

# Seminar Summary

## Moving the needle #11 The Future of the Asian Textile & Apparel Industry

Asian Dialogue on Sustainability in the  
Textile and Garment Industry Series

October 2022



# Webinar Summary

The webinar explored how **supply chain disruptions, sustainability pressures, and shifting market dynamics** are reshaping the industry.

## Discussion topics:

- **Industry recovery:** How has the sector adapted post-pandemic?
- **Supply chain trends:** The shift towards resilience, regionalisation, and digitalisation.
- **Future scenarios:** Will the industry repeat past practices, regain stability, or renegotiate the rules?
- **Labour rights & governance:** The role of unions, living wages, and due diligence laws.
- **Sustainability & competitiveness:** How brands and suppliers are responding to evolving expectations.

# Speakers

**David Williams** – International Labour Organization (ILO)

**David Birnbaum** – Founder, Third Horizon Limited

**Kong Athit** – President, CCAWDU, Cambodia

# Webinar key takeaways

- **The industry is at a crossroads:** Stakeholders must choose between returning to business as usual or embracing transformation.
- **Supply chains are shifting:** Regionalisation, digitalisation, and sustainability are driving new sourcing models.
- **Labour rights & governance matter:** Stronger unions, living wages, and mandatory due diligence laws are reshaping industry standards.
- **Sustainability is no longer optional:** Consumer expectations, regulatory changes, and climate risks demand urgent action.
- **Innovation will define the future:** Factories and brands that invest in new business models, technology, and collaboration will lead the next era of the industry.

# Industry context & challenges

- **Post-pandemic market shifts:** Supply chain disruptions, demand fluctuations, and sourcing strategy changes impact industry stability.
- **Sustainability & regulation:** Rising pressure for lower emissions, waste reduction, and compliance with due diligence laws.
- **Labour rights concerns:** Wage stagnation, lack of social protections, and resistance to collective bargaining persist.
- **Tech disruption & competitiveness:** Automation and digitalisation reshape production, demanding faster lead times and transparency.
- **Shifting sourcing strategies:** Nearshoring and regionalisation challenge Asia's dominance in apparel exports.

## Future scenarios for the industry

- **Repeat:** Business as usual, with pre-pandemic supply chain structures, buyer-supplier dynamics, and minimal reforms.
- **Regain:** Acceleration of existing trends, with some suppliers innovating and strengthening resilience while others struggle.
- **Renegotiate:** A transformative shift towards fairer power distribution, stronger worker protections, and sustainable business models.
- **Regionalisation & nearshoring:** Brands diversify sourcing, reducing reliance on Asian manufacturing hubs.
- **Automation & digitalisation:** Increased investment in tech-driven efficiency and supply chain transparency.

# Calls-to-action

## For brands & retailers:

Transform your sourcing strategies:

- **Invest in supplier relationships:** Move beyond cost-cutting to long-term, sustainable partnerships.
- **Implement responsible purchasing practices:** Commit to fair payment terms, realistic lead times, and ethical sourcing.
- **Embrace supply chain transparency:** Improve traceability and disclose sourcing data to build trust with consumers.
- **Support fair wages & worker protections:** Work with suppliers who prioritise living wages and safe working conditions.
- **Adopt circularity & innovation:** Reduce waste by integrating circular fashion models and innovative production methods.

# Calls-to-action

## For suppliers & manufacturers:

Strengthen your competitive edge:

- **Embrace digitalisation & automation:** Invest in tech solutions that enhance efficiency, quality, and flexibility.
- **Diversify market reach:** Explore regional and alternative markets to reduce dependency on single-country exports.
- **Build ethical & sustainable operations:** Implement strong worker protections, reduce environmental impact, and align with sustainability goals.
- **Enhance productivity & workforce skills:** Train employees in emerging technologies and ethical production standards.
- **Engage in Industry collaboration:** Work with trade unions, brands, and policymakers to shape a fairer, more resilient industry.

# Calls-to-action

## For policymakers & industry regulators:

Shape a sustainable & inclusive industry:

- **Strengthen labour protections:** Enforce fair wages, safe working conditions, and the right to unionise.
- **Enforce due diligence & transparency:** Ensure brands comply with ethical sourcing laws and take accountability for supply chain impacts.
- **Support sustainable investment & innovation:** Provide incentives for suppliers adopting low-impact production methods.
- **Facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration:** Create platforms where brands, suppliers, and workers can co-develop solutions.
- **Promote regional trade & market growth:** Support intra-Asia trade to boost regional resilience and reduce reliance on Western markets.

## **About the Asian Dialogue Series**

The “Asian Dialogues on Sustainability in the Textile and Garment Industry” series was initiated to foster collaboration and strengthen regional knowledge exchange for greater social, environmental and economic sustainability in the sector. Launched in 2015, the series aimed to cultivate regional, sector-specific dialogue and promote cooperation between actors from across the supply chain.

## About Asia Garment Hub

The Asia Garment Hub is a digital one-stop shop tailored to the garment and textiles sector in Asia, viewed through a lens of Decent Work and Sustainability.

### Join the AGH Circle

The AGH Circle is a dedicated discussion forum - where you can network and engage with industry professionals in discussions on decent work and environmental sustainability for free.

Join the Asia Garment Hub Circle today. Click [\*\*HERE\*\*](#) to register.

