



on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh

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## STEERING COMMITTEE QUARTERLY FACE TO FACE MEETING - MINUTES

**Date:** Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> & Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2016

**Time:** 9am – 5pm, 9am – 5pm.

**VENUE:**

Accord office

AJ Heights Building, 5th Floor

Cha – 72/1/ D

Progati Sarani, North Badda, Dhaka – 1212

Bangladesh

**ATTENDEES:**

**Chair:** Dan Rees

**Brands:** Santiago Martinez-Lage Sobredo, Karl Fagerlin, Jochen Overmeyer, Aleix Gonzalez, Edward Southall

**Labour:** Jenny Holdcroft, Christy Hoffman, Roy Ramesh, Amirul Haque Amin, Christina Hajagos-Clausen

**Witness Signatories:** Scott Nova

**Accord Executive Team:** Rob Wayss, Brad Loewen

**Accord Staff:** Tatiana Delany, Joris Oldenzien

**Apologies:** Melanie Steiner, Alke Boessiger

<b>AGENDA ITEMS</b>
<b>1. Introductions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The Chair welcomed those members present.</li></ul>
<b>1.1 Agree meeting agenda and any items of AOB</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Agenda agreed with following additions<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o BGMEAs request that the Accord inspect Liberty Fashion Knitwear Ltd; to be covered under AOB</li><li>o SC decision on whether the safety and health complaints mechanism applies in reprisal cases in a relocation; to be covered under 3.2</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>2. Governance</b>
<b>2.1 Review last meeting agreed actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- No outstanding actions</li></ul>
<b>Advisory Board (AB) Update</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The first meeting held under the revised terms of reference was on 11th April 2016.</li><li>- The AB have asked that the SC report to them on actions taken by the Accord to support the NTPA. The SC request that the Secretariat formally update the AB on NTPA engagement at AB meetings.</li></ul> <p><b>Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Secretariat to formally update the AB on Accord/NTPA engagement at AB meetings.</b></li></ul>
<b>3. Management Reporting (Executive Office pt. 1)</b>
<b>3.1 Review last meeting agreed actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- SC welcomed Roy Ramesh and Amirul Haque Amin to the meeting.</li><li>- SC brand reps to increase focus on factories close to initial CAP completion; Ted explained that in LC Waikiki's experience CAP issues reported as fixed are being returned to in progress during follow-up inspections and they have therefore struggled to complete CAPs.</li><li>- Jochen noted that the proposal on how to re-integrate factories in the Accord after a stage 3 termination will be discussed under agenda item 3.2.</li></ul> <p><b>Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>The SC confirm their request for a memo informing them of stage 3 escalation cases under Article 21.</b></li></ul>
<b>3.2 Inspection &amp; Remediation</b> <p><u>Follow-up inspection &amp; remediation update</u></p>

- Brad referred the SC to the weekly management dashboard report prepared by the Accord Engineering General Manager.
- The Accord carried out 525 follow up inspections in March. The number of Accord engineers has increased from 60 to 100 since October 2015 and the Accord now has the capacity to carry out a follow-up inspection at every Accord factory every three months.
- Accord engineers are also carrying out initial inspections of approximately 75 to 80 factories, with four initial inspections scheduled per week.
- Scott and Jenny congratulated Brad on his work increasing the number of follow-up inspections so quickly and taking on capacity of initial inspections.

#### *Review Panel & DEA update*

- Brad updated the SC on three recently submitted Review Panel factories. These factories were identified in the initial structural inspections as Red/Amber. The Accord has been monitoring their load plans since the initial inspections.
- There were approximately 150 factories identified during initial structural inspections as Red/Amber. All of these factories will receive a follow-up visit in the next week and Brad emphasised that regardless of other structural priorities these factories will be closely monitored. Brad clarified that the Red/Amber factories can only remain open if load reduction is closely managed. Jenny commented that at the time of initial inspection when reduced load measures were enforced no one anticipated such a long DEA review process.
- Jochen asked what measures the Accord has introduced to accelerate the DEA review process. Brad explains that a combination of the increased number of engineers on staff and assigning all structural engineers to review DEAs has cleared the backlog of DEAs waiting for Accord review.
- The SC discussed ways in which the DEA approval process could be accelerated, for example, incorporating factories with 4+ DEA reviews into the escalation procedure, or explaining to factories that an incorrect DEA would result in no fee, or accrediting certain consultancy firms.
- Ted asked if the Accord has data on the progress rate of factories with or without an approved DEA. The Secretariat clarified that this data is not currently available, but can be obtained. Ted observed that it would be interesting to see if there is a difference in remediation rate for factories requiring a DEA and also between factories with an approved or not yet approved DEA. He suggested setting up a small task force to come up with a solution to accelerate the DEA approval process.
- Jochen enquired if the industry is sufficiently informed of DEA requirements. Brad clarified that there is guidance available from the Accord, but notes that in many cases the reason for the approval delay is not related to a lack of knowledge of how to carry out a DEA. For example, the Accord frequently receives DEA re-submissions with the exact same content as was previously submitted and rejected.

#### *Remediation Progress rates*

- The Secretariat presented some slides on remediation progress rates. The current initial CAP progress rate is 57%. The number of CAP issues from initial inspections continues to grow because of newly inspected factories and CAPs being finalised. This partly explains why the overall initial CAP progress rate is increasing slowly.
- The SC requested that the Secretariat report on like for like initial CAP progress rates going forward. They agreed that for this comparison September 2014 should be considered the date of separation between the first batch of initial inspections and subsequent batches of initial inspections.
- The number of CAP items moving back from pending verification to in progress has increased from 18% to 23% since January 2016. This is possibly because of increased pressure on factories to complete remediation and thus they are inaccurately marking issues as pending verification in some cases. And also because there is an increase in the number of partially completed items being marked as pending verification.
- 8 factories have completed their initial CAP to date. The case handlers inform the Engineering General Manager of factories with an initial CAP progress rate of approx. 95%+. He then calls those factories to discuss their last outstanding items, requesting that they submit pictorial evidence as soon as possible so the Accord can schedule a follow-up inspection and verify the completed CAP.

#### *Escalation case*

- Brad explained a recent unusual escalation case to the SC. Three joint Accord/Alliance factories (all factories part of the Smart group) recently

falsified DEA concrete strength results. The Alliance identified the fraud and immediately took action, recommending their brands remove production and suspend all future orders from the factories. The Accord wrote to the company signatories in four factories in the Smart Group producing for Accord signatories requesting that they terminate their business with the Smart Group in accordance with Article 21. Brad noted that under the Accord Article 21 protocol termination of business applies to all factories owned by the same supplier.

- Aleix asked what will happen to these factories after termination. Rob and Jenny both clarified that they will be transferred to the NTPA and a communication distributed to workers in Bangla and posted on the Accord website.
- Amin requested that the SC monitor the worker's situation in this case given that there has been no stage 1 and 2 notice and warning process leading to termination. The SC agreed that this is an exceptional case under Article 21 and that the Accord will pro-actively monitor the worker situation in this factory. Scott notes that severance, and the opportunity of re-employment (under Article 14), can be monitored by the Accord.
- The SC agreed that public notification of non-compliance will be posted on the Accord website for the Smart Group factories.

**Actions:**

- **Brand SC reps (Aleix, Karl, Santiago) to submit a proposal to Brad for his review by 15<sup>th</sup> May 2016 on ways to accelerate the DEA approval process.**
- **Secretariat to include the *Initial CAP progress rate* of factories inspected before September 2014 in the SC monthly reports and in future quarterly aggregate reports.**
- **The SC endorsed the CSIs decision that the Smart Group of factories is no longer eligible for business with Accord signatory companies and is no longer covered under the Accord. Brad will inform the Accord brands who have not yet terminated business with the Smart Group of the SCs decision. Brad will advise the SC if any brands refuse to comply with the SCs decision once they receive the agreed further instruction to terminate business with the factories. In the event of future cases of fraud, the CSI will inform the SC on a case-by-case basis.**
- **The Accord to pro-actively monitor the worker employment situation in the Smart Group factories and inform the signatory companies if there are any concerns regarding re-employment or severance.**
- **CSI to provide an update to the SC on progress in reviewing the structural status of all red and red/amber factories**

Update on new (Article 21) escalation triggers

- Brad updated the SC on the new stage 1 escalation trigger (agreed in the January 2016 SC meeting), noting that it took two months to align the data ensuring that the correct factories received the stage 1 escalation letter based on this trigger.
- The first 75 lowest remediated factories based on follow-up inspections in the previous month received stage 1 escalation letters at the end of March. The engineers are now carrying out follow-up inspections this week (30 days later) to assess whether these factories will either escalate to stage 2 or move out of escalation if they meet the applicable remediation requirements.
- Brad informed the SC that the engineers occasionally still find some factories with immediate issues un-remediated. Ted asked if the Accord has sent a communication to brands directly to ask them to focus on immediate findings. Brad explained that factories and brands receive escalation stage 1 letters if an un-remediated immediate finding is identified.
- Brad also explained that some factories may come in and out of escalation because of the different escalation triggers.
- Scott asked the Secretariat if the amendment to the Article 21 operating procedure to include meetings at stage 2 are happening, and whether the Secretariat has any data on the finance discussions taking place at this meeting. Brad confirmed that the stage 2 meetings have been happening, but the policy has only recently been implemented and the Accord does not yet have any financing data from the meetings.
- Rob shares anecdotally that in cases so far where factories have requested financial support, they have subsequently not provided the required costings and finance breakdowns to proceed further, so the factory is either escalated or they remediate without further financial discussions

**Actions:**

- **Secretariat to report to the SC on the number of factories which have immediate issues still in progress with a recommendation of escalation to stage 1 for any or all factories in this category.**
- **Secretariat to report to the SC in the monthly reports (from June) on the outcome of the mandatory escalation stage 2 financing meetings.**

Safety and health reprisal cases in relocations

- Rob asked for a SC decision on whether the Accord should process complaints as the result of a reprisal in a relocation case under the Accord safety and health complaints mechanism. Rob shared his personal opinion that in these cases workers should be able to access the Accord safety complaints mechanism because either directly or indirectly the decision to relocate was a consequence of the Accord inspection program.
- The Accord currently deals with relocations on a case-by-case basis, where possible facilitating a meeting with the factory and the brands prior to the relocation to monitor the transition.
- Jenny commented that the Accord itself does not restrict access to the Accord complaints mechanism. Rob agreed but noted that it is not a formal requirement of the Accord to process reprisal complaints in a relocation.
- Rob also reminded the SC of their previous decision that there is no continuing responsibility for companies to support remediation in a new factory building after a relocation (April 2015).

**Action:**

- **The SC agreed that a reprisal in a relocation case is admissible under the Accord complaints mechanism (if the relocation is related to the Accord inspection). This decision does not include factories which have fully remediated and then choose to relocate.**

Article 21; Criteria for how to re-integrate factories in the Accord after a stage 3 termination. (paper 1)

Jochen summarised Paper 1 outlining the Brand SC reps proposal on re-integrating factories in the Accord after Article 21 stage 3 termination.

- Jenny responded that adding in such a mechanism undermines the Accord. Christy agreed that this proposal reduces the consequences of not remediating, which will dis-incentivise factories currently remediating or currently under escalation to complete remediation.
- Jenny reminded the SC of the leverage of Article 21 using the example of brands struggling with remediation in inactive factories to illustrate its importance.
- Aleix explained C&As code of conduct on unauthorised subcontracting and commented that there has to be an incentive to change alongside a penalty for non-compliance. The Labour SC reps emphasised that this incentive must not water down the penalty for not remediating in any way.

**Action:**

- **Jochen to amend the proposal on re-integrating stage 3 terminated factories in the Accord and re-circulate to the SC.**

**Worker participation and training**

Safety Committee implementation update; pilot

Rob updated the SC on the safety committee pilot program:

- Total unionised factories with active brands: 68
- Total unionised factories nominated for pilot: 56

- Remaining 12 unionised factories not suitable for commencing Safety Committee work (for example about to relocate; labour-management dispute; labour court cases pending; no union-executive committee)
- Factories that have confirmed participation in the pilot: 37
- All Employee meetings held: 32
- Safety Committees established: 26
- Safety Committee training sessions held: 131
- Factories completed full (7 session) training curriculum: 10
  
- Amin advised the SC that strong safety committees are much needed for the future of the safety of the Bangladesh garment industry and shared some of his experiences on the formation of safety committees: there have been incidents of factory management intervening with the nominations of the worker representatives on the safety committee. Factory management are not engaging with union members on the safety committee if they raise a non-safety and health complaint. Worker representatives on the Worker Participation Committees are being selected not elected.

Rob updated the SC on the status of the Accord complaints mechanism:

- Total 71 complaints received: 36 resolved; 13 inadmissible; 14 alleged reprisal cases and 8 complaints in process
- The Accord has received some safety complaints from safety committee members in Accord factories since the pilot began. In these cases, the Accord convenes the safety committee to try to resolve the complaint through the committee.
- Christy asked if the Accord is receiving complaints during the safety committee training on issues outside of the scope of fire, building and structural safety. Rob confirmed that the Accord has received two complaints related to heat and ventilation in the factory and one related to drinking water.
- Joris clarified that there are specific modules in the Accord safety committee training program which cover workplace hazard monitoring and hazard identification.

#### Safety Committee training programme rollout plan & All Employee information sessions (paper 2)

Rob summarised the revised proposal on the safety committee training program rollout plan.

- The Accord and the ILO Better Work program are in discussions about the Accord training safety committees established in Better Work factories.
- The Accord will solicit nominations from company and labour signatories for factories where there is a WPC and/or safety committee established and ask the signatories to rank the factories in order of likelihood of success.
- The Accord will also ask BGMEA for nominations of factories where a WPC and Safety Committee is established for the Accord to run training.
- The Accord will also approach factory groups where one of the factories in the group participated in the Accord pilot program for unionised factories.
- Rob referred the SC to footnote 5 in the proposal, explaining that if there is a WPC at the factory (either a Better Work factory, or identified by a signatory), the Accord will conduct the initial meeting with the WPC. The Accord will ask the factory management for management reps to participate on the safety committee and will ask for the worker representatives on the WPC to appoint the worker reps on the safety committee i.e. the Accord is not limited to working with factories where the safety committee has already been established. The Labour SC reps requested to discuss this approach further because they do not agree that the Accord should be working with factories without a safety committee.
- Rob noted that this proposal does not deal with EPZ factories. The Secretariat have not yet discussed how the Accord would deal with the Labour Law in EPZs because the Accord would likely have to conduct an election at factories in EPZs.
- Rob proposed that the Accord takes a more representative sample of Accord factories in the next phase and also trains safety committees at Review Panel factories where possible.
- If a complaint is raised about the method of establishment of the safety committee, the Accord would suspend training activities until resolved. The Accord would not process such complaints under the Accord OSH complaint mechanism.

- The SC confirmed that safety committee training can be carried out in tier 1 and 2 factories, but not tier 3 factories.
- Dan asked what the scope of the rollout is and how many factories is the Accord capable of training. Rob responded that the Accord has budgeted for 35 trainers and the Accord has the capacity to increase numbers quickly. However, the question of how quickly the Accord can scale up depends on how factories respond and the number of nominations the Accord receives from signatories and Better Work.
- Rob reminded the SC that the pilot safety committee program was voluntary. However, safety committees are a requirement of the Accord and therefore, the proposed rollout will not be voluntary. The SC discussed whether the Accord can anticipate all the potential scenarios that may arise during the rollout of training in non-unionised factories.
- Rob reported back to the SC on feedback received in the brands regional meetings with regards the formation of WPCs and safety committees. A number of brands have asked how they can provide oversight of the WPC and safety committee formation to ensure that they have been established in accordance with the Law. Rob explained to the SC that the Accord has a number of draft materials on election processes which could be shared with company signatories. The Labour SC reps did not agree to share these materials because the Accord has agreed not to be involved in the election process of WPCs. Those companies seeking materials to support the WPC election process will be directed to another source.
- The SC returned to the discussion of whether the Accord would carry out an initial meeting with factories where a WPC, but no safety committee, is established (footnote 5). Jenny explained that the Labour SC reps are concerned about union members being disengaged from the process of establishment of WPCs and safety committees in factories where unions are either not yet registered or where there are solidarity members of a union. Therefore, the Accord should send notice of the upcoming initial meeting in those factories to the IBC federations so that the federation has the option to attend the initial meeting. The SC noted that this invitation would only be for the federation with affiliated union members at the factory.

Rob summarised that the Accord proposes to initially develop two all employee safety information sessions on the following subjects:

- Common safety concerns in an RMG factory & how to utilise the safety committee to monitor and address these. The “Workers’ Rights and Workers’ Responsibilities” booklet on resolving safety issues will be distributed at these sessions
- Safe and orderly evacuation from the factory building in the event of a fire and earthquake
- Rob reminded the SC that the Training Coordinator, Michael Bride, starts work with the Accord in mid-May.
- Rob and the SC thanked Joris for all his hard work over the past year and a half in supporting the establishment of the training program in the absence of a Training Coordinator. His work stepping in to draft training materials, coordinating the working group on worker participation, training the trainers and capacity building was over and above his role at the Accord and has been greatly appreciated.

**Actions:**

- **The SC agreed to implement the proposal on the Safety Committee training programme rollout plan & All Employee information sessions, with the following two amendments: an explanation of the purpose of the initial meeting and that notice of upcoming initial meetings in factories with union solidarity members will be sent to the affiliated IBC federation for their option to attend, be added to the document.**
- **Secretariat to write to signatories updating them on the agreement of the safety committee and all employee information session rollout and asking for nominations of their factories for the safety committee training.**

#### 4. Management Reporting – Executive Office (pt.2)

##### 4.1 Review last meeting agreed actions

- No outstanding actions

##### 4.2 Signatory Management

Annual fee issues (reductions; solicitation to signatories on band changes) (paper 3)

Rob referred the SC to paper 3; a draft memo on company signatory fee changes and factory disclosure.

- Rob asked the SC for approval on company signatory fee reductions from Year 4 onwards
- The SC asked that the Secretariat take into account the Years 3, 4 and 5 pro-rata decrease in fees when re-calculating brands fees.

##### **Actions:**

- **The SC agreed that company signatories can decrease cost band from Accord Year 4 onwards only, but that the Secretariat will not retroactively decrease previous year's fees.**
- **Secretariat to send communication to company signatories regarding fee changes and factory disclosure**

Outstanding fees (Paper 4)

- Rob updated the SC on 11 companies with outstanding Year 2 and Year 3 annual fees.

##### **Actions:**

- **The SC agreed that all companies with outstanding Year 2 and Year 3 fees to be denoted as 'not in good standing' on the Accord website.**

##### 4.3 Human Resource Management & Operations

Update on staffing & field office issues

- The Accord now has approximately 200 employees
- Brad reminded the SC of the increased number of engineers and commented that the Accord now has 18 female engineers on staff. Management training of the engineering team leaders is ongoing.
- The Business and Financial controller started in April
- Training logistics manager has been hired to serve as a deputy to the Head of Training.
- Rob updated the SC on the difficulty in obtaining registrations for Accord field offices. The Accord will need to take a decision in the next month whether to rent another floor in the AJ Heights Building.
- Rob reminded the SC that Miriam is now on maternity leave and has been replaced by Vikki Brennan as Head of Brand Outreach (maternity cover).



- The Accord has also hired a research assistant position in Amsterdam to support the remediation review meetings with company signatories.

#### Risk assessment and costs analysis of insurance needs

- Rob updated the SC on the latest information received on the insurance policies required for the Bangladesh office, Amsterdam office and Directors Liability Insurance. It has recently become apparent that one policy will not be possible. Rob has received the first (of two) policies and will report back to the SC once both are received.

#### **Close of Meeting**

**THURSDAY 28TH APRIL, 2016**

#### Whistleblowing line proposal (paper 5)

Rob summarised the whistleblowing line proposal: A mechanism where representatives of Accord inspected factories, Accord staff or others directly working with the Accord may report information or lodge concerns regarding a breach of professional ethics and integrity. This would include situations of alleged corruption, bribery, and other conflict of interest integrity in the execution of the Accord inspections, remediation and safety training programs.

- Establish an ethics committee comprising of the Executive Director, Chief Safety Inspector, one labour and one brand SC representative.
- To the extent possible and legal protect the complainant's anonymity.
- The Accord shall not use information related to or obtained through a complaint submitted under the whistleblower channel for any future disciplinary matters for an affected staff person found not to have committed a breach of ethics or integrity.
- The Accord reserves the right to not provide a written reply to the complainant if the committee deems not necessary.
- The SC discussed whether the whistleblowing line proposal should cover 'other ethical behaviour' e.g. harassment as well as corruption and bribery. The SC agreed that the Accord may receive a large number of inadmissible complaints if the scope increases to cover 'other ethical behaviour'. The SC agreed that the whistleblowing line should be re-named the anti-corruption channel (ACC) and limited to corruption only.
- The SC reps on the anti-corruption committee of ethics will be Ted (Karl and Santiago on a rotating basis) and Alke.

#### **Actions:**

- **Rob to appoint a member of the Secretariat to receive, filter and conduct initial processing of complaints to determine if they fall under the ACC.**
- **Secretariat to report back at the next SC meeting on the number of complaints received**
- **Secretariat to produce a shorter version of the 'anti-corruption channel' proposal for public dissemination. This is to be shared with all Accord staff (staff meeting and written distribution), Accord BGD office to distribute to all listed suppliers, posted on the Accord website, provided to the IBC federations and to all signatories and factories.**

#### **4.4. Budget and Accounting**

Danny Van Opmeer joins the SC meeting via conference call.

Quarterly Budget (budget vs. actual) (paper 7)

Rob explained the key changes in the quarterly budget:

- Additional income due to a signatory reporting increased sourcing volumes.
- Underspending in this quarter is in similar areas as reported in previous quarters: Allocated legal costs which the Accord hasn't incurred to date. FFC under-budgeted due to pending roll-out of safety committees and associated costs of the customisation of the database. Savings on rent and staff for field offices which have not opened.
- Overspending in this quarter: supplies and equipment related to purchases for the increased number of engineers.
- Danny explained the 59,000 euro overspend in the Amsterdam office, clarifying that this is a paper loss due to the conversion rate at the end of the calendar year 2015.

Annual report, Dubois & Co. audit report (paper 8)

- The SC noted that it is a formality under the Dutch foundation regulations that the Board formally approve the Accord's financial statements. The Board reviewed Dubois & Co.'s auditor's report for 2014 and formally approved the financial statements, signing the accompanying minutes and annual report.
- Rob advised that the 2015 annual report will be published in the summer of 2016.

2015-2016 budget and budget forecast to 2018 (Paper 9a)

Rob explained the key areas of underspend and overspend in the 2015-2016 budget as the Accord moves into the last quarter.

- Underspending: savings on rent and staff for field offices which have not opened. Training program budget lines. Budgeted for four FMCS training sessions per year, but they have been subject to travel restrictions since September 2015. Reduction from the original budget in the inspector's professional standard support.
- Overspending: supplies and equipment related to purchases for the increased number of engineers. Additional vehicles (new engineers and trainers in the field), additional petrol lines. Fee for the Training Coordinator recruitment search.

2016-2017 budget and budget forecast to 2018 (Paper 9b)

Rob explained the key changes in the 2016-2017 budget from previous budgets:

- Group corporate costs; reduced brand regional meetings to 10 per year from 14 because some will be carried out by video conference
- Jenny asked why there was \$0 budget for labour caucus meetings. Rob clarified that there is budget for this if requested.
- Rob noted a correction on the budget line for Directors, offices and foundation insurance (Group corporate costs). The figure should be amended to \$50,000 not \$100,000.
- The field office lines in the Bangladesh operations are removed from the budget
- Ted thanks Rob for the clear report and requests two minor additions to the format for future budget reports.
- The SC brands confirm that the 6% increase in budget on the previous year is reasonable and the SC approved the budget for 2016-2017, notwithstanding the changes to reporting format.

**Action:**

- **Rob to include the following two format changes to the budget report a) Additional row with the subtotal for budget group and b) an extra column for the previous budget year's subtotal for easy comparison.**

2016-2017 budget and budget forecast to 2018 (Paper 9c)

Rob shared the budget projection for 2017-2018 with the SC for their information, noting that the budget for severance for the Bangladesh staff is the most notable difference between this budget and the 2016-2017 budget.

## **5 Communications**

### **5.1 Review last meeting agreed actions**

- No outstanding actions

### **5.2 External Communications**

Quarterly Aggregate Report (QAR) (paper 10)

- Brad and Joris explained that the key change in this QAR from previous ones is the separation of the progress status of initial vs. new findings.
- Joris presented a new quarterly factsheet to the SC for their information. This was prepared following the SC request in January for a shorter more visual communication on Accord progress.

#### **Action:**

- **SC approve the publication of the Quarterly Aggregate Report**

### **5.3 Stakeholder Engagement**

Rob updated the SC on recent stakeholder engagement with the BGMEA, the Bangladesh Government, visiting delegations and other stakeholders

- Brad spoke on the current delays in convening of the Review Panel by government. Brad noted that the only time evacuation of Review Panel factories has been successful recently is if signatory companies demand evacuation.
- The Accord will participate in an IndustriALL program in Frankfurt in late May.
- The Accord participated in an all day H&M supplier meeting. LC Waikiki and Cotton on Group are arranging similar supplier programs which the Accord will also attend.
- The Accord was invited to speak at the Sustainable Supply Chains conference taking place in Dhaka in September.
- The Accord recently met with a Canadian labour congress delegation.
- The Accord recently met with an ILO delegation on workplace rights and research group visiting Bangladesh on remediation costs and funding.
- The US Ambassador will be attending an all employee safety committee training at an Accord covered factory.
- The Accord met with a member from the UK office of Human Rights Watch.
- The Accord met with the Centre for Policy and Dialogue to discuss their ongoing monitoring project on the progress of commitments in Bangladesh made after Rana Plaza.
- Joris reported to the SC on the Dutch Covenant and information provided to the parties during its drafting and negotiation. Joris confirmed that any information shared by the Accord to stakeholders is publicly available information.

## **6. AOB**

Upcoming SC meeting dates:

- The SC agreed to move from a two-day to a one-day quarterly meeting in London; confirmed for Wednesday June 29<sup>th</sup>.

Rob advised the SC that the Accord is planning a local press conference in Dhaka on May 15<sup>th</sup> for the anniversary of the Accord.

The SC agreed that Aleix will replace Melanie on the audit committee. Aleix noted that the other SC brand reps are on standby if time commitments make his role on this committee challenging.

Scott updated the SC on a recent Pennsylvania State University critique of the Stern Centre for Business and Human Rights 'Tip of the Iceberg' report on the Bangladesh RMG industry. This critique exposed methodological concerns, serious technical inaccuracies and erroneous data in the Stern Centre report. Joris noted that the Accord has received media enquiries about the Stern Centre report and responds by directing interested parties to the Penn State critique.

**Close of Meeting**