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Mr. Rajiuddin Ahmed Raju
Minister for Labour and Employment
Ministry of Labour and Employment
Dhaka, Bangladesh

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HTUR/JSV

9 May 2013

Reform of the Bangladesh Labour Act of 2006

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), I extend our deepest condolences with regard to the tragic loss of life that resulted from the collapse of the Rana Plaza building. This tragedy has deeply moved people around the world and may hopefully serve as the catalyst to bring about meaningful reforms in the garment sector of Bangladesh.

I am writing to you, as I did your predecessor last year, about the government's initiative to amend the Labour Act of 2006. At the time, I had urged the government to heed the numerous observations of the ILO Committee of Experts with regard to the right to freedom of association, to organize and to bargain collectively, as well as the views of the trade unions, in developing the amendments. I also urged the government not to stop with the Labour Act of 2006 but also to amend the EPZ Workers Welfare Society and Industrial Relations Act (EWSIRA), which applies to the tens of thousands of workers in the country's export processing zones.

I am deeply concerned to learn that the proposed amendments, which were recently passed by the cabinet, do not address the vast majority of concerns raised by the ILO Committee of Experts with regard to Conventions 87 and 98 nor address the priority amendments put forward by the trade unions. This is unacceptable. Beyond that, failure to adopt legislation that guarantees the exercise of international labour rights will not bring the industrial peace and stability to the country which is necessary for its economic and social development.

I urge the government to use this opportunity to address the several observations of the ILO Committee of Experts. Doing so would help to restore much-needed confidence that is now lacking after so many workplace tragedies in the country.

A delegation from the ITUC plans to be in Dhaka later this month. We hope to meet with you at that time and share with you what we believe are the necessary amendments to the Labour Act of 2006.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. B.' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

General Secretary

cc:

Guy Ryder, Director General
International Labour Organization

Mr Baki Srinivasa Reddy, Director
ILO Bangladesh Country Office