



***Protecting and respecting human rights in the garment and apparel sector in Asia***

*Parallel session – Tuesday 19 April, 14:30-16:00*

Textile manufacturing as part of global supply chains has been a key feature of Asia's rapid growth and generated millions of jobs and economic opportunities. Yet factory disasters in South and South East Asia in recent years have put into stark relief the human rights challenges in the industry. Beyond the most drastic examples other fundamental challenges remain endemic: payment below the living wage, excessive overtime hours, workplace abuse and gender discrimination, repression of trade unions, unsafe working conditions, and forced and child labour in the cotton fields supplying the raw materials. Abuse of vulnerable migrant workers and refugees is another troubling trend.

Many companies have taken action to address these challenges, but others are failing to meet the corporate responsibility to respect human rights set out in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. As part of the broader picture, governance gaps and certain business practices (just-in-time sourcing, short deadlines and cost-reduction pressures) represent systemic challenges.

With the traditional audit model under criticism, what approaches can most effectively ensure progress in protection of and respect for human rights in the textile manufacturing sector, whether supplying for global or domestic markets? The session will address this issue by exploring questions such as:

1. What obstacles do workers face and **what empowerment strategies are most effective?**
2. **What does effective human rights due diligence look like** for a company with complex supply chains?
3. **What lessons can SMEs and local producers learn from?**
4. **How can company leverage be strengthened** to address human rights abuse?
5. What role can companies play in **engaging governments to address regulatory gaps?**
6. **What are governments doing to address the gaps?**

***Multi-stakeholder panel followed by discussion with the audience:***

- *Linda Kromjong, Secretary General, International Organisation of Employers (moderator)*
- *Nazma Akter, President of Sommilito Garments Sramik Federation (SGSF, Bangladesh)*
- *William Anderson, Vice President, Social & Environmental Affairs, Asia Pacific, adidas Group*
- *Xiaohui Liang, Chief Researcher and Deputy Director, Office for Social Responsibility, China National Textile and Apparel Council (CNTAC)*
- *Phil Fishman, Senior Technical Advisor, Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch, ILO*