



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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Dhaka: International meet on future of garment industry tomorrow

Major global retailers and brands such as Gap, Marks & Spencer, and Levi Strauss, will join Bangladesh garment industry leaders and Government official at a major conference in Dhaka starting tomorrow. The two-day *'Forum on the Future'* conference will focus on the prospects of the country's textiles and garments industry in the post-quota period. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the MFA Forum organized the conference, which brings this diverse group together for the first time.

On 1 January this year the Multi-fibre Arrangement, which governed clothing and textile exports to the US and the EU through a system of quotas, came to an end. For garment workers in poor countries like Bangladesh, the end of MFA brings fears of large-scale job losses as well as downward pressures on working conditions.

Says Neil Kearney, Board Director of the Ethical Trading Initiative and General Secretary of the International Textiles Garments and Leather Workers Industry: 'With the world clothing and textile industry in turmoil, countries like Bangladesh that are highly dependent on the industry for employment and export earnings, must develop strategies to stabilise and grow their industry. This conference provides a springboard for all concerned – government, employers and workers alike – to develop such a strategy'.

Over 150 participants including national and international government and trade union representatives, the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation are expected to attend the Conference. **ENDS....**



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Notes to editors:

1. The Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA), also known as the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC), which governed textiles and apparel imports to the USA and the EU through a system of quotas, came to an end on 1 January 2005.
2. The MFA Forum is a group of brands and retailers, international institutions, trade unions and NGOs formed in early 2004 to better understand the implications of the end of the MFA, particularly for workers and communities, and to explore how best to promote collaborative approaches to mitigating negative impacts and taking advantage of new opportunities.
3. Garments represent 68% of all Bangladesh's product exports. Experts predict that in the post 2005 period, Bangladesh garment exports will fall by as much as 25%.
4. The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) is a labour standards initiative. It was established in 1998 to improve the lives of workers and their families in global supply chains. It believes that companies producing, supplying and selling goods for consumer markets should observe national and international labour laws. Its purpose is to identify and promote responsible corporate practice that will help make this a reality.

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