

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

Gap Hitches Ride on Walmart's Bangladesh Race to the Bottom

Brussels, 5 June 2013 (ITUC OnLine): The decision by US clothing retailer GAP to join Walmart in a non-binding and unenforceable “Bangladesh safety programme” is a sham, according the ITUC. The two retail giants have ignored calls to join the global Bangladesh Fire and Safety Building Accord that has already been welcomed by the ILO and OECD, and signed by more than 40 US, Canadian and European brands.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said, “Gap and Walmart are now unfortunate bedfellows in a public relations effort that aims to protect their business model rather than Bangladeshi workers. Their refusal to join the global, binding effort brings shame upon them.”

Walmart and Gap have announced they are working on their own “safety programme” with some employer lobby groups and the US Bipartisan Policy Center, a think-tank of US political figures that “works to address the key challenges” facing the USA.

“The Bipartisan Policy Center has a very strong track record on advocacy around US policy issues, but it doesn’t seem to have any background on fire and building safety or on Bangladesh. Walmart and Gap have avoided any commitments and can simply step away from their own programme any time they choose,” said Burrow. “Three weeks ago Walmart said its own unilateral plan would bring faster results than the global accord, yet now they are launching into a new programme with Gap, causing even greater confusion and uncertainty. Gap said earlier that they were close to signing the global accord, but in the end didn’t want anything legally-binding.”

See also:

Joint statement by AFL-CIO and ChangetoWin: <http://www.aflcio.org/Press-Room/Press-Releases/Joint-Statement-from-the-AFL-CIO-and-ChangetoWin-on-the-attempt-by-Walmart-and-Gap-to-undermine-worker-safety-in-Bangladesh>

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