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JUST TRANSITION MANIFESTO FOR THE TEXTILE AND GARMENT SUPPLY CHAIN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED

The textile and garment sector stands at a critical crossroads. As climate resilience and digital transformation reshape global supply chains, millions of workers — especially those in vulnerable and historically excluded groups — risk being left behind. A Just Transition is not a luxury; it is a necessity to ensure that environmental and technological progress does not come at the expense of human rights, decent work and gender equity.

This manifesto calls for a worker-led transformation rooted in the principles of fairness, inclusion and sustainability. It emphasises the essential role of trade unions in shaping climate strategies, advocating for social dialogue, and building structural power to protect workers during industrial change. The sector's environmental footprint is staggering — contributing up to 8% of global carbon emissions, consuming trillions of litres of water, and generating massive volumes of waste and microplastic pollution. Yet recycling rates remain abysmally low, and the burden of textile waste is disproportionately borne by countries in the Global South.

Global consumption shifts and new policy measures — such as the EU's circular textile strategy — are transforming the industry. While these initiatives aim to reduce environmental harm, they also risk job displacement and deepening inequality if not paired with robust employment protections, gender-responsive planning, and inclusive re/upskilling programmes. Informal workers, women, migrants and

other marginalised groups are especially at risk.

The manifesto urges brands, employers and governments to centre workers' voices in all transition strategies. It calls for systemic change that links climate action with labour justice and promotes circularity with decent work. Union-to-union cooperation across borders is vital to building solidarity and resilience in the face of global challenges.

SUMMARY OF DEMANDS TO STAKEHOLDERS

This is a pivotal moment for the textile and garment industry. As climate, circular and digital transformations accelerate, brands, industry actors and governments must act boldly to ensure these shifts uplift — not exclude — the workers who sustain this industry. The following demands outline what is needed to secure a fair, inclusive, gender-responsive and worker-centred transition.

To brands

1. Ensure worker rights, representation and social dialogue.
2. Strengthen responsible business conduct and supply chain accountability
3. Advance gender equity and inclusion;
4. Champion environmental rights and climate accountability

To employers and industry associations

1. Guarantee worker representation, safety and social dialogue
2. Deliver decent work in the green and digital transition

3. Promote gender equality and inclusion
4. Develop climate-resilient operations and collective action

To governments

1. Establish policy and legal frameworks for Just Transition
2. Guarantee labour rights, social protection and green labour laws
3. Implement gender-responsive governance and care infrastructure
4. Support climate-resilient communities and worker welfare

For a full list of demands to brands, employers and industry associations, and governments, [see page 22](#).

OUR VISION

We envision a world where:

- The hands that make our clothes are respected and protected

- The land, water and air are clean and abundant for future generations.
- Fashion regenerates rather than extracts.
- Workers are not expendable but essential, with full rights and dignity.

CALL TO ACTION

We urge governments, corporations and industry leaders to commit to a Just Transition that puts workers at the heart of sustainability. We demand policies that uplift workers, protect their rights, and ensure that no one is left behind in the shift to a greener, fairer economy. Only through collective action can we build an industry that is just, gender-responsive, inclusive and environmentally responsible.

Together, we stand for a future where textiles and garments are woven with fairness and dignity.

A Just Transition for the textile and garment sector is possible — and it starts now!



WHY DO WE NEED A JUST TRANSITION MANIFESTO?

The global shift towards climate resilience and digital transformation is redefining the textile and garment sector. Without intentional planning, these changes risk deepening inequality and leaving behind millions of workers — especially marginalised and underrepresented workers, historically excluded groups, and those made vulnerable by systemic and intersectional inequalities. A Just Transition is needed to centre human rights, labour protections, and gender equity at every level of supply chains to ensure that the transition is fair, predictable, and socially and economically viable. In the longer term, such an approach delivers shared value — ensuring decent work for employees, stability for producers and suppliers, and competitiveness for business and the wider economy. Focused on upholding the promises of the Paris Agreement¹ — especially decent work, quality jobs, and the just transition of the workforce — this manifesto emphasises the essential role of unions, drawing on the International Labour Organization (ILO) guidelines² and honouring the term's origins in the labour movement, where the idea first emerged as a call to protect workers during industrial transitions. The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises directly address corporate responsibilities around a Just Transition in their chapters on employment and industrial relations, and on environment,

and underlines the importance of meaningful stakeholder engagement and social dialogue.

This transition cannot be left to governments and employers alone; unions must engage deeply in assessing climate risks and shaping solutions that work for their sectors and communities. A Just Transition goes beyond technological change, addressing the social, economic, and political risks of the transition, and helping unions and workers build their resilience, and adapt and thrive without compromising their wellbeing.

Our Just Transition vision is global but not uniform. Just Transition in the textile and garment sector must reflect the diverse realities of workers across the world. While we share a common struggle for fairness in the face of automation, digitalisation and ecological change, we recognise that the conditions of work and development differ greatly between and within regions. We therefore commit to advancing a globally Just Transition that respects contextual differences, ensures that the voices and needs of workers, especially in the Global South, are not overshadowed, and promotes policies grounded in local realities, democratic participation, and shared prosperity.

Our vision for a Just Transition goes beyond wage protection and towards economic democracy. Just Transition must include a vision for workers to claim shared ownership and governance of emerging technological and green assets. As new means of production evolve, so must labour's stake in them —

¹ The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty aiming to limit global warming to 1.5°C, requiring a 45% emissions reduction by 2030 and net-zero by 2050

² ILO, *Guidelines For A Just Transition Towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies And Societies For All*, 2015

ensuring inclusive and democratic control over the foundations of the digital and low-carbon economy.

The fight for a Just Transition builds on the legacy of historical labour struggles such as the eight-hour workday and occupational safety laws. Just as past movements secured reasonable hours and safe workplaces, today's workers require protections, training, participation, and shared ownership in the green and digital economy — ensuring that environmental progress does not come at the expense of labour.

This manifesto encourages unions to assess the challenges and opportunities posed by climate change, understand sector-specific solutions, and develop collaborative strategies that secure a fair future for all.

The manifesto is also aimed at policymakers, brands, producers and suppliers, environmental advocates, and civil society. It encourages collaboration and accountability across the supply chain to ensure that workers and communities directly affected by industrial change are actively involved in shaping a just and sustainable future.

PRINCIPLES OF A JUST TRANSITION

Six commitments for a fair, inclusive, and worker-led climate transition.

These commitments are grounded in the core principles of a Just Transition:

- Developing gender-transformative transition plans with and for workers.
- Promoting social dialogue, collective bargaining, and transparent systems for anticipating and managing change.

- Organising for structural power to shape the direction of transformation.
- Holding institutions accountable for delivering on transition promises.
- Centring workers' voices — especially those in vulnerable, informal and precarious situations — at every stage of the process.

Together, these principles affirm that a Just Transition must be worker-led, gender-responsive, democratic, equitable, and accountable, ensuring that the green and digital transformations ahead serve people, not profit.

1. **Worker-led and democratic governance**

Governments, industry and employers must transparently develop transition plans with the full participation of workers and their unions. A Just Transition requires that the social and employment impacts of industrial and climate change are anticipated and addressed in advance, so that workers and communities can foresee and shape changes through meaningful dialogue, freedom of association, and collective bargaining. Union participation must be binding, not optional. Worker representation should be guaranteed at every stage – from factory-level Just Transition committees to national climate planning and global frameworks.

2. **Equity, inclusion, and justice**

Governments, employers and unions must ensure that the transition is gender-transformative and inclusive, promotes social inclusion and racial justice, and enforces zero tolerance for harassment, violence and discrimination, particularly gender-based, in the workplace. A Just Transition must actively create opportunities for those most often excluded.



3. **Context-sensitive Just Transition for the Global South**

The Global South require Just Transition pathways appropriate to their own developmental contexts, and not a replication of models designed for the Global North – The realities of economies of the Global South — characterised by informal labour, limited social protection, energy poverty and uneven industrial capacity — demand context-specific approaches that balance decarbonisation, industrialisation and employment creation. Therefore, all Just Transition frameworks, including gainsharing and automation-related mechanisms, must be locally rooted, socially inclusive, and aligned with developmental justice — ensuring that technological and ecological transformations uplift rather than marginalise Southern workers and communities.

4. **Decent work and social protection**

Governments and employers must guarantee decent work, fair wages and universal social protection for all workers, including those in precarious,

subcontracted or informal roles. A Just Transition identifies potential risks to livelihoods early and puts safeguards in place so that no worker or community is left behind.

5. **Sustainable industry and responsible supply chains**

Governments and brands must enforce sustainable industrial policy and build equitable global supply chains. Employers and brands must be accountable for fair labour standards, provide legally binding financial and technical support to producers at all tiers, and regulate waste trade responsibly to protect vulnerable communities.

6. **Fair financing and Just Transition support**

Governments, brands and industry must mobilise resources through dedicated funds, reskilling opportunities and transition planning so that workers can move from job to job with dignity and security, supported by unions and employers throughout the process. Financing mechanisms must ensure that the costs of transition are not borne by workers but shared fairly across industries and states.

JUST TRANSITION IN THE TEXTILE AND GARMENT INDUSTRY

The textile and garment sector is an important global industry, providing livelihoods for more than 400 million people worldwide and contributing significantly to several countries' growth. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), the industry accounts for a significant proportion of global carbon emissions, estimates range between 6 and 8% of total global carbon emissions, or some 1.7 billion tonnes in carbon emissions per year³. It consumes large amounts of water and is responsible for about 20% of global water pollution⁴. Likewise, the textile sector has an extremely low circularity ratio, as only around 1% of textiles are recycled into new fibres. Only a small percentage of post-consumer textiles (less than 10%) are collected for reuse or recycling. Most textile waste is sent to landfill or incinerated (90%). In this context, the transfer of textile waste to countries primarily in the Global South is a serious environmental and ethical problem.

These environmental impacts highlight the urgent need for comprehensive policies addressing not only the manufacturing processes but also the entire life cycle of textile products. This includes promoting sustainable consumption patterns, circularity, and re- and upcycling initiatives that reduce waste and resource use, while also reshaping the nature of jobs in the sector. At the same time, the global nature of the textile industry means

that the environmental consequences — and the need for a Just Transition — are deeply interconnected across regions and workers, regardless of their contribution to the crisis.

Although many textiles and garment-producing countries in the Global South have played a relatively small role in causing the global climate crisis, they suffer disproportionately from its effects. Pathways to decarbonisation and industrial transformation in the textile and garment sector will differ across and within countries, reflecting diverse national contexts — from energy infrastructure and industrial maturity to financial capacity and institutional readiness. Recognising these differences is essential: we are on unequal development pathways, and a Just Transition will require time, targeted support, and substantial investment to ensure no country, region or worker is left behind. Addressing environmental sustainability in the textile industry means advancing holistic solutions that integrate climate action, circularity in production processes, social justice and economic resilience for workers across all countries.

As the sector faces environmental crises, automation, economic restructuring, and global shifts in trade and climate policy, we insist that workers must be involved in the development of comprehensive strategies addressing these crises at an early stage. Just Transition strategies addressing potential impacts on employment must be developed through effective social dialogue with workers. The burden of change must not fall on women, nor on those placed in situations of vulnerability by systemic and intersectional inequalities

³ ILO, [Reducing the footprint? How to assess carbon emissions in the garment sector in Asia](#). ILO Asia-Pacific Report, March 2021

⁴ European Parliament, [The impact of textile production and waste on the environment](#), 29 December 2020

— including youth, migrants, workers with disabilities, informal workers, workers from indigenous communities, sexual minorities and frontline communities. We advocate for a Just Transition that addresses the challenge of employment impacts of textile and garment strategies in a gender-responsive manner — informal work, lack of decent work, abysmally low wages, inadequate social protection, and inequalities in social dialogue. We condemn informal work in all its forms because it is inherently precarious and unregulated, and denies workers fundamental rights and protections. Our vision is that real economic, social and environmental sustainability and justice are achieved for all stakeholders.

WHAT IS JUST TRANSITION?

Just Transition originated within the labour movement, particularly from unions and frontline workers who sought to ensure that workers and communities were not left behind in the shift towards a greener economy. However, over time, governments, corporations and multilateral institutions have adopted (and in some cases diluted) the term, often framing it more as a technical policy framework than as a worker-centred struggle. Just Transition must be reclaimed as a struggle for justice led by workers — not a slogan used to justify job losses or corporate greenwashing.

Just Transition discussions led by governments, corporations and multilateral institutions often fail to account for the diverse and intersecting challenges faced by textile and garment workers across regions. In the Global South, many workers endure poor living and working conditions made worse by climate impacts, such as extreme heat, flooding and storms. These lead to wage losses due to weather-related absenteeism, as well as increased risks of violence, harassment and health problems — especially for women.

At the same time, workers in all regions, including Europe and other parts of the Global North countries, are affected by trade developments, corporate strategies, shifting consumption patterns and new regulatory frameworks. These forces are reshaping the structure of employment — through automation, reshoring and circularity policies — often without safeguards to protect jobs, wages or working conditions.

A truly inclusive Just Transition must acknowledge and respond to the full spectrum of vulnerabilities in the sector, centring workers' voices and needs — wherever they are located in the supply chain or on the map — and addressing the intersecting risks faced by garment workers, especially women.

Violence and harassment against garment workers are well-known problems among the predominantly female workforce, frequently worsened by onerous production targets. The ILO highlights that increasing global temperatures and heat stress reduce productivity. Additionally, the ILO's Better Work programme notes that garment producers are already finding it difficult to manage workplace temperatures effectively. Consequently, heat stress may further escalate the violence and harassment faced by these workers.

Given the current pressures within the industry, where cost and turnover challenges faced by producer factories are often passed on to workers, the local environmental impacts of climate change — which are already disproportionately affecting workers — will only worsen without significant intervention from unions.

The sector's ability to address these challenges at the second and third tiers of production, including small factories and home-based (often informal) units, is limited. Workers in these

settings not only handle dangerous chemicals — often without proper protective equipment — but also endure extreme heat conditions, further compounding their vulnerability.

While industry and policymakers tend to focus on the long-term impacts of climate change, textile and garment workers are already feeling the effects on their working conditions. Worker health and safety, training, job security and quality, and working conditions must be central to climate adaptation and mitigation policies, not an afterthought. The human element can be lost in some policy circles, whereas it should be central to them. This Just Transition Manifesto is therefore an important intervention to outline union priorities and demands, and sector-specific solutions and recommendations, for achieving a Just Transition for workers and communities.

We call for systemic change that upholds human rights, gender equality, decent work,

and ecological responsibility throughout the textile and garment supply chain. A Just Transition is not an option — it is a necessity, and it must be led by workers.

ROLE OF UNIONS AND COLLECTIVE POWER

Union-to-union cooperation — through skills transfer, strategic advice and shared campaigns — is also essential to building worker power across borders, and fostering genuine solidarity between unions in the Global South and Global North as we navigate the challenges of a Just Transition together.

The ITUC and IndustriALL will closely monitor the implementation of the Just Transition Manifesto, holding brands, employers and governments accountable — and calling for consequences where commitments are not met or where workers' rights are undermined.



THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND THE TEXTILE AND GARMENT SECTOR

The textile and garment sector is a major contributor to the global climate crisis, extensive water usage, chemical pollution and growing volumes of textile waste. Despite the emergence of sustainability initiatives such as the UN Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action, current efforts often fail to centre the needs and rights of workers — particularly those in supplier countries — who are disproportionately affected by climate impacts. A Just Transition demands that climate action in this sector is both environmentally ambitious and socially inclusive.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The sector contributes 6–8% of global greenhouse gas emissions⁵. Over half of these emissions originate from material production processes such as dyeing, weaving and knitting⁶. Raw material extraction — including cotton cultivation and oil extraction for synthetic fibres — contributes approximately 25% of total emissions. Breaking this down further: dyeing and finishing processes account for 36%, yarn preparation for 28%, fibre production for 15%, and fabric preparation for 12%. Assembly and garment manufacturing contribute around 7%, while distribution and end-of-life disposal have only a minimal impact on overall emissions.

The industry produces 9% of annual microplastic ocean pollution and consumes 215 trillion litres of water the equivalent of 86 million Olympic swimming pools⁷. Textile dyeing and finishing are responsible for around 20% of global industrial water pollution⁸. and it is estimated that more than 8,000 different chemicals are used to turn raw materials into textiles, many of which are persistent pollutants⁹.

GLOBAL CONSUMPTION SHIFTS AND POLICY MEASURES: EMPLOYMENT IMPACTS MUST BE ADDRESSED

Shifting consumption patterns and new policy measures — particularly in the EU and other high-income regions — are transforming the global textile and garment industry. These include key initiatives such as the EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles, extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes, textile waste export restrictions, and national circular economy and green transition plans. While aimed at improving environmental outcomes, such measures can have significant employment impacts, especially for workers in the Global South and for low-income and informal workers in all regions.

While these policies aim to reduce environmental harm and promote circularity, they also carry significant implications for employment. A reduction in fast fashion consumption or increased recycling and

⁵ ILO, *Just Transition Toolkit for the Textiles and Garment Sector*, 1 July 2021.

⁶ Elsa Dominish, *Taking climate action: Measuring carbon emissions in the garment sector in Asia*, ILO, 2022.

⁷ UNEP, *Sustainable fashion to take centre stage on Zero Waste Day*, 2025

⁸ Dominish, *Taking climate action 2017*, page 7

⁹ Ellen MacArthur Foundation, *A new textiles economy: Redesigning fashion's future*, 2017, page 54

reuse targets can lead to job displacement, production downsizing or shifts in skill demands — without necessarily providing alternative livelihoods or worker protections. Similarly, circular economy policies, such as increased reuse, repair or localised recycling, may shift employment geographically or by skill type, often without adequate safeguards for the workers most at risk of displacement.

These transformations are not inherently unjust, but without proactive planning, they risk deepening inequality and pushing vulnerable workers further into informality and poverty.

A Just Transition also requires that all regional policies aimed at shifting consumption and production:

- **Include gender-sensitive employment impact assessments** that consider cross-border and supply chain effects and impacts on informal workers.
- **Involve trade unions and workers** in the development of circularity and environmental policies.
- **Link environmental goals and consumption reforms with industrial and employment strategies** that create decent, green jobs, and protect existing ones.
- **Support gender responsive re- and upskilling initiatives** for workers affected by shifts in consumer demand, and the digital and green transitions.
- **Ensure policy coherence and global equity** by recognising responsibility of consuming countries to support fair transition processes in producing countries, and avoid burden-shifting through trade and policy externalisation.

For the transformation of the textile and garment sector to be truly just, employment and

labour justice must be central to environmental policymaking — across all regions and throughout the supply chain.

GLOBAL WASTE TRADE AND ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

Used textile exports are projected to rise from 92 to 134 million tonnes annually by 2030¹⁰. Up to 85% of exported textiles end up in landfills or incinerators, primarily in the Global South (e.g., Ghana, Kenya, Chile), overwhelming local systems, harming ecosystems, and placing the burden of overconsumption on the countries least responsible for it. While circular economy principles are often cited as a solution, current practices are largely brand-led, with limited emphasis on waste reduction, reuse, or the rights and livelihoods of workers in global reuse economies.

Policy responses remain inadequate. Notably, the European Commission's recent draft communication on exemptions from the ban on destroying unsold products — including textiles — risks undermining progress¹¹. These exemptions must be kept to an absolute minimum, and robust enforcement is needed to ensure brands take full responsibility for their products' end-of-life impacts.

In response to these challenges, IndustriALL Global is working with the ILO on the Policy Guidelines for the Promotion of Decent Work in Recycling¹², which aim to support governments, employers and trade unions in improving working conditions and rights across all recycling operations — including in the informal economy. These guidelines recognise recycling as both a public service and a vital source of livelihood, and offer concrete recommendations to align recycling practices with the ILO's Decent Work Agenda.

¹⁰ EIA, *Ocean: Falling Apart at the Seams*, April 2025.

¹¹ European Commission, *Sustainable products – exemptions to prohibiting the destruction of unsold apparel and footwear*, 3 July 2025

¹² ILO, *Policy guidelines for the promotion of decent work in recycling*, 2025

TRADE JUSTICE IN THE ERA OF DECARBONISATION: ADDRESSING CBAM AND GLOBAL INEQUALITY

The global transition to low-carbon production must not reproduce or deepen global inequalities. Governments in buying countries must refrain from using non-tariff measures that can deepen global inequalities under the guise of climate action. For example, the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is designed to prevent carbon leakage, yet risks placing disproportionate burdens on and unfairly penalises producing countries in the Global South, where industries are still industrialising and have limited access to green finance or technology.

We call for a Just Transition in trade policy that recognises these development realities, ensuring that climate and trade policies such as the CBAM promote global equity. The implementation of the CBAM and similar trade measures must be accompanied by robust, financial, technological and capacity-building support to help affected countries and industries decarbonise without sacrificing employment, wages or industrial capacity.

A fair global transition requires policy coherence between climate, trade and labour frameworks, ensuring that workers in export-dependent economies are not left behind by the new green trade regime.

CLIMATE TARGETS AND EMISSIONS GAPS

To align with the 1.5°C target, the industry must cut emissions from 1.025Gt to 0.564Gt by 2030¹³. Under a business-as-usual trajectory, emissions are projected to reach 1.588Gt by 2030, requiring a reduction of over 1 Gt to meet this goal¹⁴.

IMPACT ON WORKERS AND SUPPLY CHAIN VULNERABILITIES

Multiple climate-related challenges, such as rising sea levels, floods and extreme weather, threaten garment-producing hubs such as Bangladesh. Water stress adversely impacts both cotton cultivation and water-intensive processes such as dyeing. Extreme heat endangers workers — particularly women — in non-air-conditioned factories, with risks to reproductive and overall health. Technological shifts (e.g., digitalisation and automation) and post-Covid-19 buyer-supplier restructuring are transforming supply chains without adequate worker consultation or protection. Equitable climate action requires significant financial and technological support for supplier countries, ensuring they are not left behind in the global race toward decarbonisation.

CURRENT INDUSTRY RESPONSES AND THEIR LIMITATIONS

The textile and garment industry's sustainability efforts have primarily focused on tackling its substantial carbon emissions, overproduction, water consumption and pollution, and the release of microfibres into oceans¹⁵. However, the emergence of mandatory Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence (HREDD) frameworks, particularly within the European Union, represents a crucial shift toward legally binding accountability across global supply chains.

These frameworks require brands and companies to assess, prevent, mitigate and remediate human rights and environmental harms — not only in their direct operations but throughout their supply chain. Garment

¹³ M. Sadowski, L. Perkins, and E. McGarvey, *Roadmap to Net-Zero: Delivering Science-Based Targets in the Apparel Sector, 2021*, page 1. World Resources Institute Working Paper

¹⁴ Sadowski et.al. 2021, page 1

¹⁵ Jason Judd and J. Lowell Jackson, *Repeat, Repair or Renegotiate? The Post-COVID Future of the Apparel Industry*, ILO, July 2021

workers, especially in supplier countries, must be recognised as key stakeholders in the implementation, monitoring and enforcement of HREDD obligations.

However, the future of these frameworks is uncertain. The EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) — one of the most progressive legislative tools to date — is under threat. The European Commission has introduced an ‘omnibus simplification package’, which risks broad deregulation by weakening or rolling back critical protections. As these frameworks evolve, it is essential that they retain their ambition, uphold binding obligations for companies, and centre worker participation in both design and enforcement. A Just Transition cannot be achieved without strong, enforceable due diligence laws that protect the rights of those who make our clothes.

To ensure that these new due diligence requirements translate into genuine social progress rather than compliance checklists, it is essential to align environmental ambitions

with labour justice. While many brands and factories have made public commitments to sustainability through green factories and eco-friendly products, these efforts risk amounting to little more than greenwashing unless they are matched by concrete commitments to a Just Transition for workers.

To address this, the sector should adopt the Social & Labour Convergence Program (SLCP) — a standardised framework for assessing social and labour performance. By adopting the SLCP, brands and producers can streamline compliance processes, reduce audit fatigue, and reinvest savings into genuine improvements in workers’ wellbeing and skill development, and protect workers’ rights, incomes and futures — aligning sustainability initiatives with social justice and decent work principles at the heart of a Just Transition. We call on brands and manufacturers to adopt the SLCP, not as a box-ticking exercise, but as part of a genuine commitment to climate and labour justice.

The Social & Labour Convergence Program (SLCP) is a multi-stakeholder initiative that aims to improve working conditions in global supply chains — especially in the apparel, footwear and textile industries — by creating a standardised system for collecting and verifying social and labour data.

It provides a common assessment framework (CAF) that replaces multiple social audits.

The goal is to reduce audit fatigue, increase transparency, and free up resources for actual improvements in workers’ rights and wellbeing.

The SLCP is supported by major brands, manufacturers, and organisations such as the Apparel Impact Institute, Fair Wear, and the Sustainable Apparel Coalition.

The verified data collected through SLCP can be used across different brands and platforms, promoting efficiency and accountability, legislative proposals, and union recruitment campaigns.

Another initiative, launched by UN Climate Change in 2018, is the Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action, which targets a 30% emission reduction by 2030 (vs. 2015 baseline) and net-zero by 2050. While it promotes partnerships across business, finance, and environmental and consumer advocacy, the charter omits workers and neglects adaptation measures for those already facing climate impacts. It lacks binding regulation or accountability of brands, with an over-reliance on voluntary, brand-led initiatives focusing on mitigation without addressing adaptation and resilience.

Despite bearing the brunt of climate-related disruptions, workers in the Global South — especially women, marginalised and underrepresented workers, historically excluded groups, and those made vulnerable by systemic and intersectional inequalities — are excluded from climate adaptation planning and funding, leaving them highly vulnerable to displacement, income loss and health risks.

Governments, brands and private actors must scale up investments in renewable energy infrastructure — including through initiatives such as the ILO's Climate Action for Jobs and the International Finance Corporation's (IFC) green finance programmes — to ensure garment manufacturers, especially in the Global South, can access clean, affordable energy, and decarbonise without burdening workers or disrupting livelihoods.

THE WAY FORWARD: CENTRING JUSTICE AND REGULATION

To meet global climate targets and uphold basic standards of justice, the textile and garment industry must transform not only its environmental practices but also its social and economic structures. This transformation must be driven by democratic participation, freedom of association and collective bargaining, worker leadership, gender equity and international accountability. A Just Transition is not only possible — it is essential for the sustainability of the industry.



CLIMATE MITIGATION, DECARBONISATION AND INDUSTRIAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE TEXTILE AND GARMENT INDUSTRY

Decarbonisation refers to the reduction of carbon emissions from textile and garment manufacturing, logistics and retail. This includes:

1. Transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy in factories.
2. Retrofitting or replacing machinery to improve energy efficiency.
3. Redesigning products and processes to use less and/or greener material, replace use of chemicals, and reduce waste.
4. Changing sourcing and shipping methods to lower transport-related emissions.

However, transition strategies in the textile and garment sector go far beyond decarbonisation. A truly sustainable transformation must reduce emissions while also addressing resource efficiency, chemical use, water and waste management, working conditions, industrial policy and structural transformation

GLOBAL CLIMATE TARGETS

- **Paris Agreement (2015):** legally binding international treaty that aims to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. This requires a 45% reduction in global greenhouse gas (GHG)

emissions by 2030, and net-zero emissions by 2050. The agreement also underscores the need for a Just Transition, calling on nations to ensure decent work and social inclusion in their climate actions.

- **Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action (2018):** sets a 30% GHG emissions reduction target by 2030 (from a 2015 baseline) and net-zero emissions by 2050. However, it focuses primarily on mitigation strategies and fails to integrate labour considerations or adaptation support for workers.

CURRENT INDUSTRY APPROACHES TO DECARBONISATION

The textile and garment industry's decarbonisation strategies focus primarily on technological innovation, material efficiency and process optimisation. Key areas of intervention include:

1. **Phasing out coal, and transitioning to renewable energy** for thermal and electrical needs in manufacturing.
2. **Investing in low-impact manufacturing technologies**, such as waterless dyeing, to reduce energy and water consumption.
3. **Improving energy efficiency** across factory operations through upgraded machinery, process integration and better energy-management systems.

4. **Enhancing material efficiency** by adopting sustainable design principles, selecting lower-impact materials, reducing use of chemicals, extending garment lifespan, and reducing fibre and material waste at each production stage.
 5. **Minimising overproduction and waste** using digital tools, artificial intelligence (AI), and automation for design, forecasting and inventory management.
 6. **Developing next-generation materials**, including bio-based fibres, recycled synthetics and plant-based leather alternatives.
 7. **Scaling technological innovation**, such as computer-aided design (CAD), 3D sampling, and automated cutting to reduce waste and sampling-related emissions.
 8. **Encouraging circular business models**, including repair, refurbishment, resale, rental and take-back schemes.
 9. **Increasing the use of recycled** materials and promoting trade in textile waste for fibre recovery and closed-loop recycling.
 10. **Promoting low-carbon logistics**, such as more efficient shipping, rail over air freight, and local sourcing where possible.
 11. **Enhancing supply chain traceability** to track emissions and material flows, and ensure responsible sourcing.
 12. **Collaborating with 'strategic' tier 1 and tier 2 suppliers** to support decarbonisation, including financing, training and capacity-building.
1. **Job displacement and restructuring** — Transitions to energy-efficient technologies and automation can lead to job displacement, particularly in manual or repetitive roles.
 2. **Skills gaps and training needs** — New technologies and sustainable production methods require upskilling (e.g., digital literacy, machine operation, quality control in circular models). Workers with limited education or digital access may be left behind, widening the skills gap and economic inequality.
 3. **Increased work intensity and monitoring** — Tech-driven models can lead to intensified workloads and real-time productivity tracking, without corresponding improvements in wages or conditions. Digital tools used for efficiency (e.g., smart factories, AI planning) may be misused for surveillance and increased pressure on workers.
 4. **Health and safety risks in green transitions** — Energy transitions may introduce new occupational hazards or fail to address existing ones, such as heat stress in ironing/steaming departments. There can be new risks from working alongside autonomous equipment and robots, and handling of hazardous substances.
 5. **Gendered impacts** — Women are more likely to be exposed to automation risks and heat-intensive conditions. Some estimates predict that approximately 2.7 million RMG workers in Bangladesh stand to lose their jobs in the next 20 years, and women are particularly at risk, as they are often employed to execute tasks that are highly susceptible to automation¹⁶.
 6. **Impact on wages and informal workers** — Sustainability efforts are often pursued without cost-sharing mechanisms, and producers and suppliers may have to absorb

IMPACTS ON WORKERS

While industry decarbonisation strategies aim to reduce emissions and resource use, their impact on workers — especially in supplier countries — is often overlooked.

¹⁶ Sakshi Chadha, Social Protection for RMG Workers in Bangladesh, *The Daily Star*, 6 November 2024.

expenses related to decarbonisation, leading to wage stagnation or cost-cutting at workers' expense. Informal workers (e.g., homeworkers, subcontracted labour) are invisible in corporate climate plans, despite forming a large part of the labour force.

7. **New race to the bottom** — Global brands may decarbonise by shifting operations to 'greener' countries or producers, abandoning workers in regions with fewer resources for transition.

Automation is not merely a technical advancement — it is a political choice that can reshape power dynamics within the workplace. When digitalisation and automation are introduced to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or to replace tasks that pose health and safety risks to workers, their deployment must be subject to mandatory consultation with unions and worker representatives.

Decisions should be made jointly, with full transparency, and must include plans to mitigate job losses through retraining and redeployment pathways.

Furthermore, any proposals to automate functions must undergo rigorous assessment for health and safety implications, as well as their potential to marginalise or exclude vulnerable groups, including women, older workers, migrants, workers with disabilities, and those in casual or informal employment.

When new technologies are introduced to reduce emissions, strong regulations must be in place to ensure that workers are not held responsible for system failures, incidents, or accidents caused by autonomous machinery.

Owners and investors must ensure that new technologies are implemented to genuinely reduce greenhouse gas emissions or improve safety in high-risk processes — not as a pretext to undermine workers' rights or degrade working conditions.

OPPORTUNITIES

With the right support, decarbonisation and industrial transformation can create better-quality jobs in renewable energy, textile recycling, sustainable farming for fibres, and circular business models.

1. **Improved working environments** — Resilient buildings that reduce thermal impact, combined with energy-efficient

systems and low-carbon technologies (such as better insulation, LED lighting, and smart ventilation), can enhance air quality, temperature control, and overall factory safety. These improvements are especially important in mitigating heat stress and occupational health risks for women and frontline workers involved in processes such as ironing, dyeing and steaming.



2. **More stable and resilient Jobs** — Cleaner production and circular models (e.g., garment repair, resale and recycling) can encourage longer-term production cycles, potentially reducing seasonal layoffs and improving income stability. Resilience to climate impacts (e.g., flood-proof infrastructure, reliable energy systems) can reduce factory shutdowns and wage loss during climate shocks.
3. **Inclusion in the circular economy** — Circular business models—such as garment repair, refurbishment, and fibre recycling—can create new labour-intensive, lower-tech jobs that are more accessible to women and informal workers - if formalised and supported. These roles are more locally rooted and may offer opportunities in countries that are currently only seen as manufacturing hubs.
4. **Social dialogue and greater worker involvement** – Decarbonisation offers a valuable entry point for stronger worker participation in decision-making. Unions and worker organisations can leverage this opportunity to establish Just Transition frameworks, ensure recognition of competencies to participate in sustainability issues, and advocate for training rights, health protections and climate adaptation plans, while also addressing long-standing systemic issues. While mitigation focuses on reducing emissions and environmental impact, adaptation addresses the need to protect workers and supply chains from the climate risks that are already unfolding. As variable climate patterns and extreme weather events intensify, adaptation strategies are essential to ensure the resilience and safety of the workers who power the industry.

CLIMATE ADAPTATION IN THE TEXTILE AND GARMENT INDUSTRY

While mitigation focuses on reducing emissions and environmental impact, adaptation addresses the need to protect workers and supply chains **from the climate risks that are already unfolding**. As variable climate patterns and extreme weather events intensify, adaptation strategies are essential to ensure the resilience and safety of the workers who power the industry.

1. **Rising exposure to climate Hazards** — Garment-producing regions are increasingly affected by emerging extreme weather patterns such as flooding (e.g., Bangladesh, Pakistan, parts of India); extreme heat (affecting South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and countries in southern Europe, such as Spain, Italy, and Portugal to a lesser extent); and water scarcity (impacting cotton-growing and dyeing regions). These climate events disrupt production, threaten worker health and safety, and damage infrastructure and transport routes.
2. **Worker health and safety risks** — Extreme heat in poorly ventilated, non-air-conditioned factories can lead to heat stress, dehydration and fatigue, as well as increased risks to reproductive and maternal health — especially in female-dominated workplaces. Inadequate adaptation measures exacerbate these risks, especially for informal, subcontracted and home-based workers. In addition, some jobs involve physically demanding tasks which, when combined with high temperatures, humidity, solar radiation or unsuitable clothing, rapidly increase the heat stress to which a worker is exposed during the working day.
3. **New occupational risks** — Excessive heat can compromise the proper functioning of facilities and machinery, indirectly endangering worker safety. Its interaction with chemicals or pollution can heighten their hazards, and increase the presence of bacteria or infectious vectors such as mosquitoes and ticks, giving rise to new occupational risks or exacerbating existing ones. In addition, automation, AI, algorithmic management, and surveillance can potentially impact workers' mental health.
4. **Impact on raw material supply** — Cotton yields are highly sensitive to temperature, rainfall variability and water stress. Pests and plant diseases are becoming more prevalent due to climate shifts, further threatening raw material availability as well as health and livelihood impacts for agricultural workers.
5. **Infrastructure and operational disruptions** — Flooded roads, damaged ports, and unreliable energy supplies lead to factory shutdowns and supply chain delays and income loss for workers. Resilient public infrastructure and decent housing for workers can reduce impact on worker productivity and manufacturing and supply chain disruptions. Childcare responsibilities and unsafe infrastructure (e.g., flooded commutes, lack of sanitation) increase the burden on female workers during climate events. Adaptation strategies must be gender-responsive and inclusive.

6. **Institutional and Financial Support** — Most producers and suppliers lack adaptation plans, emergency funds or insurance coverage. Brands typically do not include adaptation or risk-sharing measures in contracts. Workers are rarely included in climate planning or emergency response frameworks.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CLIMATE-RESILIENT TRANSFORMATION

- Invest in climate-resilient infrastructure (e.g., flood-proof buildings, cooling systems).
- Train workers and managers on heat-response protocols and workplace safety.

- Integrate worker input into risk assessment and climate planning.
- Brands can take steps to provide financial and institutional support by integrating climate risk-sharing, adaptation funding and worker-inclusive emergency response measures into their supplier contracts, reflecting common but differentiated responsibility principles in the sharing of responsibility and costs.
- Brands and national governments can expand access to social protection, climate insurance and income support during extreme weather events.



CLIMATE AND LABOUR JUSTICE: OUR DEMANDS FOR A JUST TRANSITION

This is a pivotal moment requiring shared responsibility across all actors in the supply chain. Brands, employers and governments each have differing but interdependent and complementary responsibilities, as outlined in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and the OECD Draft Guidance on Responsible Business Conduct and Just Transition.

Employers and brands must actively protect and empower workers — especially marginalised groups — through safe, inclusive workplaces, reskilling and social protections. While governments provide oversight and remedies, companies carry the primary responsibility to prevent harm and ensure that no worker is left behind. They must act boldly to ensure that the climate and digital transformation uplifts — not excludes — the workers who sustain this industry.

The following demands outline the concrete actions that brands, employers and governments must take to ensure that climate and social commitments translate into real change for workers and communities.

DEMANDS TO BRANDS

Ensure a holistic, gender-responsive and accountable Just Transition

Brands hold significant power in shaping working conditions and sustainability outcomes across global supply chains.

As key drivers of sustainability and innovation, they must lead the way in ensuring that climate and digital transitions are fair, inclusive, gender-responsive and worker-centred across the supply chain. Brands cannot claim sustainability while externalising the costs of transition onto suppliers and workers. They must back their commitments with enforceable agreements and transparent implementation, including publicly sharing data on how they are enabling a Just Transition — financially and otherwise. These demands outline the concrete actions brands must take to uphold labour rights, gender equity and environmental responsibility across all tiers of their operations.

Worker rights, representation and social dialogue

1. **Respect and strengthen trade union rights and collective bargaining**
Ensure that workers and their unions have a central role in shaping the transition, with binding commitments to trade union rights, freedom of association and collective bargaining embedded in all contracts and frameworks.
2. **Negotiate and implement Global Framework Agreements (GFAs)**
Uphold labour rights and decent work through enforceable agreements that create binding corporate accountability across global operations and supply chains.
3. **Adopt Social & Labour Convergence Program (SLCP)**
Brands and employers must adopt the SLCP and commit to integrating its findings into fair, transparent improvement plans that ensure a Just Transition for workers.

4. **Support formation of Just Transition committees**

Encourage and facilitate the creation of worker-inclusive and gender-balanced committees in supplier factories to guide transition processes, prioritising the inclusion of vulnerable groups of workers.

5. **Develop and publish Just Transition plans**

Anticipate and manage changes with the effective involvement of workers and their trade unions. Require mandatory consultation with workers and unions before implementing decarbonisation, digitalisation or other transition strategies. Commit to social dialogue, job security and fair working conditions, particularly where technological and environmental changes risk displacing or degrading work. Avoid burden-shifting through trade and policy externalisation. Include employment impact assessments that consider cross-border and supply chain effects and impacts on informal workers. Support re- and upskilling initiatives for workers affected by shifts in consumer demand and the digital and green transitions.

Responsible business conduct and supply chain accountability

6. **Comply with mandatory HREDD legislation**

Ensure full compliance with evolving Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence (HREDD) laws — including those in the EU and other jurisdictions — by conducting rigorous gender-responsive risk assessments, engaging workers and unions in the due diligence process, and publishing transparent remediation plans that cover the entire supply chain, including informal and home-based workers.

7. **Mandate responsible purchasing practices**

Commit to ethical procurement policies that enable producers and suppliers to pay fair wages, comply with labour rights, and invest in sustainable practices. Take steps to provide financial and institutional support by integrating climate risk-sharing, adaptation funding, access to social protection, climate insurance, income support during extreme weather events, and worker-inclusive emergency response measures into supplier contracts.

WHAT IS HREDD?

Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence (HREDD) is a legal approach that requires companies to proactively identify, prevent, and address risks to people and the planet across their supply chains. The EU's proposed directive will require brands to monitor and remediate issues including labour rights violations, pollution and unsafe working conditions — including those caused or worsened by climate change. For workers in the garment sector, this means stronger legal pathways to demand accountability.

8. Make living wage payment a contractual obligation

Make the payment of a living wage a contractual obligation for producers and suppliers, with clear mechanisms for wage verification and traceability.

9. Create a green transition fund for workers

Establish a dedicated fund to support workers in the supply chain with retraining, income protection and social protection during transition periods, ensuring its design proactively reduces barriers and bias for marginalised and underrepresented workers, historically excluded groups, and those made vulnerable by systemic and intersectional inequalities (including informal and home-based workers who are typically invisible in the supply chain).

10. Promote formalisation and inclusion of lower-tier suppliers and home-based workers

Ensure policies and buying practices promote the formalisation of employment, and fair treatment and inclusion of informal and low-tier producers and suppliers in all sustainability and labour rights efforts.

11. Ensure mandatory public disclosure by brands on labour and environmental metrics

Also include gender-responsive employment impact assessments that consider cross-border and supply chain effects and impacts on informal workers.

address workplace violence, exacerbated by heat stress, production pressure and gender inequality.

13. Implement and enforce gender-equity policies and strategies

Establish clear, transparent and enforceable gender-equity policies and strategies — with measurable goals, accountability mechanisms and regular public reporting.



Gender equity and inclusion

12. Guarantee equal opportunity and eliminate gender-based discrimination

Ensure fair access to employment, training and promotion for all genders by actively dismantling systemic bias and discriminatory practices. Require policies to

14. Create safe, inclusive, and care-sensitive workplaces

Ensure policies and buying practices require, promote and support safe and inclusive workplaces that are free from harassment, violence and gender-based

harm. Ensure safety with confidential reporting systems and support services, and guarantee protections for those who speak up. Recognise unpaid care responsibilities and encourage suppliers to provide childcare and ensure work-life balance through flexible working arrangements during transition periods.

15. Ensure gender-responsive living wages and social protection

Ensure policies and buying practices enable wage structures, social protections and benefits that reflect and address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women. Account for women's care responsibilities and aim to eliminate the gender pay gap.

16. Invest in gender-inclusive leadership development

Fund and support gender-inclusive leadership pipelines, with training, mentorship and advancement programmes aimed at closing the leadership gap. Ensure equitable representation of women in Just Transition committees and other governance bodies.

17. Institute mandatory gender audits and safe grievance mechanisms

Conduct regular gender-sensitive assessments, and ensure safe, accessible systems for reporting abuse.

Environmental rights and climate accountability

18. Recognise environmental union delegates

Brands must formally recognise environmental union delegates or workplace environmental committees, and ensure their meaningful role in monitoring and decision-making, and reporting on

environmental issues affecting workers and operations.

19. Provide information to workers and their legal representatives on the environmental management of workplaces

Brands must transparently share information with workers and their representatives about environmental management practices, major environmental impacts and trends over time, enabling informed participation in sustainability and risk mitigation efforts.

20. Inform workers and their legal representatives of the strategies to combat climate change

Brands must communicate their climate strategies, including specific objectives, mitigation and adaptation measures, and compliance mechanisms, to workers and their representatives, ensuring accountability and collective engagement in climate action.

21. Implement protocols to combat the effects of climate change on workers' health

Brands must put in place policies and protocols to protect workers from climate-related hazards such as heat stress, extreme weather and other environmental risks, and integrate preventive measures, monitoring and emergency preparedness in contracts with suppliers.

22. Environmental awareness and training for workers

Brands must provide regular training and awareness programmes to all workers during working time (without loss of pay) on environmental issues, sustainable practices and climate change impacts, empowering them to contribute to workplace sustainability and resilience.

DEMANDS TO EMPLOYERS AND INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS

Employers and industry associations are on the frontline of implementing workplace change. As they form a direct interface with workers, they must ensure that climate and digital transitions are gender-responsive, safe, equitable and inclusive. These demands call for proactive leadership in protecting worker rights, fostering gender equity and building climate-resilient operations across the supply chain.

Worker representation, safety and social dialogue

1. **Establish Just Transition committees with worker representation**

Create inclusive bodies that ensure equal access for all workers in decision making, without discrimination based on gender, age, migrant status or disability.

2. **Strengthen occupational safety and health (OSH) policies and committees**

Develop holistic and gender-responsive OSH strategies that address all work-related risks — including heat stress, exposure to hazardous chemicals, unsafe working hours, psychosocial stress, and risks introduced by AI and other new technologies. Ensure OSH committees are gender balanced, conduct regular safety inspections, and involve workers in OSH design and monitoring.

3. **Prevent workplace violence under climate stress**

Implement strong, enforceable policies to eliminate violence, especially where climate conditions worsen workplace tensions.

4. **Ensure collective bargaining on sustainability issues**

Ensure collective bargaining on sustainability issues, enabling workers and unions to anticipate and shape environmental and climate-related changes.

Decent work in the green and digital transition

5. **Ensure democratic tech governance**

Ensure democratic oversight and accountability in the development, deployment and use of digital tools, algorithms and AI across the textile and garment sector, ensuring testing for gender and other biases. Mandatorily involve trade unions from the start, as AI works better when workers are consulted early and trained, as confirmed by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) research¹⁷. Workers must have enforceable rights over how technology affects their jobs, privacy and working conditions.

6. **Institutionalise gainsharing from automation-driven Productivity**

Ensure institutionalisation of a gainsharing mechanism that secures for workers an equitable share in the economic benefits generated by automation and digital transformation. Mechanisms for productivity and profit sharing must account for informal and precarious workers, and align with national strategies for inclusive industrialisation and social protection expansion.

7. **Establish income-generating mechanisms for workers displaced by automation**

Establish new income-generating

¹⁷ M. Lane, M. Williams and S. Broecke, The impact of AI on the workplace: Main findings from the OECD AI surveys of employers and workers, OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 288, 2023.

mechanisms enabling workers displaced by automation to retain ongoing ‘automation rents’ — a share of the value created by technologies that replace their labour — to hedge against mass unemployment and the erosion of national social protection systems. In the Global South, where unemployment and informal labour are already widespread, new, contextually appropriate income-generating systems are necessary to enable displaced workers to retain a fair share of automation-derived value. These systems must be designed to complement national development priorities, and be co-created through social dialogue among workers, employers and governments.

8. Promote worker ownership in emerging technological and green economies

Integrate worker ownership models — including cooperative structures, equity participation, community energy trusts and data commons — into the design of green and digital industries. A truly Just Transition requires that workers not only share in the benefits of technological and ecological change, but also participate in the ownership and governance of the new productive base by having a stake in the technologies that define the future of work. This will ensure that the transition fosters inclusive green and digital growth, rather than reproducing old patterns of concentration and inequality.

9. Ensure access to social security and climate insurance

Protect workers’ incomes and resilience with social protection systems and insurance for extreme weather events.

10. Support and formalise informal and home-based workers

Formalise employment across the supply chain, including lower-tier suppliers and home-based workers. Ensure these workers are integrated into legal protections, social security systems and Just Transition strategies, with access to rights, representation and fair pay.

11. Expand climate justice protections for migrant workers

across borders and within urban centres and industrial zones, ensuring they are not excluded from transition-related support.

Gender equality and inclusion

12. Integrate gender analysis into OSH planning

Tailor heat-stress and safety measures to women’s specific needs, including sanitation and menstrual health support.

13. Implement zero-tolerance for gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH)

Enforce ILO-aligned GBVH policies with accessible and confidential reporting, and survivor-centred redress mechanisms.

14. Provide equal access to green skills and career opportunities

Provide women with upskilling and leadership training in green and digital roles to overcome occupational segregation.

15. Support reproductive health and care responsibilities

Offer flexible work arrangements and support systems for workers with caregiving duties, especially during crises.

16. Collect and analyse granular gender-disaggregated and intersectional data

Gather and analyse granular data to identify and address gender disparities both in the workforce and in transition outcomes, adopting an intersectional approach (factoring for inequalities on basis of migration, disabilities, ethnicity, geographic location etc.) to develop appropriate responses and inclusive transition strategies. Share this data with trade unions and worker representatives to promote transparency, inform joint decision-making, and ensure that climate and technological transition measures are inclusive and equitable.



Climate-resilient operations and collective action

17. Adapt infrastructure and operations for climate safety

- Measure in-factory wet-bulb temperatures and invest in cooling systems to maintain safe indoor conditions.
- Upgrade insulation, ventilation and power backup systems to enhance resilience, and flood-proof facilities in high-risk areas.
- Ensure workers have access to cool water and adequate rest breaks.
- Adjust work hours, modify workloads during high-heat periods and extreme weather events, allow work stoppage at unsafe temperatures and in unsafe weather conditions.
- Conduct regular risk assessments and provide training to help workers recognise and respond to heat-related risks.

18. Develop cluster-level green infrastructure, resilience plans, and emergency response systems

- Coordinate across regions and supply chains to build sustainable and gender-responsive infrastructure and emergency response systems.
- Coordinate with brands, producers and suppliers, local governments and workers in key production hubs to invest in common sustainable infrastructure — such as renewable energy, wastewater treatment and heat-resilient buildings — and to establish emergency response systems that protect workers and communities from climate-related risks.

DEMANDS TO GOVERNMENTS

Governments — in both consuming and supplier countries — play a central role in shaping the legal, policy and financial frameworks that enable a fair and gender-equitable transition. Their leadership is essential to ensure that climate action and industrial transformation uplift workers, protect rights and foster inclusive development. These demands outline the structural reforms and proactive measures needed to embed justice, equity and resilience into national and global transition strategies.

Policy and legal frameworks for Just Transition

1. **Develop industrial strategies and plans with the involvement of workers and their trade unions**

Governments must develop comprehensive, sector-specific strategies and roadmaps agreed upon with workers and trade unions as well as industry representatives. These must be holistic, proactive, based on gender-responsive impact assessments, and include specific employment transition programmes leading to quality jobs and working conditions. Include employment impact assessments that consider cross-border and supply chain effects and impacts on informal workers. Ensure policy coherence and global equity by recognising responsibility of consuming countries to support fair transition processes in producing countries, and avoid burden-shifting through trade and policy externalisation.

2. **Develop national and sectoral Just Transition policies**

Governments must develop national and sectoral Just Transition policies that

proactively plan for climate and industrial shifts, ensuring employment impacts are anticipated, social protections are strengthened, and workers and communities are meaningfully engaged in shaping the transition.

3. **Integrate Just Transition into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**

Governments must formally include Just Transition strategies — with clear budget allocations and gender targets — in their NDCs, national climate change action plans and city/cluster-level strategies. This should be done through consultation with trade unions and representatives of the textile and garment sector, particularly women's organisations.

4. **Align national labour and environmental regulations with emerging international standards on corporate accountability**

— such as the ILO Just Transition Guidelines, UNGPs, the OECD Draft Guidance on Responsible Business Conduct, the OECD Guideline, and the EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) — and resist efforts to weaken corporate Human Rights Due Diligence rules, as urged by trade unions and civil society¹⁸. Governments in both consuming and supplier countries should mandate that due diligence processes integrate Just Transition principles and ensure meaningful participation of workers, unions and local communities.

¹⁸ IndustriALL Europe, [Workers need binding corporate HRDD laws](#), 26 June 2025

Labour rights, social protection and green labour laws

5. **Comprehensively implement and strengthen workers' rights** — including freedom of association and collective bargaining.
6. **Expand and strengthen social security systems for all workers**
Expand universal and accessible social protection systems — including unemployment benefits, health insurance, pensions, maternity protection and climate-related income support — particularly targeting informal and precarious workers. Governments in consuming countries must support governments in supplier countries both financially and institutionally to ensure universal social protection, climate insurance and income support during extreme weather events.
7. **Amend labour legislation to include legally binding provisions for Just Transition**
Define, address and ensure legally binding provisions for Just Transition in labour laws. Introduce labour law reforms that create **new rights and protections** in response to the climate and digital shift, including:
 - Legal provisions for extreme heat, flooding and climate hazards.
 - Climate-responsive insurance for workers and manufacturers.
 - Health insurance and hazard pay.
 - Introduce new worker rights such as:
 - ◊ Right to stop work during extreme weather without penalty.

- ◊ Cooling and hydration breaks, and access to cooling rooms.
- ◊ Adjusted work/rest hours, and climate emergency protocols.
- ◊ Safe evacuation and repatriation.
- ◊ Risk assessment training.
- ◊ Data privacy and digital rights.
- ◊ Support for reskilling, redeployment and income continuity.

Gender-responsive governance and care infrastructure

8. **Embed gender in all climate and labour frameworks**
All national and sub-national climate and labour policies must incorporate gender-impact assessments and gender-specific measures to address inequalities in exposure, adaptation capacity and access to services.
9. **Recognise and protect informal women workers**
Extend labour rights, social protections and climate compensation schemes to informal workers — particularly home-based women workers — who are often excluded from formal planning.
10. **Invest in care infrastructure and public services**
Expand public investment in care systems (childcare, elderly care, health care) to reduce the unpaid burden disproportionately borne by women, enabling fuller workforce participation and climate resilience.



11. **Ensure women's participation in policy-making**

Guarantee representation and participation of women garment workers and gender experts in all Just Transition planning processes at local, national and regional levels.

Climate-resilient communities and worker welfare

12. **Invest in decent, climate-resilient housing and services for workers**

Invest in dignified housing with adequate ventilation and cooling, which is both physically accessible for workers with disabilities and financially accessible for low-income workers. Ensure robust monitoring and reporting.

13. **Ensure access to** sanitation, sewage, clean water, public healthcare and transportation.

14. **Expand** public childcare and education facilities.

15. **Promote** resettlement from flood-prone areas and informal settlements with robust monitoring and reporting.

Achieving a Just Transition in the apparel and textile sector is not only a climate imperative — it is a social and gender justice necessity. Brands, employers and governments must work together to build an equitable, resilient and sustainable industry that places **workers — especially women and marginalised groups — at the centre.**

This is a pivotal moment to shape a future where climate action and economic development uplift, rather than exclude, the people who make this industry possible.

OUR VISION

We envision a world where:

- The hands that make our clothes are respected and protected.
- The land, water and air are clean and abundant for future generations.
- Fashion regenerates rather than extracts.
- Workers are not expendable but essential, with full rights and dignity.

CALL TO ACTION

We urge governments, corporations and industry leaders to commit to a Just Transition that puts workers at the heart of sustainability. We demand policies that uplift workers, protect their rights, and ensure that no one is left behind in the shift to a greener, fairer economy. Only through collective action can we build an industry that is just, gender-

responsive, inclusive and environmentally responsible.

Together, we stand for a future where textiles and garments are woven with fairness and dignity.

A Just Transition for the textile and garment sector is possible — and it starts now.



ANNEX 1

GLOSSARY

Climate and environmental terms sub sub

- **Adaptation**
Adjustments made to protect workers and supply chains from already unfolding climate risks, reducing harm or taking advantage of opportunities.
- **Climate resilience**
The ability of people and systems to anticipate, withstand and recover from climate-related shocks and stresses.
- **Climate targets**
Goals set by governments or organisations to limit greenhouse gas emissions and global warming.
- **Decarbonisation**
The process of reducing or eliminating carbon dioxide emissions from industrial and economic activities.
- **Extreme weather events**
Severe climate-related events such as floods, heatwaves and storms intensified by global warming.
- **Mitigation**
Actions taken to reduce the causes of climate change, primarily by cutting greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Net zero**
Balancing emitted and removed greenhouse gases to achieve no net climate impact.
- **Paris Agreement**
A legally binding international treaty aiming to limit global warming to 1.5°C, requiring a 45% emissions reduction by 2030 and net-zero by 2050.
- **Renewable energy**
Energy sourced from natural processes that are constantly replenished, such as solar, wind and hydro.
- **Thermal heat**
Excessive heat exposure from environmental or industrial sources, affecting worker health and productivity.
- **Thermal impact**
The effects of high temperatures on workers' bodies, safety and ability to work — especially in poorly ventilated settings.
- **Circular economy**
An economic system aimed at eliminating waste and keeping materials in use through reuse, recycling and regeneration.

Energy, materials and industrial change

- **Decarbonisation (also listed above)**
Reducing or eliminating carbon emissions from industrial and energy systems.
- **Renewable energy**
Energy from naturally replenished sources such as wind-, solar- and hydropower.
- **Next-gen materials**
Innovative, lower-impact alternatives to traditional textiles and fabrics — such as bio-based fibres, recycled synthetics, and plant-based leather alternatives.

- **Circular economy**
A system that minimises waste by reusing, recycling and regenerating materials and products.

Workplace and labour frameworks

- **Collective bargaining**
The process by which workers, through unions, negotiate contracts with employers regarding wages, working conditions and rights.
- **Due diligence**
A process through which companies identify, prevent and mitigate adverse human rights and environmental impacts linked to their operations.
- **ILO Better Work programme**
A partnership between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) that improves working conditions and competitiveness in the garment sector.
- **ILO Guidelines on Just Transition**
A global framework promoting fair, inclusive and rights-based climate transitions for workers.
- **Just Transition**
A framework for shifting to a green economy in a way that is fair and inclusive, and that protects workers' rights and livelihoods.
- **Living wage**
A wage that meets a worker's basic needs, including food, housing, health care, education and some discretionary income.
- **OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises** – A comprehensive framework of recommendations issued by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), outlining

principles and standards for responsible business conduct by multinational enterprises across areas including human rights, employment, environment, disclosure and anti-corruption.

- **Technological shifts**
Changes in work processes due to innovations such as automation, digital tools and artificial intelligence.

Fashion industry initiatives

- **Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action**
An UN-backed commitment by fashion stakeholders to reduce emissions and support sustainable practices.

Institutions and acronyms

- **CAD**
Computer-aided design; technology used to create precision drawings or technical illustrations, often in fashion and manufacturing.
- **CBAM**
Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism; a trade and climate policy instrument introduced by the European Union (EU) to prevent 'carbon leakage' — the relocation of production to countries with weaker climate regulations. CBAM places a carbon price on certain imported goods (such as steel, cement, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity and hydrogen) equivalent to the EU's domestic carbon pricing under the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS). Without accompanying financial and technical support, CBAM could affect competitiveness, jobs and industrial development in the Global South

- **CSSD**
Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence; an EU legal framework requiring companies to identify, prevent, and address adverse human rights and environmental impacts linked to their operations and supply chains.
 - **EPR**
Extended producer responsibility; a policy that makes producers responsible for managing the environmental impacts of their products throughout their life cycle, especially for collection, recycling and disposal at end-of-use.
 - **GBVH**
Gender-based violence and harassment; any act causing or likely to cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering due to gender.
 - **GHGs**
Greenhouse gases; gases that trap heat in the atmosphere, contributing to global warming.
 - **Gt**
Gigaton; a unit of measure equal to one billion metric tons, often used to quantify carbon emissions.
 - **HREDD**
Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence; a legal framework requiring companies to identify and address human rights and environmental impacts in their supply chains.
 - **NDCs**
Nationally Determined Contributions; national climate action plans under the Paris Agreement, which outline emissions targets and adaptation strategies.
 - **OSH**
Occupational safety and health; standards and practices to ensure workplace safety and protect worker health.
 - **RBC**
Responsible Business Conduct; the OECD's approach to ensuring that enterprises prevent and address adverse impacts of their activities on people, the environment and society, while contributing to sustainable development in line with international standards — distinct from corporate social responsibility (CSR), which focuses on voluntary initiatives.
 - **SLCP**
Social & Labour Convergence Program; a multi-stakeholder initiative that aims to improve working conditions in global supply chains by creating a standardised system for collecting and verifying social and labour data.
 - **UNFCCC**
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; an international environmental treaty aimed at combatting climate change.
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ANNEX 2

A. CLAUSE IN A COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

Bi-lateral agreement as per Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006, Section 210(3)

Hop Lun Intimate (Bangladesh) Limited and Somnilito Garments Sramik Federation

Climate Change/Just Transition:

Climate change is a global concern which causes extreme heat/extreme cold and has also resulted in environmental pollution, for which the mental and physical health of all the workers and employers of this workplace has been severely affected. It is also responsible for various negative experiences they face due to such environmental pollution. Moreover, this is affecting production and workers, specifically female and pregnant workers, as it causes harm to their health that may result in severe reactions and harm to the upcoming child. Therefore, to deal with any upcoming adverse circumstances, **the authority shall establish a permanent committee. This committee shall be created with the participation of representatives from the Union and factory owners.** This committee will formulate a code of conduct, which includes regular discussion sessions on climate change and the effective and necessary steps that need to be taken to address these problems. Moreover, it will also raise awareness about climate change among factory owners and workers.

News at: <https://www.industrial-union.org/affiliate-in-bangladesh-signs-cba-with-hop-lun>

B. EXCERPTS FROM A COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT – BELGIUM

Between employers' federation Creamoda and the three representative trade union federations (ABVV-De Algemene Centrale, ACV-Metea, and ACLVB), within the framework of the Joint Committee for the Clothing and Confection Industry (Paritair Comité 109 / Commission Paritaire 109).

Joint Committee for the Clothing and Garment Industry

COLLECTIVE LABOUR AGREEMENT OF 3 July 2025 CONCERNING TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Article 1

This collective labour agreement **applies to employers and workers in companies covered by the Joint Committee for the Clothing and Apparel Industry.**

CHAPTER II – RISK GROUPS

Article 4

Employers shall continue their efforts for the period from **1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025** in favour of persons belonging to **risk groups of 0.10%**, calculated on the basis of the total wages of male and female workers[...] People belonging to at-risk groups are job seekers and workers who, through training initiatives, can safeguard their jobs or increase their opportunities on the labour market.

Payment is made to the Social Guarantee Fund for workers in the clothing and garment industry, as provided for in Article 3 of the Fund's statutes.

Article 5

The Institute for Research and Education in the Garment Industry (IREC) allocates at least **0.05% to young people under the age of 26 who belong to at-risk groups.**

This is to maximise the number of stepping stone jobs for young people under the age of 26. **Every young person is eligible for a stepping stone job, regardless of the nature of the agreement** (FPI, work-study programme or “dual leertraject”, fixed-term or permanent employment contract, temporary work, etc.).

CHAPTER III – TRAINING EFFORTS

Article 7

For the period from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025, **the sectoral contribution shall be 0.20% of wages** in favour of the Institute for Research and Education in the Clothing Industry (IREC).

This contribution is calculated on the basis of the total wages of workers [...]

The IREC shall develop the necessary initiatives to this end in order to **guarantee 2.5 days of training per year**, as in the previous period of the collective labour agreement.

Article 8

§ 1. Article 54, § 1, 10 of the Act of 3 October 2022 laying down various provisions relating to work stipulates that all workers are entitled to 4 days of individual training per year in 2023 and 5 days of individual training in 2024 [...]

The following trajectory has been agreed between the social partners:

2023: 2.5 days of individual training per year

2024: 3 days of individual training per year

2025: 3.5 days of individual training per year

2026: 4.5 days of individual training per year

2027: 5 days of individual training per year

§ 2 The training courses taken into account for the fulfilment of the individual right to training [...]

Formal training: Courses and internships designed by trainers or speakers. These training courses are characterised by a high degree of organisation on the part of the trainer or training institution. They take place in a location that is clearly separate from the workplace [...];

Informal training: Training activities, other than those referred to in (a), which are directly related to work. These courses are characterised by a high degree of self-organisation by the individual learner or group of learners with regard to the timetable, location and content, with content determined according to the individual needs of the learner in the

workplace and with a direct link to the work and the workplace, including participation in conferences or fairs for learning purposes;

Training on subjects relating to wellbeing covered by the Law of 4 August 1996 on the wellbeing of workers in the performance of their work.

Training hours are treated as normal working hours in terms of salary and any other salary-related benefits to which the employee is entitled.

§ 3 The employer is required to inform the worker of any unused training rights in December of each year. Article 57 of the Act of 3 October 2022 on various provisions relating to work stipulates that all **workers must have benefited from all their training entitlements at the end of a five-year period** [...]

§ 5 The employer is required to **maintain an individual training account for each employee**, in which formal and informal training efforts are recorded [...]

CHAPTER IV – TRAINING PLANS

Article 10

Article 36 of the Act of 3 October 2022 containing various provisions relating to work requires all employers to draw up a training plan for their employees within the company once per calendar year, before 31 March. **Particular attention must be paid to at-risk groups, and gender issues must be taken into account when drawing up the plan.** The employer shall submit this training plan to the works council, or failing that to the trade union delegation [...]

The sectoral social partners recognise the importance of training plans in the context of realising workers' training rights. However, they also **recognise the additional administrative burden this represents for companies.** In this regard, the IREC can provide assistance with the implementation of Article 36 (drawing up the training plan) and Article 38 (sending it to the relevant Federal Public Service).

Source : Commission paritaire de l'industrie de l'habillement et de la confection

C. SECTION IN A GLOBAL FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

Global Framework Agreement (GFA) between H&M Hennes & Mauritz GBC AB and IndustriALL Global Union and Industrifacket Metall on the Implementation of H&M Group Minimum Requirements, Sustainability Commitments, and International Labour Standards at the Suppliers of H&M Hennes & Mauritz GBC AB

August 2024

Industry Collaboration

The parties shall work together to bring about systemic change in the global garment and footwear supply chain, through collaboration in different multi-stakeholder initiatives with other brands. The parties commit to further explore similar collaboration on Just Transition, on joint advocacy in support of the ratification of relevant ILO conventions, and other topics as mutually agreed.

Accessed at: https://www.industrialunion.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/2024/SWEDEN/gfa_final_signed_240826.pdf

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