

## Press Release

For immediate release  
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PHNOM PENH, Cambodia – The International Labour Organization's (ILO) Better Factories Cambodia (BFC) programme has convened a meeting of the key international brands sourcing from the Kingdom's garment industry which has resulted in them jointly supporting a comprehensive investigation into the recent group faintings within garment factories.

More than 24 international clothing brands attending the annual *Better Factories Cambodia Buyers' Forum* in Phnom Penh this week expressed the need for immediate action on behalf of the welfare of workers. They pledged a collaborative commitment to support and provide resources for comprehensive technical research including international expertise to determine the precise causes of the incidences of fainting among factory workers.

This new research will work in conjunction with numerous concentrated efforts already underway to examine recent group faintings and to prevent future incidents. Cambodia currently has just under 300 exporting factories, of these there have been in the region of ten reported fainting incidents in 2011 to date. The Royal Government of Cambodia has created an inter-ministerial government task force encompassing the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Health to address any future incidents. BFC has given this taskforce a series of inputs in order to assist their work.

In addition, international retailer H&M with the assistance of BFC has launched an investigation into two of its supplying factories where faintings occurred. Following the investigation's conclusions, BFC will work with the factories on an improvement plan. These efforts work in conjunction with other ongoing BFC initiatives to strengthen the garment industry and workers' wellbeing including the improving of factory health clinics, social protection and training workers in terms of health, hygiene, nutrition and life skills.

Chief Technical Advisor of Better Factories Cambodia, Tuomo Poutiainen said: "BFC welcomes the commitment from brands for a new joint initiative. More research is urgently needed to identify possible new causes that will explain the fainting phenomenon, as well as eliminate ones we know about, in areas such as occupational safety, health and nutrition. BFC will ensure all stakeholders are involved and any necessary action is expedited. We will continue to monitor individual factories and to investigate every reported fainting. Additionally we will support the Royal Government of Cambodia in the enforcement of existing labour related laws and in the creation of any new prakas in this area."

He continued: "Providing a safe work environment for employees is a vital duty of all employers. Although the compliance level of the vast majority of the garment factories is generally high we as BFC are working with employers, unions, government and buyers towards strong and effective management systems. These are the only way to ensure that at the workplace, the workers and employers operate in a safe and productive environment."

The recent faintings in Cambodia's garment and footwear factories were just one of the prominent issues discussed by industry stakeholders at the annual *Better Factories Cambodia Buyers' Forum*, held in Phnom Penh this week. The forum also gave attention to areas including the potential environmental development of the industry, social protection and the sustainable development of the industry. Participants included officials from the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, the Garment Manufacturers' Association, Trade Unions and representatives from



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international brands

As part of the Better Factories Cambodia programme, now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year of operations, among other things the ILO monitors a comprehensive range of occupational, safety and health areas with all registered garment export factories in Cambodia. Monitoring is based on the Cambodian Labour Law and international labour standards.

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