

Speech Arne Lietz MEP

High Level Conference on Sustainable Supply Chains in the Garment Sector

Charlemagne building - Room De Gasperi
Brussels

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Dear Commissioner,

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I would like to **thank the Commissioner and staff** from DG DEVCO for this initiative and the organisation of this event. I also want to **thank the Netherlands Presidency** of the Council of the EU for pushing this initiative forward and accompanying it with also several conferences or workshops.

The European initiative has already come very far in the multi-stakeholder approach and from regarding the national initiatives, especially the German experience, which I will mention later in my remarks, I know, how hard it is to bring all stakeholders together and to actually find a compromise. This is my first term at the EP, but in my first speech in 2014 I raised that topic of fair textile production and that I would take it up during my term.

Today it is a unique occasion, where all stakeholders at the EU level together with our partners from Pakistan or Bangladesh. And today we all are here for the same reason: This conference shall be a **milestone** of our all common work towards a European Initiative on responsible and sustainable Supply Chains in the Garment Sector, **probably with already concrete steps** towards action.

The eyes of the public are on the topic. Yesterday the **Fashion Revolution** day has again attracted many activities in the social networks. Citizens of Europe and the world are demanding action against the intolerable situations in textile chains. But still **most of the public is still not aware** that human and environmental abuses are

endemic across the fashion and textiles industry. Instead of wearing clothes that could have been made in an exploitative way, fashion should become a force for good.

This is an opportunity for the EU to show its capacity to act and bring about change whilst also contribution to its own **Policy Coherence for Development [PCD]**. Hence, we need to bear in mind, that although the conference is being organised on behalf of DEVCO, the topic is targeting many resorts such as trade, employment or environment. This is also reflected through the **SDG's** and we shall also embed this initiative into the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Union - here especially the Commission and the European Parliament - shall set the frame for the European initiative **together** and anchor Corporate Social Responsibility and Responsible Management of the Supply Chains in Trade Agreements and other bilateral interactions between the EU and partner countries, bearing in mind the ILO-standards and environmental standards.

In the European Garment Initiative we can also take inspiration from national initiatives, like the Dutch initiative or the French initiative, which is unfortunately still stuck in the 2nd chamber. Or we can look at the **German Textilbündnis**, which was initiated by our Minister for Development Cooperation, Mr. Gerd Müller and which I want to briefly mention here as well.

The **German Textile Alliance had its difficulties** at its launch in October 2014; many enterprises did not want to join for different

reasons. It was not until June 2015, where the scope of the Textile Alliance changed from the commitment to reach the goal into the commitment to pursue the goal. It is probably less than the Minister expected at the beginning, but it helped to bring enterprises to the negotiation table.

Now, every enterprise joining the Alliance has to elaborate a **Road Map** with steps towards a responsible supply chain in their production. Once, they cannot explain, why they cannot follow their Road Map, they can be sanctioned. But the aim is more to **encourage and facilitate** the measures of the enterprises, which have committed themselves to track and improve their supply chains.

By the end of 2016 the Road Maps shall be ready and the stakeholder will review them periodically by independent expert groups. What is useful and notable, is that **already existing standards will be used** for the review and that all stakeholders - which means also Trade Unions amongst others - have to be involved in this process, so also elaborate their Road Maps.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me now mention **5 political priorities** that I as a parliamentarian and Member of the Development committee see as crucial:

1. The Supply Chain has to start already in the **cotton production**. Cotton farmers are the often-forgotten actors in the fashion and textile supply chains. This Garment Initiative should support the EU in putting in place an **action plan** that ensures fair and transparent fashion and supply chains - from **farmer to consumer**. The recently launched Fairtrade Textile Standard demonstrates

that this *is* possible. We need to see more support for initiatives like this.

2. **More transparency** is needed across the fashion industry, from seed to waste.
3. Due diligence and **binding rules** on the clothes, before they reach the EU-sector. It is a very ambitious goal, nevertheless we should aim that high. Companies selling textiles should be asked do a risk assessment and risk management of the social and environmental impact of their entire supply chains, from farmer to consumer.
4. Practically we can start thinking about changing the **public procurement** towards sustainable and fair requirements. Through the implementation of the new 'EU City for Fair and Ethical Trade' award' (foreseen in the new EU "Trade for All" strategy) the Commission should promote the exchange of good practice among **local authorities** on how to use public procurement to increase demand for textiles made with Fair Trade cotton. The Commission could help support the creation of an EU-wide Fair Textiles procurement network.
5. There is also need to help make **offer meet demand**: We need to make it easier for EU citizens - who want to buy ethical fashion - to find it. Also small businesses, that want to source from ethical and fair producers and garment manufacturers, shall be supported in finding their counterparts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

last but not least, the role of the European Parliament:

From the **Parliament's side** we are very much interested in supporting the initiative by holding **public events** like workshops, discussions or maybe a Fair Trade Fashion show in the Parliament's premises. We can also support the Commission by **bringing together stakeholders** on the ground of the EP and **communicate the initiative into delegations** /MEP's from all Member States.

Concretely, there is an **exchange of views planned** in the DEVE Committee (*von DEVE Sekretariat bestätigt*) at the end of May, where I would like **to invite the Commission to participate** and which will be very fruitful for the discussion between the MEPs and delegations.

We have to learn and understand the analysis and mapping to write and discuss possible roadmaps of how to go from here, including an online tool for supply chains.

But we can also try to be a leading example by reviewing **our own procurement** regarding textile and first of all be a leading example in **individually** choosing our own clothes with a responsible supply chain.

Thank you very much and I am very much looking forward to the discussion during this conference.