

Women Textile Workers Demand Justice

On the Situation

of the Textile and Garment Industry

in the Countries of the South

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Introduction

In the development policy discussion concerning a world division of labour, the textile and garment industry is regarded as being the appropriate starting point for the industrialisation efforts of the South. This is due, not least, to the fact that this field is very labour-intensive and is regarded in many countries as being the most important source of foreign exchange. For investors from industrialised and newly industrialising countries, generous conditions for the location of industry were created. In addition to this is the calculable access to the financially sound markets of industrialised countries which facilitates the generation of desperately needed foreign exchange. Particularly through the establishment of free export zones, the so-called "Free Trade Zones" (FTZ), interested countries offer foreign investors attractive framework conditions for industrial location. For the most part, it is industries in the textile, garment and electronics field which use the model of free export zones. Experience made over the last few years shows the following fields of tension:

Offers concerning the location of textile and garment industries were taken up on a large-scale by foreign investors. Parallel to this, firms in the industrialised countries were closed down. This caused a dramatic decline in employment and structural change in the textile and garment sector in industrialised countries. Depending on the economic policy of a government, social repercussions were either eased by socio-political measures, or a high rate of unemployment in the key national areas of production was tolerated.

It became quickly apparent that the early capitalistic working conditions and very low wage levels were, in part, the main reasons for the success of the FTZ concept. Through wage and social dumping, investors reap additional profits and competitive advantages. At the same time, employees in most free trade zones are either denied the right of freedom of association, that means the right to form trade unions, or trade union rights are substantially restricted. The minimum norms approved by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in the fields of labour law, health and safety at the workplace are deliberately disregarded by many firms. That the governments of many developing, but also newly industrialising countries, not only tolerate these violations of civil rights but also defend them aggressively in international forums as being a necessary incentive for investment, increasingly aggravates international controversy between governments on the one hand, and trade unions and human rights organisations on the other.

For the governments in the countries of the South, export-orientated industries in the free export zones are an important source of foreign exchange. The vast majority of employees in the export zones are young women. The labour-intensive nature of the textile and garment industry renders "remunerative" advantages possible, as women are almost exclusively badly paid and are employed in jobs requiring only low qualifications. Their work is, as a rule, also underrated at the social level. But even if wage levels are low and working conditions are bad, the derived income is, in view of the widespread unemployment in most countries, nevertheless, an important contribution to the support of the, as a rule, large extended family. Despite trade union prohibition and high risks, women workers fight for improvements in their working conditions and for higher wages. Their efforts are linked up with a long tradition of social disputes in the textile and garment field. The International Women's Day remembers the social fight of women workers in the textile and garment industry. Several thousand women went on strike in 1857 in New York and fought under the banner "Bread and Roses", for fair remuneration and better working conditions. Even though international ILO Conventions on the protection of working women, such as Convention 111 on "discrimination in respect of employment and occupation", as well as Convention 100 concerning "equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value", exist for over 40 years, many women workers in the textile and garment industry are occupied in totally unprotected employment relationships. As a background to their importance as directives, extracts of the conventions have been included in the appendix to this publication.

The selected country reports show that where women are already organised in trade unions, they have ascertained that problems specific to women are not adequately dealt with in the trade unions and women are insufficiently represented in decision-making positions. Within the trade unions they are striving for recognition of their interests. In the long term, a legal framework must be established which takes up questions of improving maternity and parental leave arrangements, child-minding facilities, equal opportunity in terms of training and further training and complaints procedures in the case of sexual molestation at the workplace.

Seamstresses on strike. Berlin 1896.

Source: Trade Union Textile and Garment. Document to commemorate 150 years of women working in the textile and garment industry. Düsseldorf 1981.

Trade unions in the industrialised and developing countries are in an area of tension between the striven for world division of labour, and support for the South in the development of national economies on the one hand, and the realisation of worker and trade union rights, as formulated by the ILO, on the other hand. With inhumane working conditions in mind, trade unions are internationally pressing for the inclusion of social clauses in trade agreements. They are also demanding a catalogue of sanctions in order to oblige governments to respect worker and trade union rights, if necessary by a limitation of trade advantages or access to markets. Alongside the trade unions, human rights organisations and consumer initiatives are trying to establish a link between world trade and human rights norms. They are committed, amongst other things, to the introduction of trademarks which would identify products which have been produced under conditions conforming to human rights standards.

These controversies are overshadowed by protectionism on the world markets. Less than 10 per cent of total world trade conforms to the principles of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The Multi-Fibre Arrangement expires at the end of 1992. As a result of this agreement, the textile and garment industry in the European Community enjoys a certain amount of protection which, apart from agriculture, is not taken up by any other sector. Where and how much may be supplied, is regulated by the Multi-Fibre Arrangement. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in this year's "Human Development Report" estimates losses incurred by developing countries caused by protectionism in the North at US dollars 75 bn. per annum. According to calculations made by the UNDP, the abolition of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement could increase the export receipts of the South by US dollars 24 bn. per annum. Industrial societies bear the main responsibility for the removal of protectionism in order to increase export potential for processed products from the countries of the South. The pending transfer of world trade in textiles under general free trade rules must meet the challenge linked to the codification, under international law, of the rights of male and female workers.

In new negotiations for a world textile agreement, trade unions are pressing internationally for the inclusion of social clauses. As a result of this, trade unions in industrialised countries are being accused by some governments in countries of the South of hidden protectionism: one demands higher wages and improved working conditions for male and female workers in developing countries in order, at the end of the day, to make production more expensive and thereby halt the exodus of textile and garment industries from the industrialised countries. Trade unions in the countries of the South are being increasingly accused by their respective governments of adopting in their demands allegedly protectionist slogans of the industrialised countries and thereby acting contrary to the development interests of their own countries. In this way international areas of conflict in the employment and social field become exemplary clear as shown in the case of the textile and garment industry and could lead to further tension in North-South relations. With contributions from various countries we want to draw particular attention to the situation of women workers in the textile and garment sector. A fair world division of labour must be based on humane working

and living conditions for the employees. The connection between world trade and respect of international conventions for the protection of workers' rights must be based on the right of freedom of association, that is the right to form free trade unions, on wage agreements freely negotiated by both parties and the right to collective bargaining.

In place of the country reports published here, other countries in Africa, Latin and Central America and Asia could have been chosen. The contributions show the importance of the textile and garment sector for the economic development of the South and, at the same time, that discussions concerning a fair world division of labour and humane working and living conditions have in no way been completed. Reported about here, are the working conditions and trade union demands of women workers. It is quite evident that a need for world-wide action exists in order to, on the one hand, expand protection of women in their working environment and on the other hand to ensure the right for free and independent trade unions. It is only in this framework that a world division of labour can guarantee a humane life to women textile workers.

Colleagues who are, in part, working as staff members of the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation in Brazil, India, Mexico and Sri Lanka have contributed to this publication. In Germany, the archives helped in the search for material. Gerd Ernst and Monika Riedenklau helped, in an interested and proficient way, with the completion of the manuscript. The Trade Union Textile and Garment kindly made documents available to us on this subject, extracts of which have been included in the appendix to the publication. Veronica Milhan-Forrester translated the German contributions into English. We would like to thank them all for their support and cooperation in producing this publication.

Bonn, October 1992
Reddies

Ludgera Klemp and Bernd

Achim Wachendorfer

"Victims are mainly Women". The Development of the Textile and Garment Industry in Brazil

The role of the textile and garment industry in the industrialisation process in Brazil was of great historical importance. However, the textile industry, was during its development, subject to substantial fluctuations in which dynamic phases alternated with phases of stagnation. The last dynamic cycle of the textile and garment industry dates from the beginning of the 70's: its growth based on a strong expansion of the domestic market and growth in exports. During this period significant investment occurred, linked with the modernisation of machinery and the complete utilisation of installed capacity. On the whole, however, the textile and garment industry lost in significance, even though short-term recovery tendencies could be observed from time to time. Nevertheless, total investment was far from sufficient to guarantee international competitiveness for the whole of this branch of industry. In the end, only a few large firms were able to modernise in terms of technology and working organisation. The result was that a strong heterogeneity of corporate structures crystallised in the textile and garment industry. Even a temporary recovery of the branch, which began in 1984 as a result of which major firms concentrated more strongly on exports, failed to change this fundamental situation.

The textile and garment industry today

In the textile industry today 450,000 jobs exist in about 6,000 firms, whereby only 14 per cent can be regarded as medium or larger companies, most firms being small or very small in size. At least 10 per cent of the textile industry is controlled by foreign capital. The significant trend towards concentration in this branch is shown clearly by the fact that large firms only employ 10 per cent of the workforce but account for 84 per cent of turnover in this branch of industry. The key region is the south-east where 73 per cent of the firms are concentrated, half of which are located in the industrial centre of Sao Paulo.

The garment industry (including shoe production and textile accessories) comprises 35,000 companies in which 650,000 workers are employed. As a result, the garment industry is, after the building industry, the

second largest sector in Brazil. At least 95 per cent of the firms are small or very small firms, whereby the majority of firms are concentrated in Sao Paulo.

Brazil's share of the world market for textiles lies at about one per cent and in the confection industry at 0.3 per cent with a rising tendency. Problematic, is still the fact that large parts of the traditional industries (food, textiles, civil engineering) and trade have hardly been touched by this dynamic, and still remain controlled by the traditional and hardly representative trade union structure.

Marginal role of trade unions in the textile and garment industry

The 273 trade unions in the textile and garment industry, an industrial sector with little trade union organisation, are hardly integrated in CUT (Central Unica dos Trabalhadores) or in the less relevant competitive federation "Forca Sindical" or CGT. 54 trade unions are affiliated to CUT, a further 12 will shortly complete their membership. By far the largest part of the organisations in the textile and garment industry are still in the hands of the "Pelegos" (the popular name for corporate trade union officials) relics of a trade union tradition, who could maintain their position due to the compulsory state tax which is annually deducted, on a compulsory basis, from all workers and amounts to one day's pay.

Several factors are responsible for this: the formation of strong trade union representation is made difficult by the structure of the textile and garment industry with its small and very small sized firms and a largely unqualified workforce. These firms employ mainly women who are, anyway, discriminated against in Brazilian society. The "Pelegos" have, for their part, no interest in expanding trade union organisation. This is combined with the limited interest of the large, well organised, autonomous trade unions to become actively involved in the textile and garment industry.

Women and trade union structures in the textile and garment industry

Although women form the majority in the textile and garment industry, trade union structures are almost exclusively dominated by men who, in general, hardly concern themselves with the problems of their female members. The seamstresses' trade union of Sao Paulo and Osasco, which is affiliated to the closely business linked "Forca Sindical", was led for 49 years by men until, in 1989, a woman managed to take over this position despite strong opposition. The problem of marginalisation in trade union structures also repeats itself, however, in trade unions affiliated to CUT. In the textile and garment trade union in Osasco, 80 per cent of whose members are women, there are 4 women and 23 men on the executive committee. The CUT trade unions in the textile, garment, leather and shoe industries, about two-thirds of whose members are women, got together in 1989 to form in CUT, the "Departamento Vestuário" (department for the garment industry): but, even here, of the 11 members on the executive committee of the "Departamento" only two are women and they are responsible for the fields of training and women.

Victims are, above all, women

The predominance of small firms, low qualification of the workforce and limited trade union presence, contribute to the fact that exploitation and discrimination particularly in terms of women continues to exist in the textile and garment industry.

Female representatives of the CUT textiles and garment trade union in Osasco, a small industrial town near Sao Paulo, provided information on catastrophic working conditions under which mainly women, who

account for 80 per cent of the labour force and who nearly all work in the lower wage brackets, are affected. Massive lay-offs in the textile industry, resulting from the serious recession and the re-structuring processes of the Brazilian economy, mainly affected women in the textile and garment industry. In numerous firms women receive lower pay than men for the same work. Wage agreements are not kept to in many firms. Women workers were particularly bitter about degrading treatment and practices with which they are confronted every day. In many firms going to the toilet is subject to rigorous control. On leaving the works, women workers are often subjected to shameful bodily searches. On recruitment women must go through a urine test. Sexual molestation by superiors is the order of the day. A female member of the executive board of the trade union protested against bodily searches and was dismissed on the spot on the grounds of incitement and improper behaviour vis-à-vis her superiors. Such reports are not isolated incidents but rather everyday practice in many firms. A problem repeatedly raised by women workers was pregnancy at the workplace: no consideration is shown to pregnant women during the work process and pregnant women are forced during their work at the machines "to shift their stomach to the side". An application for a transfer to another place of work during pregnancy is, as a rule, refused.

A nation-wide sensation occurred in 1989 over a case in the garment factory De Millus, the fifth largest in Brazil, in which mainly underwear is produced. The majority of the almost 3,000 strong workforce were women aged between 14 and 17 years. They were forced on leaving the firm, allegedly to prevent thefts, to undergo a degrading bodily search. This led to spontaneous strikes, as a result of which 230 women workers were dismissed. Eighteen women won a, for Brazilian terms, sensational judicial decision: the firm was obliged to pay a steep fine. The court started out from the premise that human rights must not be violated in order to maximise profit.

In 1978, De Millus was already the subject of conjecture when during the military dictatorship it allowed police to beat up striking women workers. Even after the end of the military dictatorship, the firm refused to allow trade union organised women workers.

Subject to the greatest exploitation are the approximately 100,000 homeworkers. They do not benefit from social insurance schemes, holiday provisions or pension schemes. Their independence is a pure formality as they are, de facto, dependent upon a company which supplies them with the goods and buys the finished products. As they do not, however, have any legally binding working relationship with the firm, they cannot be organised within a trade union.

Women protest

The increased awareness of women, organised in trade unions in the textile and garment branch of industry, manifested itself at the first national meeting in October 1990 at which 80 female trade union delegates from CUT trade unions discussed their situation. Women from the CUT trade union increasingly brought into question the issue of male domination.

The assembled women analysed their situation in the following way:

"Women in this branch have, until now, only had limited involvement in the trade union movement, although they form the majority in our factories. Progress which has been achieved in some trade unions still far from answers the most pressing problems of women."

Some trade unions have already achieved progress in wage negotiations such as, for example:
- transfer during pregnancy

- two hours daily for breast-feeding
- protection against dismissal after returning from the 120 day maternity leave
- kindergarten allowance.

It can be observed that these achievements are directly linked with motherhood and do not solve the general problems of women workers, such as:

- too low wages
- lack of training and further training
- sexual molestation at the workplace.

Fear, subordination by the employer, husband and children as well as a double working day are the main grounds which hinder a greater involvement of the woman in the trade union fight. These circumstances can, in reality, apply to all areas of our class and the problems are almost the same, e.g., working conditions which are detrimental to health and wage discrimination.

Specifically applicable to seamstresses and stitchers is the harm to health caused by sitting for eight hours.

Exploitation of the woman by the woman: e.g., women in managerial positions are just as authoritarian and "macho" as their bosses.

Subsequently, the text deals critically with the trade union participation of women workers. In this connection, reference is made to the burden of the family and social discrimination, also by colleagues in the same firm, as being responsible for the limited trade union involvement of women. However, in the event of a strike, women are extremely active but less ready to make compromises.

In addition, trade unions were orientated as a traditionally male domain with traditionally male expectations and male patterns of behaviour. Traditionally male positions would, solely as a result of this, block any stronger trade union organisation of women as they would be regarded as competition on the labour market and this would run counter to their "natural" role as a mother and housewife. Despite the difficult circumstances, women are optimistic and militant:

"But some things change - for the better. The strength and the organisation of women. The women's movement. Feminism. A shout which the whole world must hear: We rebel. We have a voice, a body, readiness. And we belong to ourselves.

Feminism of women workers has brought the situation of women workers into the limelight. It has brought up the question of wage discrimination and the double working day; it has started the organisation of women workers, investigated their environment, their requests and frustrations."

Demands which the first national meeting of women of the CUT trade unions in the textile and garment industry made to their trade unions are, for example:

- establishment of women's committees in all CUT trade unions
- information seminars for the executive boards of CUT member trade unions in order to make them aware of discrimination against women
- organisation of health activities for women.

In the fight for women's rights in firms, the following priority demands were, amongst others, approved:

- pre-school facilities to be paid for by the firm
- the same pay for the same work
- external, further training financed by the firm
- no controls about going to the toilet
- medical check-ups
- 30 days paternity leave
- two free hours daily for breast-feeding babies
- prohibition of pregnancy tests by the firm.

Vis-à-vis trade unions, the following are demanded:

- collectively agreed settlements with regard to nursery schools, same pay for the same work, use of toilets etc.
- framework provisions which enable women to participate in trade union meetings
- inclusion of womens' topics in trade union publications
- the carrying out of a representative survey on the situation of women workers.

The implementation of these demands, in an environment rather hostile to women, will not be easy. Nevertheless, something has been set in motion within the trade unions, particularly in the field of CUT. At its national congress, in July 1992, the question of a women's quota was at the centre of an almost three hourly discussion, whereby the introduction of a 30 per cent quota for women in leadership positions of the CUT was vehemently defended by the president of the federation. The national congress decided that next year the question of a quota should be voted upon, whereby in a test ballot the absolute majority voted in favour of such a quota. If this decision, as well as the recommendation to individual trade unions to involve women in leadership positions in proportion to their membership is put into practice next year, then this would be an important step towards the real integration of women in the trade union movement of the textile and garment industry.

Carlos García and Alfred Stoll

The Textile and Clothing Industry in Mexico

Mexico's textile and clothing industry was - like all the other industrial sectors - protected for decades against world market competition by high tariff barriers in the framework of a protectionist economic policy (import substitution).

The accession to GATT in 1986 initiated an opening to foreign trade which will be speeded up vigorously by the present government under President Carlos Salinas de Gortari. Negotiations for a free trade area between the USA, Canada and Mexico were completed in August 1992. A free trade area has already been signed with Chile. Additional agreements with other Central and Latin American states are planned.

After the opening to foreign trade, Mexican industry, due to long-standing protection against world market competition, was in comparison with other industrialised countries technologically behind the times: at low productivity, goods of inferior quality were produced at comparatively high production costs. On the other hand, high quality and reasonably priced products mainly from the USA and Asia were pressing onto the national market. This led to a reduction of the textile and clothing sector's share of the whole manufacturing industry: from 10.8 per cent in 1980 to 8 per cent (projected for 1992) (see Graph 1)

Graph 1: Share of the textile and clothing industry in the net output of the manufacturing industry.

(not included)

(e) estimated

Source: Bancomer

On the other hand, the sector showed an increasing foreign trade deficit (see Graph 2).

Graph 2: Foreign trade of the textile and clothing sector (in U.S. dollar millions)

(not included)

(e) estimated

Source: Bancomer

The number of firms in the textile sector amounted in 1990 to about 2,200, 86 per cent of which were small firms with a maximum of 49 workers. At present about 170,000 workers are employed in this sector, 10 to 15 per cent of whom are women. This proportion corresponds to 5 per cent of those employed in the manufacturing industry. Due to the ever increasing number of mergers and the vertical integration of production processes, a fall in both the number of firms and the number of workers is expected over the next few years. The production plants are, in the main, completely out-of-date; only a few firms possess modern plants.

The contribution of the textile and clothing industry to gross domestic product (GDP) amounts to approximately 2.5 per cent. Both sectors employ about 27 per cent of the labour force. In 1990, at least 290 contract processing firms (maquiladoras) with 42,000 employees were registered. They work almost exclusively in the ready-to-wear field and account for about 6 per cent of GDP.

Due to the signature of the free trade agreement with the USA and Canada about 3,800 companies and 100,000 jobs are threatened particularly in small and medium-sized firms. The trade unions fear that the necessary increase in productivity and competitiveness will occur mainly at the cost of female and male workers and that the pressure will increase. However, it is recognised that the productivity of the sector must be increased through the modernisation of machinery. It is expected that the conclusion of the free trade agreement will promote domestic and foreign investment. The ministry of trade has worked out a specific programme for the promotion of the textile and clothing sector in cooperation with representatives of the employers.

In the textile sector in particular, labour relations are not regulated by negotiated in-house collective agreements (contratos colectivos) at the plant level between management and trade unions, but instead by collective agreements at the branch level between employers and branch trade unions (contratos ley). Collective agreements at the branch level become legally binding through their publication in the legal gazette. The employers' side criticises that as a result of global agreements, the flexibility of labour relations is hindered by the collective agreements at the branch level.

In contrast to the textile sector, collective agreements in the clothing sector are settled at plant level between employers and in-house unions. In the majority of firms in the textile sector, trade unions are represented which are, in turn, affiliated at the national level to a branch trade union. In the clothing industry on the other hand, absolutely no trade union is represented in most firms due to the smallness of the companies. Women workers in particular have no trade union protection in the informal sector. Obligatory membership by all employees is usual in almost all companies in which a recognised trade union exists.

In the textile industry, in which mainly male workers are employed, the level of wages and social benefits corresponds, as a result of collective agreements at branch level, to about the average in the manufacturing industry and lies above the legally-required minimum norms. In the clothing industry, in which mainly women are employed, wages and social benefits are up to 60 per cent below the level in other branches of the manufacturing industry. The average hourly wage in the clothing industry stood in 1991 at the equivalent of less than one German Mark.

In nearly all small and very small firms, the legally-required minimum standards are far from met and inhumane working conditions often prevail. Serious problems in respect of working conditions are: bad

ventilation, dust-laden air, high noise levels, high temperatures, bad lighting, unsatisfactory sanitary facilities, inferior tools, lacking or minimal safety precautions etc. In addition, women workers are often subjected to sexual molestation and physical violence.

Sources:

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The "19th September" workers' union in Mexico - a union in the garment contract processing industry

*The earthquake opened my eyes
My voice found an answer
My arms reached out to form a chain*

In Mexico City, the centre of the national garment industry, the seamstresses employed in so-called "maquiladora" (contract processing industry) initiated the foundation of the workers' union "19th September" in 1985. The women had decided to unite due to the fact that after the earthquake of 19th September 1985, many enterprises remained closed, and their women workers waited for them to reopen in vain. As a result, more than 3,000 women lost their jobs. The owners did not reconstruct the buildings which had been destroyed by the earthquake, but removed the production to other places. After one year, many of the women still had not found another job, nor had they received the compensation they had demanded.

For one year, the women workers fought for their organisation to be recognized as a workers' union. The official trade union movement exhausted all legal possibilities in order to prevent them from doing this. The social struggle of the seamstresses reflects the history of revolt of women workers against the state-controlled trade unions. The official unions never took the interests of women workers into consideration, nor did they give them support in their struggle against exploitation and oppression.

Working conditions for women employees in the contract processing industry far from comply with standard labour law and social law regulations, and their wages are below the legal standard wage. The demands of the "19th September" seamstresses union range from implementation of the rights formulated and social fringe benefits foreseen in the Mexican labour law, to the cancellation of Mexico's foreign debt.

The way in which we are integrated into our working environment is not only determined by our requirements and interests but also by the capitalistic system which regulates the economic development of the country.

The international division of labour has shown world wide disparities between various countries. As a result there are rich and powerful countries such as the United States of America and other poorer countries such as Mexico.

The economic success of the rich countries is based on sales of machinery, technology, arms and credits to poor countries. The poor and dependent countries are burdened by unequal relations.

The tendency to change Mexico into a maquiladora-country is one example of unequal relations. This development has a negative impact on women, because demand for female workers who are employed according to maquila conditions is increasing. The salary is low, contracts do not exist, labour legislation is disregarded and the working conditions are unworthy of a human being.

Reinhold Plate

Women Working in the Free Trade Zone: The Textile and Garment Industry in Sri Lanka.

The development of the textile and garment industry is an important step in the industrialization process of developing countries. The accessibility of raw materials, the availability of a large unemployed labour force and the low capital needs of the industry, combine to make the textile and apparel industry more attractive for developing countries both as a substitute for imports and as a major source of foreign exchange. In Sri Lanka, the sector is important to the national economy in terms of output, employment, foreign exchange earnings and support for the export-led development strategy. Since 1986, the production in the textile and garment sector has more than doubled. The annual growth rate exceeds that of other industrial branches by more than 20 per cent. Over the last six years, the textile and garment sector has accounted for 30 per cent of the country's total export earnings and the industry continues to be the largest source of foreign exchange. In relation to the textile and garment industry, the Greater Colombo Economic Commission (GCEC) plays an important role. Of the 350,000 jobs in the textile and garment industry, a further 200,000 jobs exist within the GCEC firms. An additional 150,000 jobs are indirectly linked to the latter. The numbers employed in the spinning, weaving and finishing sector is estimated at 64,000. The textile and garment sector is, as a result, the largest employer in Sri Lanka.

Formal and Informal Sector in the Textile and Garment Industry

An accurate estimate of the total employment in the textile and garment industry is not possible as one must differentiate between the informal and formal sectors. The garment industry has both a formal sector and an informal sector. The formal sector includes export-oriented garment enterprises and medium and small-scale units producing garments for the domestic market. The informal sector is characterized by very small firms and household units scattered throughout the country.

The manufacture of garments is exclusively a private sector activity producing solely for the domestic market. The public sector, however, dominated until recently the spinning, weaving and finishing sectors (in terms of quantity). The picture changed in the latter half of 1991 with the privatisation of public sector mills and powerlooms under the government's privatization programme. The Tulkhria Textile Mill has, for example, been sold outright to a South Korean company and the existing foreign managers of Pugoda Mills have acquired controlling shares in the mill. All twelve public sector powerloom firms, except two, have been privatised. Competitive bids have been invited for the remaining two units.

The spinning, weaving and finishing sector could be classified into three categories: mill, powerloom and handloom. The mill sector includes the four integrated mills of public sector (recently privatised), and the two integrated mills of the private sector. A further 62 weaving and knitting mills of the private sector and the 7 textile units of the Greater Colombo Economic Commission (GCEC) also belong to the category of large-scale producers.

The powerloom sector consists of the privatised public sector powerloom projects, the private powerlooms and the two remaining public sector powerloom projects to be privatised shortly. The handloom sector comprises the 70 handloom centres under the Department of Small Industries and the 25,000 handlooms under the Department of Textile Industries.

The spinning sector was dominated, until recently, by the public sector while the private sector was dominant in the weaving field. Wide fluctuations in production is observable in the spinning industry. This is attributed to low capacity utilisation caused by labour unrest and political disturbances.

Measures for the Promotion of Exports.

Sri Lanka has, since 1977, adopted an export-led growth strategy. Import, foreign exchange and administrative controls are being liberalised. The Sri Lankan Rupee has been drastically devalued and is now floated against a basket of currencies. The tariff structure has been rationalised by lowering tariffs, quantitative restrictions have been removed and the number of tariff bands reduced to four. Greater reliance has been placed on the private sector for economic growth. The existing public sector enterprises are being privatised. The government's involvement in direct economic activity will be confined to the provision of infrastructure facilities.

There are a number of ministries and agencies concerned with the development of the textile and garment industries. The Ministry of Textiles and Handloom Industries is in overall charge of the sector outside the Free Trade Zones. The textile and garment industry in the Free Trade Zone is within the purview of the Greater Colombo Economic Commission. Although the country has, since 1977, pursued liberal economic policies, the textile and garment industry continued to be heavily protected by high tariffs and quantitative restrictions. Thereafter, tariffs were gradually reduced until 1991, when the country's tariff structure was rationalised.

In order to remain competitive in garment exports after the expiry of the bilateral agreements negotiated under the Multi-Fibre Arrangement, the government is pursuing a policy of backward integration. Furthermore, since the country's garment exports constitute low-cost utility items which are subject to severe competition from low labour cost countries, plans are afoot to diversify its exports to cover non-quota garments and to move up the market by manufacturing quality garments and fashion garments. As backward integration of the garments export sector is highly capital intensive, the government is offering foreign investors a variety of investment incentives. The handloom sector has declined following trade liberalisation and the Ministry of Textile and Handloom Industries has prepared a 5 year development plan to revive, modernise and expand the sector by establishing handloom export villages throughout the country. The GCEC has recently announced attractive incentives for foreign investment in the field of fabric and handloom textile manufacture.

Wage Structure and Development of Skills

The direct costs of salaries and wages in Sri Lanka are much lower than those in other Asian countries. Salaries and wages differ from firm to firm depending on the size of the firm, its efficiency and the quality of the products manufactured. The current rates are as follows:

Category of Personnel

Salary/Wage per month
US \$

Unskilled workers	35 to 47
Semi-skilled workers	50 to 60
Skilled workers	75 to 100
Clerical and allied including Secretaries	125 to 175
Computer Programmers	150 to 250
Supervisory	100 to 150
Middle managerial or technical executives with 3 to 6 years experience, and a university degree	200 to 300
Managerial or technical executives with university or professional qualifications in business management, engineering, law, etc., with 7 to 10 years' experience	600 to 700

Source: GCEC 1990

Industries within the Greater Colombo Economic Commission pay higher wages than their counterparts. A GCEC firm employs on average about 1,000 workers. Wages and salaries in firms outside the free trade zones are at the lower end of the scale given above.

Training and further training facilities are of great interest to the export industry. The most important knowledge, required by the industry, is imparted by public institutions. The University of Moratuwa and the Open University of Sri Lanka conduct, for instance, degree, diploma and certificate level courses on the subject of textiles and garments. The "Textiles Training and Services Centre" provides training for middle and lower level managers. The "Clothing Industry Training Institute" provides 24 training courses for personnel employed in the garments manufacturing industry. The courses range from simple machine operations and machine mechanisms to production management diploma courses in clothing manufacture. The "Handloom Development Centre" assists in design development and productivity improvement. In the private sector, "Sewing Machine Training Centres" have mushroomed in various parts of the country. Producers of garment making machinery also provide technical assistance in the use and maintenance of machines. Most garment firms lay emphasis on on-the-job-training to develop skills. Despite these very good training facilities, shortages of trained personnel still exists in various fields. This is probably due not only to inadequacies in existing training facilities and but also to the government's policy of regional dispersal of garment manufacturing industries. The textile and garment enterprises within the Greater Colombo Economic Commission attract trained personnel through their better wages and working conditions. In addition, on-the-job training provided by these enterprises appears to be of a higher quality, due to the technological expertise and manufacturing experience of foreign partners in these firms.

Women Working in the Free Trade Zone

More than 85 per cent of the employees in the free trade zones are women. Most of them are young, unmarried and are employed in a factory for the first time in their life. They hope, moreover, to have well paid and lasting employment in the free trade zones. As a rule, their hopes are, however, not fulfilled.

Katunayake is one of the two free trade zones in Sri Lanka; it was established in the late '70s and employs at present about 60,000 workers. More than 80 per cent of these are women, whose entering age is between 18 and 25, and they come from rural regions. Their precarious living and working conditions have resulted in repeated spontaneous activity of the workers. Many of the women are housed in private accommodation in close proximity to the free trade zone: cooking and washing facilities are insufficient and in desolate conditions, and often forty women have to share one toilet, kitchen and well. The Greater Colombo Economic Commission is in charge of the administration of the free trade zone and ordered a study on the social and economic problems of the workers. This study, entitled "A Report on the Socio-Economic Prob-

lems of the Workforce at Katunayake", was published in June 1990. The author of the study, Mr. T. Hettiarachchy, has collected some important results in his summary "Some aspects of social problems related to export promotion", the main points of which are given below.

In order to understand the problems relating to the situation in Sri Lanka, it is necessary to probe a little deeper into the problem of export promotion and drastic export expansion. Since the growth of industrialism in Europe the search for cheap labour, particularly when the industry was labour-intensive, persisted as a way of advancing profits. Search for cheap labour is more pronounced in the industries which are both very competitive and labour-intensive such as textiles, garment manufacture and food processing. Thus the recruitment of female labour into the export processing industry is supposed to be another stage in the long search for cheap labour. The history of the development of capitalist industries reveals that textiles, garments, food processing and more recently electronics have traditionally utilized female labour. Since the opportunity cost of female labour has always been lower than that of males, particularly in the Third World, industrialists preferred female labour in order to enhance their profits. Cheap labour remained one of the primary concerns of multinational enterprises which governed their decision with regard to the physical location of industries. As a result countries with cheap labour, a high level of unemployment and sufficient natural resources have been selected by multinationals as locations, particularly, for labour-intensive industries.

Insufficient wages paid to the workers in the Export Processing Zones (EPZ) is one of the primary problems connected with EPZs in Sri Lanka. Even though the minimum salary paid is Rs. 1000.00 per month, the take-home salary of many workers is about Rs. 150.00 less than the above figure. The problem is more acute with probationers whose take-home salary is little over Rs. 700.00. From this salary, between Rs. 100.00 - 125.00 is paid to the boarding house and about Rs. 500.00 is spent on their daily expenses on food. What is left, is for many workers, especially during the probationary period, insufficient to even clothe themselves decently. In fact many workers bring rice and coconut from their parental homes. No commentaries are necessary to describe their poverty. Malnutrition is quite evident and what they wear at boarding houses is no better than rags.

Accommodation for Workers

Almost all the workers at Katunayake Export Processing Zone, except the very few who travel from their homes, are boarded in close proximity to the zone. Because of the uncertainty of the public transport system, most workers prefer to stay in boarding houses very close to the zone. As a result, the area surrounding Katunayake, within a radius of about 1 km, is covered with boarding houses.

The first category of boarding houses, i.e. those that are built solely for the purpose of renting out to the workforce in the Export Processing Zone are often no better than poultry sheds. They resemble estate line rooms of the past, the only difference being that a room of 10x8 feet, 10x9 feet, houses ten or more female workers. These boarding houses are built in units of three to four rooms. Occasionally these rooms have an extended eave which provides a kind of shelter where a bench is kept for the boarders to sit. The room has a small window but considering the number of boarders sharing a room, ventilation and sunlight allowed in by a window is grossly inadequate for healthy living. This is more so as the working girls close the window at night for fear of thieves and intruders. For about 30 - 40 boarders a kitchen is provided outside - usually a small shed with about ten fire places.

There is no furniture inside the rooms which serve as the only place the boarders have for sleeping, dining, sitting, storing personal belongings, the leftover food and even firewood. Many boarding houses offer a mat to sleep but rarely a pillow. In other places both these items are bought by the boarders. During daytime one

can find rolled up mats, and boxes or suitcases of girls kept side by side on the floor. Dirty clothes are seen hanging on strings running from wall to wall. The stuffy, foul smell emanating from unwashed clothes and slippers is often nauseating.

As there is no pipeborne water supply system in the area where most of the boarding houses are located, well water is the main source of water supply. Well water was often found to be polluted due to the inadequate distance between the well and the soakage or cesspit, non-availability of a surface drainage system within the site, and the failure to provide the well with a protective wall and a cemented pavement around it. The same well is also used both for drinking and bathing.

Even earlier living and sanitary conditions of the Export Processing Zone were cited as factors causing many health problems to the workers. It is stated that workers cook once a day and keep the same for three meals without any refrigeration. According to medical opinion, such habits (cultivated out of necessity) lead to indigestion and bowel diseases. They are also compelled to buy (cooked) food from vendors. The hygienic condition of such food is, of course, highly questionable.

There are other aspects to the problems connected with boarding houses. Boarding house masters, like many other members of the public, regard the workforce only as a source of income. It is up to anyone to devise his or her own means of exploiting this source of income using his or her own ingenuity. Boarding house masters have capitalized on this situation. Apart from being boarding masters, they have also turned into suppliers of grocery items to the boarders. There are over 600 groceries within a radius of 1/2 to 2 km of the free trade zone and the majority of these groceries are owned by boarding house masters. The important point to be stressed in this respect is that the occupants of a particular boarding house are more or less compelled to buy grocery items from the grocery maintained by the boarding house keeper. The price levels in these places are 20 - 25 per cent higher than on the open market.

Living in the Katunayake Free Trade Zone

Manike was a woman worker who was dismissed for writing a poem in a newspaper on the grounds that she had told lies about the factory. After months of campaigning - involving the different centres, as well as a national and international campaign by the paper - Manike was reinstated with full back pay.

Life

I awake early morning at 4.30 a.m.
I have to kindle the fire
Having washed my face, I gulp down some tea
I leave for work early morning.

I start work at 7 a.m.
The supervisor demands the production
I regret my inability to meet this target
She scolds us for this.

At 10.30 a.m. we get a sip of tea.
The tea contains no flavour, no sweetness
We drink it to quench our hunger
We tolerate these because we are poor.

I came to Katunayake because I was without work
I came to the Free Trade Zone to work
I worked at Star Garments
Now I am tired and disgusted with the job.

The other day I fell sick.
But I was not allowed to leave the factory
I know that one day I will have to work
- even through sickness.
I will surely fall dead, at Star Garments.

I work throughout the month
I am paid Rs. 800 for the month
An attendance bonus of Rs. 72 is paid
We are paid with no further allowances.

At 7 a.m. I sit at the machine
By 8 a.m. the supervisor is already at my side
She asks me what my production is
I tell her only the amount I can give

I often get a pain in my chest
The supervisor asks me to go to the sick room
I can stay there around quarter of an hour
I come back again and sit at the machine.

My mother does not know how much I suffer.
Only I know how much I suffer.
I leave in the morning and come back at night.
I suffer with the pain in my body.

We are not given any leave.
Leave is allowed only in emergencies.
That leave is also granted after much argument.
We who are poor are made to suffer so much.

My mother who fed me with her own milk.
My father who worked so hard to bring us up.
My teacher who gave me the knowledge.
To them I pay my respects.

Uma Ramaswamy and Sarath Davala
Women in the Indian Textile and Garment Industry

Textiles, one of the oldest industries in India accounts for around 20 per cent of India's total industrial output and gives employment to nearly 15 million workers. Although textiles have a large domestic market, India has always had a share of world trade in textiles. In recent years, with a boom in exports, textiles have also emerged as the largest contributor to India's exports and to foreign exchange earnings. The growth in textile exports has been phenomenal, with the garment industry emerging as the biggest contributor to its growth.

Mills, Powerlooms and Handlooms

The textile industry is extremely complex and varied in its composition and structure, with the informal handspun and handwoven and even the homebased sector at one end of the spectrum, to the capital intensive, large-scale organized mill sector at the other. The phenomenal growth of the informal small-scale powerloom units during the seventies and eighties has further contributed to the diversity of the industry. More than 80 per cent of the powerlooms are in the informal sector and contribute to more than half of the total production of cloth. Quantitative data on the exact number of units in the handloom and powerloom sector are not available as a large number of units remain unregistered. While the mill sector employs over a million people the powerlooms, and handlooms employ five to seven times as many people. The distribution of production in the industry is equally curious. While much of the yarn production takes place in the mill sector, 78 per cent of the cloth production occurs in the powerlooms and handlooms. The organized mill sector contributes just 13 per cent to the total cloth production. The three sectors have complex linkages and exhibit characteristics of complementarity and mutual competitiveness. The trends of growth in the midst of this diversity and complexity has to be understood in the context of the policy that governed the growth of the industry.

The Textile Policy and Framework Conditions

The textile policy since the fifties has made efforts to balance the growth of the large-scale organized mill sector with that of the labour-intensive informal traditional handloom sector. Handloom weaving is an important source of earnings and livelihood for a large number of weavers and workers. However, poor capacity utilization, low productivity, dated technology, fluctuating and volatile yarn price, inadequate access to hank yarn and high costs of production, have made the handlooms poor competitors for the mills and powerlooms. To protect the handloom sector with its potential to generate large-scale employment from the onslaught of the fast-growing production in the modern capital intensive mill sector, several policy measures were imposed to restrict expansion of the latter. Amongst others, the salient ones included freezing the loom capacity in the organized mill sector by prescribing the number of looms per mill, and reservation of a range of categories of cloth for production in the handloom sector. Cooperatives were also promoted to enable the weavers to benefit from raw materials, marketing facilities and government subsidies.

The ceiling on loom capacity in the mills has had several consequences. The mill owners began to circumvent the policy by setting up more spinning units, with the result that the number of spinning mills has grown. The mill owners found it simpler to set up more units than expand capacity. Again, to overcome policy restrictions and cut labour costs and the onslaught of trade unions, mill owners resorted to subcontracting much of their production to the powerlooms, contributing substantially to the growth of the latter. Being in the informal and unorganised sector, powerlooms have learnt to function outside the legal framework. Production in this sector takes place under exploitative conditions. Combining family and wage labour, working hours in the powerlooms are as long as 12 hours. It is significant to mention that in times of

recession and labour unrest, as for example during the prolonged textile strike in Bombay in 1982, the powerlooms have handheld the mill sector.

Bhiwandi, the single largest powerloom centre in Maharashtra symbolizes this sector: the dismal working conditions, the vulnerability of labour and the inefficacy of trade unions to organize workers. A visit to Bhiwandi reminds one of scenes usually associated with the beginning of the Industrial Revolution: thousands of persons sleeping in or next to numberless ramshackle sheds in which the deafening sound of the looms is heard 24 hours a day, with no ventilation, proper light, children doing tedious work for long hours, and dust and dirt everywhere. The exact number of powerlooms is unknown, as is the specification of their production, the ownership of looms, the quantity of work done on behalf of the mills.

The unbridled growth of the powerlooms has indeed been at the cost of production in the mill and even handloom sector. Another significant trend which has had a dramatic impact on the production of cotton yarn is the increasing preference and demand for blended and synthetic cloth. This has further depressed the production of cloth in the mill sector, its current share being just 13 per cent. Policy restrictions, competition from the powerlooms and market conditions have resulted in the incidence of a high degree of chronic sickness in the mills. The continual closure of mills over the decades, affecting the lives of millions of workers reflects the magnitude of the problem. (See table below). The health of cities such as Ahmedabad, Bombay and Kanpur where there is a concentration of "sick units" has, in turn, been seriously affected.

Closure of Mills 1985-1991

Year	Number of Mills		Installed Capacity on		
	Spinning	Composite	Total	Spindles ('000)	Looms ('000)
1985-86	43		29	72	1,767
1986-87	49		41	90	2,384
1987-88	81		52	133	3,358
1988-89	83		59	142	3,854
1989-90	66		55	121	3,394
1990-91	50		55	105	3,126

Source: Ministry of Textiles, Annual Report 1990-91

In the seventies, the government of India nationalized a cluster of ailing "sick units" under the banner of the National Textile Corporation (NTC) with a view to revive and restructure the units. Reeling under heavy losses, the NTC recently drew up a massive exit plan, to restructure some units and close down 14 units which would displace 75,000 workers. Clearly, nationalization has not proved to be an answer to sickness in textiles.

The powerlooms have also posed a threat to the handlooms. Practices such as marketing of their products as handlooms, even subcontracting out work from the handloom sector have taken their toll on handlooms. It has been argued that every new powerloom puts 6 handlooms out of action. Between 1974-1981, that is to say within seven years, 231,000 powerlooms eliminated 1,380,600 handlooms.

The powerloom sector itself has not escaped policy restrictions. Initially, the smaller powerloom units were placed on par with the handlooms. Although the growth of the larger ones was controlled with certain restrictions such as the purchase of looms and registrations, these were never strictly implemented. The response of the powerlooms has been to split the bigger units into small units. This has enabled them to avoid tax payments, application of labour laws and availing of the benefits of the informal sector.

Development of Export Production

A major policy of the industry which brought in further fragmentation relates to exports. Several factors govern India's exports. Cotton crops, availability of high quality yarn, an ever increasing demand for synthetic fibres and fabrics and most importantly, the protective stand taken by developed countries, restricting imports by way of quotas and tariff barriers have had far reaching implications. While catering for the domestic market, the Indian textile industry was for long not even meeting the stipulated export quotas. To boost exports, the government of India introduced an export promotion sale in 1959, facilitating the import of machinery and embellishments. Again, in 1970, the Export Policy Resolution ensured the expansion of exports by provision of special facilities such as duty drawbacks, cash assistance and import replenishment.

Backed by measures to boost exports, the industry has stepped up its effort to utilize fully the given quotas and even demand that the quota restrictions imposed by MFA be removed and brought under the general GATT agreement. At present, the market share of India in world clothing exports is about 2.7 per cent and that of textiles is 3.7 per cent. India ranks about 6th in MFA in clothing and 17th in textiles. In view of the ceiling on quotas by importing countries, the need to channel and step up exports to non-quota countries is being emphasized.

The sudden boost in exports during the last decade has, in its turn, only further accelerated the growth of the unorganized, informal sector. The emergence of free trade zones is a response and an exemplification where much of the production takes place under most exploitative conditions. The thrust on exports has drawn the mills, powerlooms and handlooms into the international ambit of trade operations, strengthening the interdependence between the sectors, with far-reaching implications for capital, production and labour.

To check distortions and bring in a better balance, the textile policy of 1985 ceased to classify the industry into three sectors - differentiated by technology, production and labour - catering to specific segments of the market. Keeping in mind the state of sickness in the industry, the policy brought in some liberalization in the import and use of fibres and machinery. The policy also made easier the exit of unviable units. Funds for the rehabilitation of the workers were made available. Reservation of products for the handlooms continued to stay. Greater thrust was given to the modernization of handlooms. To check the powerlooms, the policy removed protective measures and introduced compulsory registration.

Textiles in Bombay: A Case Study

The textile industry in Bombay was the second largest employer in the seventies. The textile mills also generated a great deal of employment in supportive services in trade, food, energy and others and enjoyed considerable presence in the metropolis. Significantly, a large number of the workforce was migrant and provided employment to a number of self employed women caterers (khanawalis). Many migrant workers

lived with families as boarders. The textile industry experienced a prolonged eighteen month strike (1982-83) that rocked the Bombay metropolis, bringing into sharp focus, the production, technological and labour problems that beset this industry. Several factors triggered off the strike. The performance of the mills was hampered by obsolete machinery and poor capacity utilization. The textile policy and the reluctance of the mill owners to make investments deeply affected production. The unbridled growth of the powerlooms took its toll on the mill sector. At this time, the exports of textiles came under severe competition from Pakistan and China. Again, internationally, the textile industry was in a state of recession. Against this backdrop, the deeply dissatisfied workers rejected their representative union, RMMS (Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh), chose an outside leader and went on strike. As the sole representative of the textile workforce, the RMMS has dominated the textile industry for decades.

The impact of the strike was traumatic. Besides the loss in man-days, wages and production, the most dramatic was the job loss and reduction in employment potential. The mill owners used the strike to modernize the units. Thousands of workers were not reinstated. Workers who retired or were forced to resign did not even receive their legal dues.

This massive displacement reduced the textile workforce to a mere 135,000. Women bore the brunt of the strike. They took up whatever employment came their way as casual, temporary and self-employed to run the household and enable their menfolk to continue with the strike. The institution of *khanawalis* which provided meals to workers was deeply affected. Many *khanawalis* lost their major source of livelihood and returned to their villages. Studies reveal that contrary to popular perceptions, women gave tremendous back-up support, participated in meetings, *dharnas* and *morchas*. However, their efforts did not consolidate into a force to be taken seriously by the unions.

Production Processes and Sexual Division of Labour

To understand the presence and nature of employment of women in the textile industry, it is important to briefly describe the production processes and locate women's work therein. If we take the mill sector, the production processes include mixing of bales of cotton; blowing and cleaning the cotton of impurities; carding which ropes the cotton and spinning which prepares the yarn. The yarn is then wound into cone yarn (cone winding) or into bundles of hank yarn (reeling), which is then packed and sent for weaving. The composite mills combine spinning with weaving.

Women are employed as cotton pickers in the field. Within the mill, however, they are employed at the back end production processes, predominantly as reelers and packers and have a minor presence as cone winders. Women are also found in small numbers as sweepers in some mills. The Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (1975) states that out of about 200 operations in the textile industry, women are employed in not more than four or five.

Reeling consists of putting doffs of yarn to be reeled, tying the knots when yarn breaks, twisting the finished bundles into shape and getting them weighed. The expertise here is in tying the yarn when it breaks and women constantly complain of poor quality of yarn which affects their workload. In winding both men and women are employed. Over the decades, women winders have been gradually replaced by men in most of the mills. The decline of women's employment has been gradual but quite steep in the textile sector. There are, however, regional variations. They are found in larger numbers in South India than in the textile centres of Ahmedabad or Bombay. In Bombay, for example, it is reported that their numbers have come down to 2.1 per cent between 1974 and 1981. According to the National Sample Survey, the overall presence of women in all textiles is a mere 2.87 per cent. (See table below).

Employment in Textiles (in Millions)

Sector	Male	Female	Total
Manufacture of Cotton Textiles	2.97	1.24	4.21
Manufacture of Wool, Silk & Synthetic Textiles	0.78	0.14	0.92
Manufacture of Jute & Hemp Textiles	0.57	0.09	0.66
Manufacture of Textile Products (including apparel other than footwear)	3.39	1.41	4.2
TOTAL	7.72	2.87	10.59

Source: National Sample Survey Estimated on the basis of NSS - 43rd round employment distribution and interpolated population for 1987-88

Women have as good as disappeared from the mill sector. Several reasons have contributed to their declining employment. The upgrading of technology has not worked in favour of women. Successive attempts at rationalisation and modernisation by the mills have only depressed the number of women employed. Paradoxically, protective legislation such as a ban on women's night shift, maternity and child care benefits have not worked in their favour. Mill owners have looked at these benefits as costly and bothersome and have resorted to ways of circumventing welfare measures such as the provision of creches and other benefits. An indirect consequence of protective legislation has been casualization of women's work. While this may be true for industrial employment in general, even the few women who are employed, work as temporary, and casual workers.

The production processes in powerlooms are not substantially different. It is argued however, that the scope for women's employment is greater here as production takes place in the informal sector. Furthermore, the powerlooms in many instances combine family labour with wage labour. A study of Coimbatore, which is a major centre of textiles, reveals that the participation rate of women in powerlooms is almost 33 per cent. They also form a larger part of the workforce per unit - between 21 and 50 per cent of the employees. Women are less segregated by function in this sector in comparison with the mill sector. The substantial presence of women in powerlooms and handlooms may well be due to the homebased nature of production and technology that is labour-intensive. However, even here, weaving, with some exceptions, does not come under the purview of women.

The division of work in the handloom sector is similar to that of powerlooms. The considerable presence of women in powerlooms and handlooms is largely due to lower forms of technology which permits labour-intensive production processes. There is substantial empirical evidence that women's labour is inexpensive and it works to the advantage of employers and contractors to employ them. Where production accesses to family labour, women seldom get paid for their labour.

Working Conditions in the Garment Industry

The garment industry, especially in the export sector typifies the dehumanized conditions of work in the informal and unorganized sector. The manufacture of garments for export is spread all over the country but mostly concentrated in urban centres. Delhi alone accounts for 60 per cent of all Indian exports. The garment industry consists of independent, small proprietary units at one end, and subcontracting units at the

other. A great deal of end jobs are also farmed out to homebased workers. Characteristically, the methods of production and work organization in this industry remain heterogeneous. The production process is split into separate functions undertaken in different locations and managed by different parties such as export agents, contractors and subcontractors. Essentially, the production of garments consists of dyeing of fabrics, design, cutting, stitching, embroidery and packing. By and large, core processes such as design, cutting and sampling are centralized and other jobs such as sewing, button stitching, thread cutting embroidery and washing are subcontracted. The extensive subcontracting has deeply fragmented the industry, leaving the workers with no enduring linkages. Most of the fabricators (workshops) are small units and remain unregistered and function with no legal backing. Since work is seasonal, it is quite common to see production units being dismantled when there is no work. Located in crowded areas, the working conditions are poor, with little lighting and inadequate ventilation. The profile of women's work in the garment industry is quite heterogeneous. Those who work in large fabricators are either technically trained and literate, employed in specialized jobs (a negligible minority) or unskilled, working as checkers and helpers. A study of the garment industry in Bombay reveals that out of about 2,000 units listed in the economic survey, only 300 employed women. A large number of women in the garment industry are invisible as homebased workers, getting work from the contractors and subcontractors, often having little interaction with the principal agent. Much of their work consists of sewing, button stitching and embroidery. With the exception of large units, wages are piece-rated. Although policy prescribes that all garment units be registered and conform to legislative prescriptions, there is large-scale evasion. The worrisome feature is the constant fear of closure of units. Any attempt to organize the workers results in the units being closed down and relocated elsewhere. Frequent closures also result in worker mobility that is horizontal and not vertical. Women's work, therefore contains a large component of piece-rated work and pockets of skilled work within a framework of employment which itself is casual and informal. Studies reveal that women also get lower wages than men even when they do similar work. A sequel to home-based work is the high incidence of child labour in this industry.

While women languish in low skill, poorly paid work, casualized and marginalized in production processes, what is of greater concern are the perceptions and perspectives that management and even unions bring to women's work. The general perception is that apart from their nimble fingers, women's expertise does not lie in skilled operations in spinning, carding, weaving or designing and cutting in the garment industry. The division of labour continues to be circumscribed by custom and tradition. The fact that technology has brought much work within the reach of women does not manifest itself in the distribution of work.

Trade Unions and Women

It is common place that trade unions have not been forthcoming in taking up the question of women's employment or their rights. Over the decades, their preoccupation has been with issues relating to wage and production agreements and fringe benefits. Issues relating to women workers and their employment levels have not been serious concerns of trade unions. Women themselves have waged several struggles at individual, departmental and even plant level to protect their employment. While leaders have been active in their respective departments, few have been part of the wider trade union movement and decision-making processes. Those who held executive positions seldom took up issues relating to employment and gender with the top leadership. The performance of women workers in the trade unions, however, has been awfully inadequate. The burden of household responsibilities, and the culture of the wider society do not encourage women to be active in trade unions. Part of the reason for this is, of course, their negligible numbers. More importantly women as reelers and cone winders do not have the clout that spinners or weavers have either with the management or trade unions.

Most union leaders admit that the task of organizing workers in powerlooms is arduous and are even fearful of taking on the muscle power of the vested interests. Women's employment levels figure, occasionally, in the charter of demands that trade unions put up to employers, but are seldom discussed in the bargaining forums. While trade unions have given little focus to the dwindling numbers of women workers, a few organisations such as SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) in Ahmedabad and Annapurna Mahila Mandal in Bombay have organized women who have been displaced and turned into homebased and self-employed. Unionizing women workers in the garments, handlooms and powerlooms sector is fraught with issues. Combining the ideologies of trade unions and co-operatives, SEWA, Ahmedabad has organised women in several trades and has been lobbying for appropriate legislation for self-employed and homebased women workers. Recently, SEWA has affiliated itself to ITGLWF. SEWA has also given considerable thrust to worker education programmes to educate their members on their rights. Such efforts, however, continue to remain innovative experiments and too few in number to meet the challenges of numerous workers. Not many experiments appear to combine the organizing principles and ideology of trade unionism and cooperativism to bring about a change of scale.

Ursula Schmelting-Brinkmann

A Hazardous Venture - The Textile Industry in Sub-Saharan Africa

In the struggle for foreign capital, the states of Sub-Saharan Africa have engaged in a relentless contest. Dusty investment codes are being pulled out of drawers and polished up to a bright new lustre. Lower taxes, generous exemption from customs duties, free trade zones and cheap labour are meant to attract investors from Europe, Asia and America in order to, at last, speed up the industrialisation of these countries. Employment must be created because the large number of unemployed and underemployed is increasingly endangering peace on this continent. Yet the success of the steps which have been taken is mediocre.

The textile industry is one sector of the economy which is at the centre of interest. The production of yarn, fabrics and ready-to-wear clothes, particularly from local cotton has a long tradition in Sub-Saharan Africa, above all in West Africa. Arabian travel reports from the 9th century already refer to guild-like spinning and weaving communities, as well as to busy trading in materials. While during the colonial period textile production was, for the most part, forbidden and Sub-Saharan Africa was reduced to being producers of raw materials, in the meantime every country has again a more or less well functioning textile industry - cotton mills, "Pagne" weaving mills, production firms for traditional clothing and European fashion.

This concerns mainly small firms and a few, mostly, state-owned, large-scale enterprises which can often only survive behind high tariff barriers. Medium-sized firms exist hardly anywhere.

Most markets in Sub-Saharan Africa are small in terms of purchasing power, even in the case of a large population. Legal exports to neighbouring countries are, in the main, unpracticable; the bureaucratic obstacles insurmountable; smuggling flourishes. Changes in state price formation, but also legal and illegal imports often alter, overnight, the basis of existence of this industry. In this way, cheap imports from other West African countries and illegal imports have reduced the textile industry in Cote d'Ivoire to almost nothing. As the textile industry, after the end of the colonial period was built up mainly with the aim of import substitution, it is extremely difficult to achieve export orientation on the lucrative first and second world markets. The reduction of import duties helps, but is not sufficient. As a result, individual countries are seeking to win investors from abroad for the establishment of new export-orientated plants. Creative fashion firms which exist, for example, in Hong Kong, remain elusive in most countries.

Mauritius, often called "Africa's Hong Kong", is one of the success stories in the textile sector. With textiles produced in the free trade zones, the island has advanced to being the second largest exporter of pullovers in the world and the third largest exporter of knitwear. In the case of knitwear with the wool seal, the small island is even the leader on the world market. The textile industry with about 600 firms is foreign-exchange earner number one. Full employment and a standard of living which lies well above the African average are the results of a successful economic policy. Moreover, Mauritius is smaller than Luxemburg and has no notable raw material reserves. Despite an investment promotion agreement and a double taxation agreement, the Federal Republic of Germany is only represented by 12 textile firms (material for shirts, men's outerwear, knitwear). Other projects are, however, being negotiated. The largest German investor is the firm Corona. But also Boss, Betty Barclay and many department stores have the cutting and knitting done here. As a result of full employment and rising wage levels, employers in Mauritius are increasingly gambling on the use of modern labour-saving computer steered weaving and knitting machines, are trying to enter higher-priced markets and develop their own trademarks. Nevertheless, there are still sweat shops here too, in which barely 14 year old girls weave by hand, elbow to elbow, to booming music.

One of the countries which is also gambling on the systematic expansion of its textile industry, with foreign assistance, is Madagascar. Here the attempt was started, with a completely out-of-date investment law and the creation of industrial free zones, to outdo the successful neighbour Mauritius. Income tax in the free trade zones was fixed at 10% and thereby 5% less than in Mauritius. With the equivalent of DM 45 per month, Madagascan workers are cheaper than their colleagues in Mauritius.

Amongst the first parties to knock on the door of the Madagascan authorities were, of all people, Mauritian entrepreneurs who find here, more and also cheaper workers. At the same time, it opened up a new possibility for Mauritius to explore other industrial areas in order to reduce dependency in its own free zones on the unbridled growth of the textile industry. But French firms also showed initial interest in establishing manufacturing plants in Madagascar.

With the aim of producing thousands of new jobs, Togo also began to establish an investors paradise. Foreign entrepreneurs, who export 80% of their production, should remain spared from the tax man for ten years. From the eleventh year onwards, a reduced tax rate of 11% lies waiting for them. Pinpointed areas are the textile sector - for the processing of local cotton - the electrical engineering industry and the production of tools.

Kenya is also involved in the competition to produce the best investment conditions, a country which was, for a long time, regarded as an exemplary country, but which in recent years has become subject to increasing criticism. Due to low wage levels, even a few Mauritian textile firms have moved to Kenya.

Zimbabwe, which has, for several years, successfully exported textiles to the United Kingdom and the USA, has also achieved export success in the Federal Republic of Germany as a result of joint venture production of sports clothes.

Swaziland, favoured by its proximity to the large South African market, has also succeeded in building up an export orientated textile industry on a small-scale.

In Nigeria, the approved programme of structural adjustment has, until now, had substantial effects upon the textile industry there. Pressure to force the processing of local raw materials has led textile firms to invest large sums of money in cotton plantations. The export efforts of the industry have resulted in a situation where, if Nigeria were to close its borders, a shortage of textiles would arise in many neighbouring West African countries; a situation which would be difficult to overcome. The quality of goods is, in the meantime, so good, the success for example on the US market so great, that Congress last year considered

whether or not quotas should be introduced for the import of Nigerian textiles. It is difficult to compute the actual scale of exports as the export trade is inadequately organised and smuggling plays an enormous role.

The collapse of the Ets. R. Gonfreville (ERG) textile mill, founded in 1932 in Cote d'Ivoire, the oldest textile firm in francophone Africa and until recently the largest textile producer in Africa, shows clearly the problems facing the textile industry in Sub-Saharan Africa. These problems can, however, scarcely be eliminated by the recently introduced measures for privatisation and the reduction of the workforce to 10 per cent.

The main obstacles for the establishment of an export orientated textile industry are investment costs in Sub-Saharan Africa, which according to experts lie 50 to 100% above those in comparable regions in South East Asia. Bad infrastructure, high transport costs within the countries and to Europe, an unreliable supply of water and electricity and a non-functioning telecommunications system, act as a deterrent to potential investors. While low wage and salary costs are attractive, another picture often evolves when wage levels are placed in relation to labour productivity. For in Africa this is, with the exception of Mauritius, considerably lower than, for example, in Asia. At the beginning of the 80's, wages in most African countries were higher than those in South East Asia and were "only adjusted downwards" as a result of devaluations. An additional factor is the lacking qualification of the majority of workers, who must first of all be trained. It is not possible, in all countries, to succeed in introducing incentive pay. Without a qualified European plant manager, accepted by the local workforce, and a European quality controller, nothing works. Often lacking for joint ventures, favoured by many governments, are solvent, financially strong local partners, who are not solely interested in making quick money but rather in long-term industrial projects. Problems also arise with raw materials because locally produced cotton does not always meet the requirements. In Ghana, where attempts are being made to build up a textile industry, already since the middle of the eighties, about 90% of the raw materials must be imported from abroad. Individual textile firms have, in the meantime, started to cultivate their own acreages. The government is promoting, in particular, the cultivation of cotton by small farmers. In Nigeria, the textile industry has also committed itself to the cultivation of cotton. In Mali, the European Investment Bank has made a considerable amount of funds available for the construction of another ginning plant and for the modernisation of existing plants in order to improve fibre quality. In Kenya, silk production by small farmers is, since very recently, being promoted. Where in addition to these problems, investment protection and double taxation agreements do not exist (e.g. Kenya), German industry and institutions involved in development aid are extremely reticent to become involved. The textile industry is the lowest point of entry into the industrial age.

Women mainly find jobs in the textile industry. While mostly "only" in the lower wage brackets, nevertheless in countries with a real and a hidden rate of unemployment of up to 50 per cent, every job is better than none. In addition, having one's own wage strengthens the self-assurance and the position of a woman in the family. This can lead to family tensions, particularly in Moslem countries, but has a mainly positive effect on women. The textile industry opens up training and additional training as well as chances for promotion from overseer to quality controller up to manager and designer; chances which women would, perhaps, not otherwise have. Through working with high technology machinery, the possibility is also increasingly opened for women to change to other better paid branches like electrical engineering and electronics.

In order to overcome unemployment, womens' groups are increasingly turning to production cooperatives and are being supported by various western development organisations. Employment leads to social and political changes which can only be welcomed.

Glossary

International Women's Day

The International Women's Day is in the tradition of women workers' union struggle. Its date, March 8, commemorates a textile women workers' strike in New York in 1857. Fifty years later, in 1909, fifty thousand New York shirt seamstresses went on strike and organised protest marches. The slogan "We want bread and roses" illustrated their struggle against inhumane working conditions and their fight for equal wages for men and women. Several thousand women were arrested, but after two months of strike, the seamstresses' demands came through. Three years after the protest marches, the women textile workers founded their own labour union. The International Women's Day goes back to an initiative of Klara Zetkin. The Socialist Women's Conference, held in Copenhagen in 1910, approved its regular celebration. The first International Women's Day in Germany was held on 19 March 1911, the anniversary of the Revolution of 1848.

(Source: Renate Wurms, Der Internationale Frauentag. Wir wollen Freiheit, Frieden, Recht. Frankfurt am Main, 1980)

International Labour Organisation

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) was founded in 1919 with headquarters in Geneva. Initially an organisation of the League of Nations and since 1946 a subsidiary organisation of the UN, the main aim of the ILO is the achievement of a better working world. Over 150 states are members of the ILO. Structured according to the tripartite principle, governments, workers and employers organisations are represented on all committees and organisations of the ILO. The decision-making body of the ILO is the annual International Labour Conference, also called the "World Parliament of Work". In tripartite committees, agreements and recommendations are worked out in all fields affecting the working world. In order to become valid, the agreements require ratification by the respective national parliaments. An important task of the annual International Labour Conference is to check-up on the respect of the ratified standards. In relation to women in the working world, two significant agreements have so far been passed:

- protection of motherhood, ratified by 45 countries;
- night work of women, ratified by 59 countries.

A department on women workers issues exists since 1976. In terms of the professional situation of women in the Third World, the ILO has identified the following major problems:

- lack of jobs and training for women in industry;
- insufficient promotion of rural women.

Source: Rolf Neuhaus: International Trade Secretariats. Objectives, organisation, activities. Bonn 1982.

International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation

This organisation is a world-wide federation of free trade unions in the field of textiles, garment and leather industries (ITGLWF). The organisation belongs to the family of International Trade Secretariats, the world-wide association of industrial and branch trade unions into 14 federations. The aim of Trade Secretariats is the world-wide protection and enforcement of trade union rights and acts of solidarity within the world-wide trade union movement. As a result, the ITGLWF is an important forum for dialogue in this area between trade unions of developing and industrialised countries. Protection of women and male workers against exploitation and health risks in the workplace are the prime aims of Trade Secretariats. They actively support member trade unions in matters concerning wages and labour legislation. Through cooperation in national and international committees, the demands of workers in industrial branches are vigorously represented. Continental secretariats take-up specific questions concerning a region and promote selective

group work within the trade unions, for example, women. In this way, the Asiatic regional organisation of textile workers (TWARO) has approved a minimum catalogue concerning employment conditions of women in the textile field and has introduced this into the national work of member trade unions. The formation of free trade unions in the former communist states in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe is the latest challenge, both in terms of organisation and content, which is facing the Trade Secretariats. From the Federal Republic of Germany, the Trade Union Textile and Garment and the Trade Union Leather are members of the ITGLWF.

Source: Rudolf Dertinger: Menschlich arbeiten - menschlich leben. Internationale Arbeitsorganisation - Ein Handbuch für Gewerkschafter. Köln 1987.

Multi-Fibre Arrangement

Since its creation in 1974, the Multi-Fibre Arrangement or World Textile Agreement (WTA) regulates international trade in textiles and clothing. It concerns here a special agreement to GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade). Notwithstanding the basic regulations of GATT, the WTA allows for selective supply restrictions vis-à-vis a country or a group of countries. The WTA lays down rules according to which individual textile trade agreements between supplier and customer countries are to be organised. The WTA is an instrument of industrialised countries against the supply of cheap textiles from developing countries. In the framework of a general customs and trade agreement, the WTA should be rescinded and international trade in textiles be put back under normal GATT rules. The WTA should expire after a transitional period of about ten years. Disputed is the question of which steps will be taken to achieve the transfer to GATT.

Recommended reading: Benno Engels: Multifaserabkommen und GATT-Verhandlungen. In: Nord-Süd-aktuell. 1. Quartal 1990, Hamburg.

List of Abbreviations

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
CGT	Confederação General do Trabalho
CUT	Central Unica dos Trabalhadores
FTZ	Free Trade Zone
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GCEC	Greater Colombo Economic Commission
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ITGLWF	International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation
NTC	National Textile Corporation
RMMS	Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Association
WTA	World Textile Agreement

Appendix

Extract from: Convention 100

Convention concerning equal remunerations for men and women workers for work of equal value

The General Conference of the International Labour Organisation adopts this twenty-ninth day of June of the year one thousand nine hundred and fifty-one the following Convention, which may be cited as the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951:

Article 1

For the purpose of this Convention-

- (a) the term "remuneration" includes the ordinary, basic or minimum wage or salary and any additional emoluments whatsoever payable directly or indirectly, whether in cash or in kind, by the employer to the worker and arising out of the worker's employment;
- (b) the term "equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value" refers to rates of remuneration established without discrimination based on sex.

Article 2

1. Each Member shall, by means appropriate to the methods in operation for determining rates of remuneration, promote and, in so far as is consistent with such methods, ensure the application to all workers of the principle of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value.
2. This principle may be applied by means of-
 - (a) national laws or regulations;
 - (b) legally established or recognised machinery for wage determination;
 - (c) collective agreements between employers and workers; or
 - (d) a combination of various means.

Article 3

1. Where such action will assist in giving effect to the provisions of this Convention measures shall be taken to promote objective appraisal of jobs on the basis of work to be performed.
2. The methods to be followed in this appraisal may be decided upon by the authorities responsible for the determination of rates of remuneration, or, where such rates determined by collective agreements, by the parties thereto.
3. Differential rates between workers which correspond, without regard to sex, to differences, as determined by such objective appraisal, in the work to be performed shall not be considered as being contrary to the principle of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value.

Extract from: Convention 111

Convention concerning discrimination in respect of employment and occupation

Article 1

1. For the purpose of this Convention the term "discrimination" includes-
 - (a) any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation;
 - (b) such other distinction, exclusion or preference which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation as may be determined by the Member concerned after consultation with representative employers' and workers' organisations, where such exist, and with other appropriate bodies.
2. Any distinction, exclusion or preference in respect of a particular job based on the inherent requirements thereof shall not be deemed to be discrimination.
3. For the purpose of this Convention the terms "employment" and "occupation" include access to vocational training, access to employment and to particular occupations, and terms and conditions of employment.

Article 2

Each Member for which this Convention is in force undertakes to declare and pursue a national policy designed to promote, by methods appropriate to national conditions and practice, equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation, with a view to eliminating any discrimination in respect thereof.

Article 3

Each Member for which this Convention is in force undertakes, by methods appropriate to national conditions and practice-

- (a) to seek the co-operation of employers' and workers' organisations and other appropriate bodies in promoting the acceptance and observance of this policy;
- (b) to enact such legislation and to promote such educational programmes as may be calculated to secure the acceptance and observance of the policy;
- (c) to repeal any statutory provisions and modify any administrative instructions or practices which are inconsistent with the policy;
- (d) to pursue the policy in respect of employment under the direct control of a national authority;
- (e) to ensure observance of the policy in the activities of vocational guidance, vocational training and placement services under the direction of a national authority;
- (f) to indicate in its annual reports on the application of the Convention the action taken in pursuance of the policy and the results secured by such action.

**Extract from: Trade Union Textile-Garment, Board of Directors
Dept. Women: Important Decisions for Women**

15th Trade Union Conference of the Trade Union Textile-Garment
from 5 - 9 October 1986 in Aachen.

Ref.: Multi-Fibre-Arrangement

The delegates of the 15th Trade Union Conference are requested to consider the following for decision:

- The delegates of the 15th Trade Union Conference welcome the agreement reached in Geneva on the extension of the Multi-Fibre-Arrangement.
- The conclusion of the 4th Multi-Fibre Arrangement fulfilled a vital demand made by the Textile-Garment Trade Union, following a corresponding provision for the international textile and garment trade. Moreover, all efforts to dismiss the present framework agreement as temporary, were rejected.
- For a five year period, the conditions of the extension protocol ensure for the European textile and garment industry certain trade protective measures against lowprice imports from industrial threshold, developing and state-trading countries. This alone was particularly important as the competitive advantages of these countries rely almost exclusively on unsocial and inhumane working conditions as well as on a non-competitive practice of subsidization.
- The delegates of the 15th Trade Union Conference welcome the fact that their demands have again been realized in which import quotas are to be differentiated between real developing countries on the one hand and already industrialized countries on the other hand, particularly as threshold countries could if necessary be called "developing countries" due to their extremely unfair distribution of income.
- In view of a rather low increase in the demand for textiles and garments in the European Community, new textile and garment suppliers only have a real chance to sell their products if this is made chargeable to the existing quotas for industrialized major supplier countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong or Brazil. The delegates of the 15th Trade Union Conference therefore deeply regret that the present extension protocol does not reduce the import quotas for these main supplier countries.
- The delegates of the 15th Trade Union Conference also criticise that the present extension protocol does not contain any concrete statement regarding an opening of the market of industrialized threshold and state-trading countries. Although the extension protocol mentions uncompetitive, illegal copying of samples and designs, practical consequences are not mentioned. The delegates of the 15th Trade Union Conference therefore request the EC Commission to raise the question of market openings as well as sample theft in the forthcoming bilateral negotiations. Should no binding commitments materialize, then future EC import quotas must be made even more restrictive.
- In order to ensure that the expansion of trade really leads to the social development of the population in Third World countries, these countries must be obliged to observe the social minimal norms of the International Labour Organisation as well as trade union laws. The delegates of the 15th Trade Union Conference criticise sharply that, despite consent obtained beforehand, the present extension protocol

does not include definite provisions regarding a social clause. As in the 3rd Multi-Fibre Arrangement, the aim of trade expansion as stipulated here should be the promotion of economic and social development in developing countries. This reference alone is, however, insufficient. The delegates of the 15th Trade Union Conference therefore request the EC Commission to firmly insist upon a realizable social clause, along the lines of ILO minimum norms, in the forthcoming bilateral agreements. Above all, this should ensure the unhindered work of free and independent trade unions.

- The EC Commission is requested to use the 4th Multi-Fibre Arrangement as a basis in the forthcoming bilateral negotiations to firmly represent the social and employment interests of the workers in EC member countries.

Extract from a statement by the European Trade Union Committee Textile, Garment and Leather on the topic "Social Clauses", dated 13 February 1989

Social clause

Policy in the field of trade and development cooperation must aim at both economic and social progress in developing as well as developed countries. Both aims have to be pursued simultaneously.

On the one hand, this should ensure equal opportunities for developing countries entering the common market without punishing those who already apply social minimum norms. On the other hand, this should promote social development in the framework of economic progress.

The aim of these minimum norms, which must be incorporated in both GATT and WTA are:

To support workers in developing countries in their efforts to secure a part of the social and economic benefits of industrialization.

To enable governments and trade unions to influence countries which do not implement the norms, so that it can be ensured that workers indeed obtain a more appropriate share of the advantages of industrialization.

Crucial minimum norms are:

Equality of opportunity and equal treatment in the fields of employment and profession, in order to abolish discrimination due to race, colour, sex, religion, ethnic or social origin.

The right to allow free and independent trade unions, and the obligation not to hinder their activities (freedom of association).

Prohibition of child labour and fixation of the minimum employment age to 14 years.

Observance of health care regulations.

Guarantee of security regulations at work.

Limitation of working hours to a general maximum of 48 hours per week.

Guaranteed minimum wages which ensure living conditions fit for human beings.

The legal basis of these minimum norms is constituted by the respective ILO agreements which have come into force after ratification by the required minimum number of member countries. Control and implementation of these regulations are therefore dependent on the cooperation of the ILO.