

# **GAFTT - GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR FAIR TEXTILE TRADE ISTANBUL DECLARATION COALITION PARTNERS**

**More than 90 Trade Groups From 48 Countries Supporting Fair Trade for a Safer World**

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## **Euratex and GAFTT Call for Immediate WTO Action**

July 27, 2004

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND – Representatives of the Global Alliance for Fair Textile Trade (GAFTT) and Euratex representing in total 65 countries, both developing and developed, met in Geneva on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> July to further discuss the crisis in international textile and clothing trade in the run-up to January 1<sup>st</sup> 2005 when all quotas are scheduled to be eliminated and to brief their respective government missions in Geneva.

In this context they welcomed recent initiatives by the Governments of Mauritius and Bangladesh towards the Director General of WTO to address the crisis associated with the pending phase out of quotas. The group also welcomed as an important development the scheduling of a Head of Delegations meeting at the WTO on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004 to address this critical issue.

However, strong concern was expressed over the fact that certain key countries were not invited to the meeting next week. These countries include a number of the largest textile and apparel exporting nations, as well as many countries whose economies are heavily dependent upon this sector for substantial export earnings and employment.

The group called on the Director General of the WTO to ensure that many of these additional countries be involved in the critical discussion of August 3<sup>rd</sup>.

“For Nepal, this is a matter of life or death. This is not a matter of one industry surviving or not but whether our national economy can withstand such a terrible loss. Already, our industry’s exports have fallen by two-thirds in the last year. We have already seen thousands of workers lose their jobs. The WTO must act decisively to preserve our remaining jobs and the promise of fair trade for our workers,” Shaym Kehtani, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Garment Association- Nepal.

Ziya Sukun, Executive Director of the ITKIB Association, a Turkish textile and garment trade association from Istanbul said, “The Euratex and the European collaboration and the strong presence of the Global Textile Alliance in Geneva sends a clear message to WTO. The global textile industry is united stronger than ever around the Istanbul Declaration and in its desire to solve the international crisis of the quota phaseout. It must be solved now or the WTO will have to deal millions of people

losing their jobs, thousands of factories closing down, corporations going bankrupt in dozens of countries on five continents.”

Cass Johnson, President of the National Council of Textile Organizations, stated, “The exclusion from the meeting next week of many countries which are deeply dependent on textile and apparel exports is troubling. The U.S. textile industry exports billions of dollars of textile products to Mexico and the nations of Central America, developing countries that employ hundreds of thousands of textile and apparel workers. None of those countries is invited despite the fact that they are among the world’s largest apparel exporters. For a fair and balanced hearing, we urge that the Heads of Delegation meeting be open to all interested countries.”

Auggie Tantillo, Executive Director of the American Manufacturing Trade Action Coalition (AMTAC), said, “This meeting is a critical first step in moving towards a much needed solution to crisis associated with the quota phase-out. It is time for countries to stand up and be counted. Failure to act now will mean massive job displacement in practically all countries involved in textiles and apparel production, including the United States.”

While restating their commitment to open world markets under conditions of free and fair trade, industry representatives also reaffirmed their grave concern that the final phase-out of quotas would lead rapidly to a situation in which major markets will be dominated by only one country, China. The industry representatives reiterated their call for an emergency meeting of all WTO members in September to prevent the expected massive disruption of global textile and apparel markets and the loss of 30 million jobs worldwide.

*List of countries currently invited to the Heads of Delegation meeting: Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, China, the Dominican Republic, the European Union, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lesotho, Mauritius, Norway, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United States*

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