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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE)
International Organizations (IO)-2
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Subject: Minutes of the 3rd Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting of the "Promoting Social Dialogue and Harmonious Industrial Relations in Bangladesh Ready-Made Garment Industry (SDIR)" Project.

1. The third Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting of the "Promoting Social Dialogue and Harmonious Industrial Relations in Bangladesh Ready-Made Garment Industry (SDIR)" Project was held on 16 February 2020 in the conference room of Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE). Mr. K M Ali Azam, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) chaired the meeting. A list of participants present in the meeting is attached (Annex A).
2. The meeting started with the welcome note from the Chair. Being requested by the Chair, Deputy Chief, Labour, Ministry of Labour and Employment presented the agenda of the meeting. Thereafter he proposed for adoption of the minutes of the 2nd PAC meeting if no modifications were required. After unanimous adoption of the minutes, SDIR Project representative was requested to present the implementation status of the last meeting's decision. The representative of ILO mentioned that he had a presentation on the SDIR project which would cover the implementation status of the decisions. With permission of Chair, he presented the progress and work plan of the project.
3. During the presentation of project updates, participants provided their inputs regarding the conciliators from the Department of Labour (DoL) trained up by the project. Thirty officials of the DoL were trained as conciliators through this project. It was mentioned that according to the Bangladesh Labour Act, Collective Bargaining Agent or owner of the factory concerning any collective disputes can only bring industrial disputes to the DoL. Thereby the scope of conciliation of individual disputes by the DoL is limited. The representative of BGMEA opined that the project could include both DIFE and DoL officials in the training programmes. The representative of IBC requested the Honourable Secretary to take a coordinated approach in this regard. The representative of NCCWE mentioned that bipartite and tripartite mechanisms are not practiced; workers rather go to DIFE or BGMEA and BKMEA. The representative of BEF mentioned that the time-frame outlined in BLA was not consistent with reality. If formal procedure was followed, factory would be damaged in the meantime. Another representative of BGMEA mentioned that workers were supposed to go to DIFE in terms of dispute as per the article 124(a), but they normally go to BGMEA and BKMEA. Therefore, the scope for arbitration by DoL is limited. Finally, the Chair considered it and agreed to discuss this issue at the Tripartite Consultative Council (TCC) or any other proper platform to take appropriate measures including the amendment of law if required.

4. Thereafter, the representative of ILO presented work plan for three outcomes of the project:

4.1. Outcome-1: Revised training plan will be developed based on the report of Mid-Term Evaluation and will be shared to donors and the PAC.

4.2. Outcome-2:

(a) The project will organize training for effective functioning of the SOPs developed by the project.

(b) Project will provide support to develop a strategic plan for DoL for enhanced labour dispute resolution in line with the upgraded organizational structure of the DoL. The Chair recommended organizing a day-long workshop in collaboration with DoL with participation from tripartite constituents. After developing the plan, project will look into the scope of providing support to make it functional.

(c) Project will assist the required amendment to the BLA in order to support the establishment of a pool of national conciliators and arbitrators, including preparing the SOP for establishment and functioning of conciliation and arbitration. The representative of BGMEA recommended to include DIFE in this regard.

4.3. Outcome-3:

(a) BGMEA and BKMEA will take immediate action to enrol remaining 70 non-unionized factories in the project.

(b) WRC will have to play a crucial role to enrol remaining unionized factories. After a long discussion, it was agreed that IBC and NCCWE will provide the list of unionized factories and will share with the BGMEA and BKMEA to finalize it. BGMEA and BKMEA will approach the management of factories to enrol the factories in the project and send their participants to trainings.

(c) 27 paralegals have been developed under the WRC through this project. They have handled 150 cases under the banner of WRC. A summary track sheet of these cases will be shared with PAC and RMG TCC for the information of the committees. Moreover, list of those 27 paralegals will also be shared with TCC, PAC and PCC.

(d) WRC Board of Trustees will develop a sustainability plan and share with PAC and PCC accordingly.

5. Upon discussions, following decisions were taken:

5.1. Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) will look into how to initiate a coordinated approach between DoL and DIFE regarding the conciliation and arbitration mechanisms of both collective and individual industrial disputes. In this regard, MoLE will take appropriate measures including the amendment of law if required. Project will assist for the required amendment to the BLA in order to support the establishment of a pool of national conciliators and arbitrators, including preparing the SOP for establishment and functioning of conciliation and arbitration.

- 5.2. SDIR project will develop a revised training plan based on the Mid-Term Evaluation Report and will share to donors and the PAC.
- 5.3. The project will organize training for effective functioning of the SOPs developed by the project.
- 5.4. Project will provide support to develop a strategic plan for DoL for enhanced labour dispute resolution in line with the upgraded organizational structure of the DoL.
- 5.5. BGMEA and BKMEA will take immediate action to enrol remaining 70 non-unionized factories in the project.
- 5.6. IBC and NCCWE will provide the list of unionized factories and share with the BGMEA and BKMEA to finalize it.
- 5.7. A summary track sheet of the cases handled by WRC paralegals will be shared with PAC and RMG TCC for the information of the committees. Moreover, list of those 27 paralegals will also be shared with TCC, PAC and PCC.
- 5.8. WRC Board of Trustees will develop a sustainability plan and share with PAC and PCC accordingly.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks from the chair.

Signed/-
(K M Ali Azam)
Secretary
Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE)
And Chairperson of the PAC