



April 7, 2014

The Honorable Sheikh Hasina Wazed
Prime Minister, People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Prime Minister
Office Old Sangsad Bhaban Tejgaon, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh

Dear Prime Minister:

On behalf of the undersigned associations, which represent the companies that account for over 90 percent of purchases of ready-made garments (RMG) in the United States and Canada, we are writing to urge your government to immediately eliminate the duties paid on Bangladeshi imports of critical fire and building safety equipment. The elimination of these duties would greatly accelerate the current efforts to improve worker safety in Bangladesh.

The U.S. and Canadian RMG industries have played a strong role in ongoing efforts to improve worker safety in Bangladesh, supporting and/or participating in the Tri-Partite National Action Plan, the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety, the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, and other initiatives. As you know, a major goal of these initiatives is to remediate thousands of Bangladeshi RMG factories so that the workers employed in these factories are safe. It is predicted that these remediation efforts could cost tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of dollars per factory – to improve exits, install fire safe doors, install sprinkler systems, restructure the factory, etc. – to improve the safety of workers.

Regrettably, the current high duties paid on Bangladeshi imports of key safety equipment can make what is already a costly, but very necessary, investment in remediation next to impossible. With duties and other taxes on Fire Doors reaching 61.09% and on Sprinkler Systems reaching 31.07%, not only do these import duties act as a significant deterrent for factories to make necessary investments, but these significant duties also drain away much needed capital from our common goal – improving worker safety.

We applaud the announcement at the recent International Trade Expo on for Building and Fire Safety in Dhaka by your Minister of Commerce, Mr. Tofail Ahmed, that the government supports the elimination of duties on safety equipment. And we ask that your government takes immediate action to eliminate the duties paid on Bangladeshi imports of critical fire and building safety equipment. Making this change will contribute greatly towards improving worker safety in Bangladesh.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Steve Lamar
Executive Vice President
American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA)

Bob Kirke
Executive Director
Canadian Apparel Federation (CAF)

Matt Shay
President & CEO
National Retail Federation (NRF)

Diane J. Brisebois
President and CEO
Retail Council of Canada (RCC)

Sandra L. Kennedy
President
Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA)

Julia K. Hughes
President
U.S. Fashion Industry Association (USFIA)