedness of economic efficiency, social factors and environmental soundness are to be taken into account in this process. The implementation process must therefore be kept up-to-date at all times. The progress pursuing and achieving the objectives is checked. One of the intended outcomes of this is that internationally recognised guidelines and standards such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the ILO core labour standards should become reality across the board. All members of the Partnership make their own contribution to achieving the Partnership's goals, whether in terms of cooperation between the textile industry and its suppliers, in the development-policy dialogue at government level, in international trade union work or the international activities of non-governmental organisations.

Because of the international nature of the textile and apparel sector, the Partnership undertakes to connect with European and international initiatives and institutions so as to

¹ In accordance with the agreements entered into by Partnership members, the deadlines and implementation requirements shall be regularly reviewed and modified in the course of the process, with the participation of all stakeholder groups and on the basis of joint experience.

work towards equal terms of competition and broad membership of the Partnership across national borders.

Partnership members agree that the objectives cannot be met by all partners at the same level and within the same timescale. This will allow small and medium-sized enterprises to join the Partnership, too.

Partnership members will endeavour to integrate the majority of businesses in the Partnership and to work for common standards at European and international level, to prevent any distortion of competition, among other aspects.

B. OBJECTIVES

The aim of the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles is to bring about continuous improvement of social, ecological and economic sustainability along the entire textile chain.

This is to be achieved with the following **four strategic elements**:

1. Joint **definition of Partnership Standards** and implementation requirements with deadlines for **continuous improvement**.
2. Joint improvement of **framework conditions** in the producer countries and recommendations for action on policy and policy coherence in Germany and the EU.
3. **Transparent communication** that makes it easy for consumers to identify sustainable textiles. Communication about the progress made by the Partnership and its members must also be transparent.
4. **A Partnership platform** to review and support progress and the feasibility of implementation, share experience and learn from each other.

The guiding principles leading to achievement of the Partnership's goals are credibility, transparency and effectiveness. The focus is on tangible results. Local partners such as producers, trade unions and non-governmental organisations are to be strengthened, and synergies with existing initiatives are to be exploited. In its orientation towards results, the Partnership seeks further partners, including in the European and an international context.

The Partnership views the **supply chain for textiles and clothing as an integral whole**: from the production of raw materials through to disposal. The intention is that the members of the Partnership apply their expertise and capabilities in working groups or contribute specific measures relating to selected supply stages, depending on their own sectoral priorities and the objectives specific to their organisation.

The Partnership addresses the **ecological, social and economic challenges of sustainability**. On the basis of the Partnership standards, therefore, the Partnership will address various **priority areas of activity** to pave the way for the coherent and effective implementation of the Partnership's goals. The Annexes lay the foundations for the further development and definition of Partnership standards and implementation measures.

C. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The credibility of the Partnership and of the commitment by individual members of the Partnership relies on improvements being achieved, these improvements being verifiable and the improvements being presented in a transparent manner.

In this context the participants commit to making an **active contribution to implementing all four strategic elements**. This comprises:

1. Joint **definition of Partnership Standards** and implementation requirements with deadlines for **continuous improvement (pursuit of the objective)**.
The Partnership Standards define the social, ecological and economic goals in relation to the individual stages of the supply chain. Members undertake to comply with a joint process to pursue these objectives with a view to achieving the standards and goals of the Partnership. The implementation requirements govern the individual stages of implementing the Partnership Standards as a multi-stage model in an ongoing process of improvement.
2. Joint improvement of **framework conditions** in the producer countries. For this purpose the Partnership develops:
 - proposals for specific measures on the ground, which
 - involve suppliers and local stakeholders such as trade unions and non-governmental organisations,
 - provide for capacity building measures over and above assessments of the current situation and
 - set thematic or national priorities;
 - recommendations for action on policy and policy coherence in Germany, the EU and partner countries (e.g. through the examination of policy instruments as well as recommendations for better trade-policy and industry-policy incentives and exemplary practices by the public sector in the purchasing of textiles).
3. **Transparent communication** that makes it easy for consumers to identify sustainable textiles. Communication about the progress made by the Partnership and its members must also be communicated in a transparent manner.
For this purpose the Partnership will develop:
 - a verification and accreditation mechanism for existing standards and initiatives in order to improve transparency in the supply chain and protect competition-relevant information, including
 - benchmarking/evaluation of initiatives,
 - rules for the accreditation and verification of existing initiatives.
 - appropriate and credible forms of communication, including consumer information
 - mechanisms determining how the supply chain is made transparent and for whom

- mechanisms to be developed by the Steering Committee to ensure transparent communication
- options for presenting company performance within the framework of the Partnership, including best practices
- rules for external communication conducted by the Partnership, i.e. which lay out the form in which participants in the Partnership communicate about the Partnership

4. **A Partnership platform** to review progress in implementation, share experience and learn from each other.

For this purpose the Partnership will develop and implement:

- As a first priority a **transparent and effective internal monitoring system** in order to steer the Partnership and to review the inputs of the individual Partnership members, the joint progress of the Partnership and the implementation of the requirements as agreed: on this basis transparency is to be achieved in a graded manner, protecting data that are relevant for competition while meeting the information requirements of the Partnership
- opportunities for the effective exchange of lessons learned and successful approaches
- mechanisms to ensure constant further development of the content of the Partnership's work on the basis of the progress made
- joint approaches and projects to foster mutual learning, e.g. support for SMEs with respect to sustainable supply chain management

D. COOPERATION STRUCTURES

In order to integrate all stakeholders in an appropriate manner and to enable the objectives to be implemented quickly and effectively, the Partnership will operate with the following implementation structure until the date set for the first review:

1. Governance

A Steering Committee that represents the various stakeholders via member groups is responsible for strategic steering and development of the Partnership.

The Steering Committee comprises twelve members, made up as follows:

- four representatives from the private sector, ideally with two commercial and two industrial representatives
- three representatives from non-governmental organisations, ideally with one representative each from the environmental and social spheres
- three representatives of the German Government, with at least one representative of BMZ
- one representative of trade unions
- one representative of non-commercial standards organisations

All decisions will be reached on the basis of consensus. The respective stakeholder groups shall elect the members of the Steering Committee.

2. Working groups

Time-limited expert groups that work on thematic or regional issues and report back to the Steering Committee and the Partnership Secretariat.

3. Partnership Secretariat

Technical/professional and in-process support for all operational tasks, including technical preparation and implementation of telephone conferencing, meetings, workshops and assemblies.

4. Involvement of other stakeholders

In the coming months the Steering Committee shall develop a proposal to involve stakeholders from the producer countries and from initiatives (EU/international) and organisations comparable to the Textile Partnership in the Partnership's activities.

Evaluation of the structure

The structure shall be evaluated by the Steering Committee in the further course of the Partnership, after no later than one year, with regard to its effectiveness and results orientation, and if necessary shall be adapted.

E. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

Participation in the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles is in principle open to all organisations that satisfy the eligibility requirements set out in the following.

I. Eligibility requirements

- **Declaration of agreement**

The members of the Partnership undertake to jointly pursue the objectives with a view to achieving the standards and goals of the Partnership.

- **Active engagement in the Partnership**

The members of the Partnership undertake to contribute actively to implementation.

- **Commitment to an independent review process**

The ongoing efforts to pursue the objectives of the Partnership will be reviewed in the form of a regular review process conducted by independent third parties. The review process will be steered by the Steering Committee of the Textile Partnership. The review process serves the interests of transparency and provides a basis for an ongoing learning and enhancement process. Within the scope of the review, progress made by Partnership members and by the Partnership per se will be identified, problems in implementation pinpointed, and measures devised. Partnership members undertake to move towards achieving the standards and objectives of the Partnership. Where these are not achieved reasons must be given. Where a member fails to move towards the objective or fails to make adequate progress sanctions can be imposed, culminating in an exclusion from the Partnership.

Interest in participation in the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles must be submitted to the Partnership Secretariat in writing. The Steering Committee will decide on admission to the Partnership in line with criteria and deadlines to be identified during the further course of the process. Refusal of admission is only permissible with good cause and must be justified in writing.

Any participating organisation that violates the interests of the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles or fails to uphold its commitments can be excluded from the Partnership by means of a Steering Committee resolution.² Before exclusion, the member in question shall be given a chance to mount a written defence.

Participants commit to cooperation in a spirit of trust, and in particular to compliance with the Chatham House Rule with regard to Partnership meetings and workshops unless otherwise decided in individual cases.

² For this purpose the Steering Committee shall develop a suitable procedure.

II. Composition of participants

The Partnership for Sustainable Textiles is a multi-stakeholder initiative that pools the wide-ranging expertise and skills of the various stakeholders in the textile sector for the purpose of improving sustainability along the entire supply chain in an effective manner. The participants are made up of the following organisations:

1. Companies in the textile and clothing industry and in the trade

2. Associations and initiatives which are active in the field of sustainable textiles.

Members of participating associations and initiatives are not automatically participants in the Partnership but they may apply for individual membership.

3. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which are active in the field of sustainable textiles.

4. Trade unions which are active in the field of sustainable textiles.

5. The Federal Republic of Germany, represented by the Federal German Government.

As the initiator of the Partnership, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development is a permanent participant with a permanent seat on the Steering Committee.

6. Other stakeholders

- Non-commercial standards-setting organisations which offer or develop standards for sustainable textiles;
- Scientific institutions which conduct investigations and studies into sustainable textiles.

7. Future stakeholders

The aim is to integrate companies and other stakeholders, especially civil society stakeholders, from the producer countries into the Partnership. The Steering Committee shall draw up a proposal to this effect.

Until such time interested parties who do not come under one of the listed participant groups can be granted guest status if their interest is justified.

III. Termination of participation

Participation in the Partnership ends

- upon deregistration of a sole proprietorship or commercial company from the commercial register or, in the case of legal persons and non-private-sector organisations, upon their dissolution;
- upon the initiation of insolvency proceedings;
- by declaration of withdrawal sent in writing to the Secretariat, with four weeks' notice;
- through exclusion from the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles.

IV. Funding

1. Until 2018 the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development shall cover the basic funding for the Secretariat of the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles.
2. Proposals for the long-term funding of the Partnership shall be elaborated by the Steering Committee.
3. In the event of greater funding being required for specific tasks, such as campaigns for consumer communication, the Steering Committee shall elaborate a financing strategy that involves contributions from other participants.
4. Participants and third parties can support the activities of the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles with further contributions at any time.
5. Work within the Partnership is carried out on a voluntary basis.

ANNEX

The Annexes of the Plan of Action 1.0 provide the basis for the further activities of the Textile Partnership.