

## STEERING COMMITTEE QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES

International Accord Steering Committee Meeting

Date: 11 September 2025 and 12 September 2025

Time: 9:00 – 18:00 (GMT+1) and 9:00 – 12:00 (GMT+1)

Location: Arup, 50 Ringsend Rd, Dublin, D04 T6X0, Ireland

### ATTENDEES:

**Chair:** Dan Rees

**Signatory Company representatives:** Jochen Overmeyer, Felicity Tapsell, Michael Bride, Michelle Tarry, Michael Reidick, Indalecio Perez

**Trade Union signatory representatives:** Alke Boessiger (online), Christina Hajagos-Clausen, Atle Høie

**Witness signatories:** Ineke Zeldenrust, Scott Nova

**International Accord Secretariat:** Joris Oldenzel, Véronique Camerer, Koen Oosterom, Colm Quinn, Solène Técourt (minutes)

**Pakistan Accord Secretariat :** Paul Rigby, Zulfiqar Shah (online), Kirsty Drew

**Apologies:** Amirul Haque Amin, Anam Kamrul, Mathias Bolton, Jorge Alonso Campo

## MINUTES

### INTRODUCTION

i. **Agreement on meeting agenda**

The SC agreed to the agenda.

ii. **Review and Approval SC Meeting Actions**

**International Accord, the Secretariat:**

- Carried out further surveys and desktop research on the potential expansion countries.
- Was unable to apply to the RVO funding due to a lack of decision on the expansion of the complaints mechanism in Bangladesh beyond OSH.
- Has an opportunity to apply for funding with the Lloyd's Register Foundation.

**Pakistan Accord, the Secretariat**

- Is prioritising the initial inspections of factories that are on the factory list of signatories for which no factories have been inspected.
- Produced a report to the SC on the estimated resources needed to expand the complaints mechanism beyond OSH, and analysed complaints the mechanism received thus far.
- The Secretariat has been conducting regular sessions with trade unions and NGOs to update them receive feedback. The last meeting was held online in January 2025 and the next meeting will be held in person in October 2025.

**Bangladesh Safety Agreement**

- The Secretariat updated the alternatives to the current RSC governance model, as requested in the May 2025 SC meeting and subsequent SC discussions.
- Developed a communications plan on the Remediation Progress Rate Disclosure.
- The expansion of the complaints mechanism in Bangladesh beyond OSH has not taken place. Therefore, the Secretariat: 1) is unable to present a detailed report on the experience in Bangladesh to support decision-making on the expansion of the complaints mechanism beyond OSH in Pakistan. 2) is unable to support the SC in developing success criteria to evaluate the success of the complaints mechanism's expansion.
- The Secretariat and the RSC updated the Boiler KPIs and the Escalations KPIs
- A paper on the potential expansion of the scope of the Accord beyond CMT is on hold.

## **INTERNATIONAL ACCORD**

### **i. BUDGET & FINANCE**

- **2025 Quarterly Accounts (Jan-Jun) - Paper 1**  
Update: Expenditure and results (IA, BD, PK)
- **Proposal on 2026 IA and CSSP Fees – Paper 2**  
Decision: Approval

The Secretariat presented the quarterly accounts for Jan-Jun 2025 and the forecast of the budget for 2026 made by the Finance Committee. The forecast leads to a proposed a 5% fee increase for the International Accord, a 10% fee increase for the Pakistan Accord, and a 50% fee decrease for the Bangladesh Safety Agreement. The 2026 budget forecast is essential for the Secretariat to determine signatory fees and inform signatories in a timely manner for the Accord to be considered into signatories' budget lines.

Jochen: There was an RSC EC meeting on 4-Sep-25 which the unions did not attend. The RSC EC agreed to a provisional budget for 2025-2026 and reserves the right to amend the budget later. Industry proposed an external audit of the RSC's use of resources and efficiencies.

Alke: Trade unions agree to the provisional budget and do not agree with an audit of the RSC.

Ineke: The estimated expenditures for the Bangladesh program do not take into consideration the budget needed for the implementation of key aspects of the program such as the expansion of the complaints mechanism beyond OSH, the inclusion of non-CMT facilities, or the needs to expedite implementation of the boiler program.

Christina: Requests that the surplus is allocated to follow-up inspection capacity in Bangladesh, to close the gap between items that are marked Pending Verification and items that are Corrected.

Michael Reidick:

- The Accord SC needs to consider the in reserve by the end of the Bangladesh Safety Agreement. A decrease of 50% in fees means the agreement will end with a reserve that should be enough to finance the points raised by Ineke and Christina.
- The decrease in fees for Bangladesh should be of at least 50%. Wishes to discuss this further with the Finance Committee.
- Argues against the funds only coming from the Accord to increase inspection capacity in Bangladesh, this should be split with industry like the rest of the RSC budget
- Proposes for the invoicing for Bangladesh to only take place in July 2026.
- We should request the 500,000 USD to be transferred from the RSC back to the International Accord account (deducted from upcoming fund transfer requests)

Joris: Raises concern over decreasing the fees too drastically, as this will cause difficulties in raising the fees if needed later. Warns against a potential incentive to not expand the complaints mechanism beyond OSH if that would mean the fees would need be increased again.

Michael Bride:

- The 25% fee discount that was given to signatories for 2025 was positively received and showed signatories that industry is stepping up in Bangladesh.
- The Accord should give an indication to its signatories that a third CSSP will be added in 2026 and communicate that it is lowering fees in Bangladesh so that signatories can allocate funds to the development of the third CSSP.

SC Decision:

- SC agrees in principle to a 50% fee reduction for Bangladesh, 10% fee increase in Pakistan and 5% fee increase for the International Accord. The Finance Committee to finalise and circulate a budget

that includes the expansion of the complaints mechanism beyond OSH, increase in follow-up inspection capacity, and other key aspects of the program.

- The 500,000 USD reserve currently at the RSC to be deducted from upcoming fund transfer requests so that this reserve will be kept with International Accord bank account.
- Secretariat to draft communications on the fees.

- **Bangladesh CSSP: Status RSC Direct Supplier Invoicing - Paper 3 Update**

The RSC has collected funds on behalf of Shondhi by directly invoicing suppliers. These funds are going into a collection account which requires the signatures of RSC Management and BGMEA to be released.

- **Donor Funding**

Decision: Arup's Lloyd's Register Foundation Application in partnership with Accord

The Lloyd's Register Foundation has a grant to fund engineering-led research on improving the safety of people, property and the environment. Arup proposes to partner together with the Accord to identify safety measures through the collection of data on safety hazards the Accord and the RSC have done, and determine what an enabling systemic environment would be.

Indalecio: Requests Secretariat to be mindful of who owns the data and make sure to get their buy-in before using the data.

Michelle: Good opportunity to quantify the successes of the Accord. The findings be added to our communications strategy and made available to a wider audience.

Christina: Requests a ToR for the project that the SC can comment on before moving forward with the application once the Expression of Interest is approved.

Scott: This is important work that we should commit to doing regardless of the outcome of the application.

Ineke: Informs the SC for transparency sake that CCC is also sending in an application to this donor.

**SC Decision:**

- Secretariat to partner with Arup and submit an Expression of Interest.
- Secretariat to draft a ToR if the Expression of Interest is approved for the SC to comment on.

**ii. GOVERNANCE**

- **Dispute Resolution Process**

Update: Establishment of an expert working group to develop a roster of arbitrators/mediators

As per section 14 of the Dispute Resolution Process, the Secretariat is to constitute an expert working group composed of mediation and arbitration specialists. To do so, the Secretariat requests the nomination of two SC members to brainstorm the way forward for the establishment of the working group.

**SC Action:** Communicate to the Secretariat the nomination of one trade union and one brand representative.

**iii. SIGNATORY ENGAGEMENT**

- **Regional Cluster Meeting Schedule and SC Participation**

Update

The Secretariat presented an overview of upcoming in person and online meetings related to signatory engagement:

- Early October: 7 online Regional Brand Cluster Meetings.

- 23-Oct-25: in person meeting with local brand representatives in Lahore, Pakistan. Focus on practical discussion about the Pakistan Accord implementation.
- 29-Oct-25: in person meeting with local brand representatives in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Focus on practical discussion about the Bangladesh Safety Agreement implementation.

- **Signatory letters to SC (Otto Group, LPP)**

Decision: LPP Request for reduction of fees; request from Otto Group, Aldi North and South for release of responsibility.

LPP requested a 70% discount of their signatory fee. The Secretariat submitted the request to the SC for decision.

Following Section 6(a) of the Factory Disclosure Protocol, the Secretariat submitted the evidence provided by Otto Group, Aldi North & Aldi South for its request of responsibility for a factory on their factory list. As per the same, the SC must appoint two SC members to assess the evidence and provide a response.

**SC Decision:**

- LPP's fee reduction request is denied.
- Michael Reidick and Mathias Bolton appointed as the two SC members to decide on Otto Group, Aldi North and Aldi South's requests to be released of responsibility.

**iv. EXPANSION**

- **Expansion of Complaints Mechanism Beyond OSH**

Updates: Status of Expansion beyond OSH in Bangladesh  
Expansion beyond OSH in Pakistan (report on resource needs)

**Bangladesh**

Jochen: The RSC BoD has not had an in-person meeting since before summer 2024. Therefore, no decision has been taken at the RSC level regarding the expansion of the complaints mechanism beyond OSH. This could be added as an agenda point to the next RSC BoD.

Christina: Agrees to add this as an agenda point at the next RSC BoD.

**Pakistan**

The Secretariat reported that 138 complaints have been received by the Pakistan Accord thus far, 71% OSH and 29% non-OSH. This is similar to the trend noticed in Bangladesh, where at the beginning of the complaints mechanism most complaints were OSH and an increasing percentage of non-OSH complaints were received as the mechanism established itself. Non-OSH complaints received relate to the non-payment of overtime hours at the overtime rate, unpaid wages, and problematic contracting practices (illegal contracts, forced resignation, unfair dismissal, illegal termination). The Secretariat mentioned a specific issue of wage arrears, specifically regarding delays between the date of a wage increase and the date at which the factory pays the wage increase. Another common non-OSH issues in the textile and garment sector in Pakistan are illegal employment contracts (40-60% of the workforce), an inability of workers to register for social security benefits and pension due to these illegal contracts, and retaliation for / interference with trade union activities. The Secretariat summarised the argument in favour of expanding the complaints mechanism beyond OSH and presented a proposed budget which would cover the costs of expansion of the mechanism.

Indalecio: Are topics being covered in the complaints mechanism such as heat stress also being tackled in the other aspects of the program?

Paul: The Secretariat has submitted a proposal to cover heat stress under the inspections and remediation program and is looking at specialised consultancies for further support.

**SC Action:**

- Expansion of the complaints mechanism beyond OSH to be on the agenda of next RSC BoD.
- Expansion of the Pakistan Accord complaints mechanism beyond OSH to be discussed as part of the negotiations for the next Pakistan Accord.

- **Expansion to other Countries**

Updates: Status expansion criteria in Pakistan

Brand Survey results

Feasibility Study Reports - Morocco, India, Cambodia – Papers 4, 5 and 6

Decision: Process/Planning Expansion Decision-making

The Secretariat estimates that the expansion criteria are met at the end of Q1 2026. The outstanding targets to be met are the Pakistan Accord Secretariat operating at full capacity (expected November 2025) and a 50% verified remediation rate at 10% (48) of covered factories, to be expected at the end of Q1 2026.

208 signatory companies responded to the brand survey. Of the respondents, 139 (67%) source from India, 71 (34%) source from Cambodia, 32 (15%) source from Morocco, and 55 (26%) do not source from either of the three countries. The surveyed brands indicated preference for expansion to Tamil Nadu, followed by Delhi NCR, Cambodia, Karnataka, and Morocco.

The Secretariat presented the findings from the feasibility studies of Cambodia, India, and Morocco.

Jochen:

- Proposes to move forward with Cambodia.
- Requests Secretariat to present the choice to brands at the regional cluster meetings: if this country is expanded to, how many brands would sign the Agreement?

Christina:

- Top choice for the unions is to expand to Morocco.
- Engagement on an Accord program has been taking place with the governments of Cambodia and Morocco.

Michelle:

- Expanding to Cambodia would solidify the Accord as a global program.

Scott:

- Idea to establish a working group on keeping the essential elements of the Accord and to operate in India.

Indalecio:

- Any decision on expansion should include a proposed budget for signatory brands to be able to make informed decisions.
- If we do not expand to India, we should communicate to the brands why their top 1 and 2 choices have not been selected for expansion.

Michael Bride: A working group on India does not mean the SC has chosen India to be the country that is expanded to after Cambodia/Morocco.

Atle: Morocco is the preferred expansion country for the unions. There are significant health and safety risks to workers, we know the labour inspectorate. We want Morocco but are open to consider Cambodia if heat stress and commuting are included in the scope.

**SC Decision:**

- Present Cambodia as preferred next country for expansion at the regional cluster meetings and ask brands whether they would intend signing a Cambodian Accord. The Cambodia Accord will in principle include heat stress and commuting safety as part of the inspections and remediation.

- Set up a working group to explore the viability of an Accord program in India, after a Cambodia Accord is agreed

**PAKISTAN ACCORD**

**i. OPERATIONS**

- **Pakistan Accord Implementation**  
Update: Status Phased Implementation Plan  
 Inspections & Remediation  
 Status of Inspections by Brand  
 Workplace Programs

With the exception of establishing a Supplier Forum, similar to the Labour Forum, the implementation of the Pakistan Accord is in phase 4.

- 276 factories with an initial Structural, Fire and Electrical inspection
- 58 external boiler inspections
- 15 factories have had a Structural, Fire and Electrical follow-up inspection
- 74 factories' inspection reports have been published

Michael Reidick:

- When will 400 factories have received their initial inspection?
- Why is there a gap between the initial inspections that have been carried out and the number of published reports?
- Boiler inspections were started later and are not taking place at the same time as the initial inspection of other scopes.

Scott:

- How many engineers does the boiler engineering department comprise?
- Has the Pakistan Accord had success in prioritising boiler inspections based on risk assessment?

Colm:

- We project 400 factories will have received an initial inspection by March 2026.
- There was a backlog in inspection reports, which has now been cleared.

Jochen: What has the attitude of the Chief of Boilers been towards the Pakistan Accord?

Christina: What are we doing to build the capacity of suppliers to remediate the findings?

Paul:

- The gap in inspection reports and published reports relates to the process of reformatting the CAPs. Once the CAPs have been reformatted, we will be able to publish the reports.
- Boiler inspections are the most hazardous inspections conducted by Accord engineers. The first inspection of a boiler requires three engineers, with one engineer's role being to monitor the safety of their colleague. The boiler program took time to set up as we dedicated months to training the engineers. Any boiler inspection takes two days and not all boilers of a factory can be done in one day. To be ready for inspection, a boiler needs to be shut down for 24 hours, descaled, and checked for carbon monoxide. Unfortunately, we sometimes arrive at a factory and this has not been done, which causes delays in our inspections.
- The boiler department currently has ten engineers, with two more currently being hired. This means there will be four boiler engineering teams.
- The Pakistan Accord has focused on safety practices and team development and will look into prioritising boiler inspections. With the current resources, it will take ten years to inspect the boilers covered by the Pakistan Accord.
- The Chief of Boilers has been welcoming and cooperative.

- Due to resource constraints, the development of the engineering helpdesk and materials to support suppliers has been outsourced to consultant Tim White.

The Secretariat provided an update on the implementations of the Pakistan Accord Workplace Programs:

- 227 factories received an initial meeting
- 418 AEM sessions took place at 91 factories
- 98,488 workers have been present at the AEMs (11% female workers)
- 225 factories have had the complaints number distributed in their premises
- 149 complaints have been received

Ineke: The low percentage of female workers could mean that unregistered workers are not present at the AEM.

Kirsty:

- Agrees with Ineke. Highlights issue of not being able to reach night shift workers due to the time at which the AEMs are held.
- Raises difficulties in conducting unannounced inspections to investigate complaints. Factories are not allowing the team in the premises.

**SC Decision:** Secretariat to prepare communication to the brands on the necessity to support and communicate to the suppliers that the Accord is mandated to do investigations for complaints, which includes unannounced inspections.

- **Salient OSH Risks**

Update: Implementation re: Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT)

Decision: Heat Stress - Suggestions for Pakistan Accord 2.0 – Paper 7

The Secretariat will begin the implementation of its HAZMAT policy on 3-Nov-25. This policy focuses on easy methods factories can put in place to ensure worker safety regarding hazardous materials and will be easy to train Pakistan Accord engineers on. The policy is aligned with international norms currently in place.

Michael Reidick: Requests the Pakistan Accord to see whether HAZMAT policy aligns with CASCALE's policy.

Scott: The Pakistan Accord should also be looking at the risks of hazardous chemical inhalation.

Veronique: The Secretariat received a letter from Human Rights international requesting the inclusion of heat stress to the Accord's scope. Heat stress is currently covered under complaints, but including it in the inspection and remediation scope of the program would allow for it to be tackled systemically.

Michael Bride: Including heat stress in the Accord scope would be a value added.

**Secretariat Action:** Paul to check alignment of HAZMAT and CASCALE.

**SC Decision:** Inclusion of heat stress to be discussed at the negotiations for the next Pakistan Accord.<sup>1</sup>

- **Accord Implementation of Fabric Mills**

Update: Initially piloted inspections

All initial inspections scheduled with non-integrated fabric mills are moving forward with no pushback.

- **Stakeholder & Supplier engagement**

Update: Brand-Supplier Roundtable/Stakeholder Engagement

<sup>1</sup> On 12-Sep-25, at the negotiations for the renewal of the Pakistan Accord, the SC found that heat stress is already within the scope of the Accord including for inspections and remediation and agreed for the Secretariat and Technical Committee to develop a Protocol on heat stress for the matter to be tackled on a systematic and preventive basis.

The Accord has organized a brand-supplier roundtable in Lahore on 23-Oct-25. A Labour Forum meeting is being organized on 24<sup>th</sup> October.

**BANGLADESH SAFETY AGREEMENT**

**i. OPERATIONS**

- **Bangladesh Safety Agreement Implementation**  
 Escalation KPIs - Paper 8  
 Boiler KPI Report - Paper 9

There has been a modification of the Boiler KPIs: an indicator has been added to show new boilers that have been identified after the over 2000 boilers initially indicated. “Small boilers” have also been added following an incident where a small boiler, which did not qualify as a boiler under Bangladeshi regulations, exploded and injured a worker.

**Secretariat Action:**

- Circulate an executive summary on the Escalation KPIs.
- Check the water capacity definition of “small” boilers with the RSC.
- **Remediation Progress Rate Disclosure – Paper 10**  
Update: Communications Plan

The first new progress rate report from 1-Jul-25 will be published by the end of September 2025. The Secretariat will develop communications to inform signatories about the rationale behind the change in remediation progress rate disclosure. In February 2026, the Secretariat will organise tailored outreach to signatories with brand-specific progress rate information, with the objective of encouraging brands to re-sign the BSA. After June 2026, we expect brand specific progress rate information to be available on the Signatory Portal of Salesforce. Factory-specific progress rate information will be made available on the Accord website.

Michelle: Context for the brand performance report that explains what the high risks are for a particular brand’s factory base would be useful.

Michael Bride: Slicing data shows where the anomalies in the supply chain lie. Could the Secretariat provide guidance for brands on how to slice data so they can access this information themselves?

Christina: Reiterates wish to use reserve budget to increase follow-up inspections to close the gap between the percentage of items pending verification and the percentage of items verified as corrected.

Felicity: Industry has raised concerns about delays in factories receiving follow-up inspections. We need to determine whether more engineers are needed to get more inspections done. Industry believes that there are sufficient engineers for there to not be inspection delays.

Michael Bride:

- Wishes to ask the RSC MD where he believes the bottleneck in follow-up inspections comes from and what his solution to fix it would be.

**ii. GOVERNANCE**

- **Status of Review of RSC Governance**  
Decision: Strategy moving forward

Jochen:

- There is no legal relationship between the International Accord and the RSC, as there is no agreement that says the RSC implements the Accord in Bangladesh. The conversation on RSC governance has no place in this forum and should be taking place at the RSC BoD.

Joris: The International Accord has a Cooperation and Financing agreement with the RSC, that outlines the signatories’ commitment to continue the health and safety program in Bangladesh through the RSC. If

signatories wish to expand the scope of the complaints mechanism beyond OSH, this becomes part of their commitments under the BSA. If the RSC does not implement the expansion of the scope of the complaints mechanism beyond OSH, the International Accord SC will need to find alternative ways to implement the BSA.

Veronique: The BSA Preamble provides that “the inspections and remediation program, safety committee and safety training program, safety complaints mechanism, and reporting and disclosure requirements of the Accord are implemented and carried forward in Bangladesh through the RSC.”

Michelle:

- There is a governance structure at the RSC that has not been used to its full potential. As the International Accord SC, we can express dissatisfaction but cannot decide to unilaterally change the RSC Governance structure.
- It is within the scope of this forum to understand how well the RSC is working and whether they are implementing the Accord appropriately.

Scott: The Accord has the obligation to ensure the RSC operates in a manner that allows signatories to fulfil their obligations.

Atle: The International Accord SC is responsible for the Accord’s implementation. If we use the RSC as an instrument to implement the Agreement and the RSC does not do it, we either enforce a change in the RSC or we withdraw our support for the RSC.

Ineke: We have had this discussion in October 2024 and in February 2025. We agreed as an SC that this should be discussed with industry, and this matter has still not been discussed with industry despite several attempts having been made.

Michael Bride:

- Brands acknowledge the points that have been made.
- Proposal from the brands is to request Abdul to call an RSC BoD meeting on 20-Oct-25. The International Accord SC should align on what the agenda will be and send the agenda in advance of the RSC BoD meeting. Proposed agenda: 1) expansion of the scope of the complaints mechanism beyond OSH, 2) allegations of undue influence and interference, 3) non-disclosure of potential conflict of interest.
- Agreement that if the RSC BoD does not lead to meaningful, timebound progress on the issues identified, the matter will be brought back to the International Accord SC for a discussion on clear next steps.

Alke: We will need to determine what we consider to be meaningful and timebound progress.

Scott: Requests the addition of the RSC governance structure to the RSC BoD agenda.

**AOB**

- **Reporting**

Michael Reidick: Requests the Secretariat to review the number of reports being produced and evaluate which ones are necessary and which ones could be discontinued or shortened.

Michael Bride: Requests the Secretariat to develop a positive communications strategy to promote the Accord and the Accord’s work.

**NEXT SC MEETING**

Secretariat to send a doodle to determine dates and times for 2 SC meetings by the end of 2026.

**END OF MEETING**