



Department
for International
Development



Rt Hon Desmond Swayne TD MP
Minister of State

Response to All We Can/War on Want campaign regarding working conditions and pay in the garment sector

Thank you for your letter/postcard to the former Foreign Secretary William Hague in support of the All We Can/War on Want campaign about working conditions and pay in the garment sector. Your letter/postcard has been passed to DFID and I am replying as the Minister who leads on the issues raised.

I strongly agree that workers everywhere should have safe working conditions and receive a fair income that can help them support their families. In this important area there is undoubtedly more to do.

In Bangladesh, the UK is playing a leading role in driving change, providing support for improving building safety and working conditions, empowering workers, and urging buyers to take responsibility for their supply chain. I have raised this matter face to face with the Bangladeshi Prime Minister.

DFID continues to push for companies to take responsibility for the working conditions of all those that make their clothes. As the Accord is an independent and legally-binding agreement between unions and private companies, the Government is not able to mandate companies to join. However, I can confirm that we do encourage companies to join.

DFID also supports the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) which is a leading alliance of companies, trade unions and non-governmental organisations working together to improve the lives of workers around the world. ETI played a key role in getting brands to sign up to the Accord and it has called for companies to contribute to the compensation fund. ETI members also commit to working towards ensuring that living wages are paid in their supply chains.

I hope this assures you that the Government shares your concerns about the conditions faced by workers in other countries. We will continue to work with businesses, NGOs and retailers towards the goal of building a healthy, safe and sustainable garment sector that benefits everyone.

The role of the public is crucial in putting pressure on companies to take responsibility for the workers that make the clothes they sell and I appreciate your involvement in this issue.

Yours Sincerely

DESMOND SWAYNE