

Minutes of the WRC Board Meeting October 25, 2019

Present at the meeting are: Geoff Chatas, Rachel Duffy, Michael Ferrari, Alixe Holcomb, Kyle Muncy, and Craig Westemeier of the University Caucus; Jill Esbenshade (via phone), Julie Farb, Mark Levinson, and Julie Martinez Ortega, of the Advisory Council; Elizabeth Carroll, Delaney Ho, Shromona Mandal, Clara Raftery, Juliana, Swift, and Kimberly Johnson of USAS. Julie Su of the Advisory Council was absent.

WRC staff members in attendance were: Scott Nova, Ben Hensler (via phone), Jessica Champagne, Rola Abimourched, Chelsea Rudman, Vincent DeLaurentis, Penelope Kyritsis, Kimberly Capehart, Bent Gehrt, Laura Gutierrez, and Tara Mathur.

Observers in attendance included: Ana Jimenez, USAS, Cal Watson, Georgetown University, and Don Edwards, Justice & Sustainability Associates.

Alixé, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:28 a.m.

Nominations of the Board Members, Board Officer Elections, and Audit Committee

The Board ratified the election of six new members, as follows:

USAS Board Members

Betsey motions to appoint:

Kimberly Johnson

Shromona Mandal

Clara Raftery

Juliana Swift

Delaney Ho

Michael seconded the motion

All board members approved the motion

University Caucus Board Members

Craig motions to appoint Rachel Duffy

Kyle seconded the motion

All board members approved the motion

Board Chair from USAS

Delaney motions to appoint Juliana as Board Chair

Kimberly J. seconded the motion

All board members approved the motion

Juliana is now chairing the meeting.

Treasurer from Advisory Council

Julie F. motioned to appoint Julie Martinez Ortega

Michael seconded

All board members approved the motion

Secretary from the University Caucus

Craig motioned to appoint Alixe

Michael seconded the motion

All board members approved the motion

Audit Committee Elections

Advisory Council

Julie Martinez Ortega, as Treasurer, is automatically a member of the Audit Committee.

University Caucus

Alixé nominates Kyle

Craig seconded

All board members approved

USAS

Shromona motioned to appoint Delaney

Craig seconded

All board members approved

Approval of Minutes of June Board Meeting

Open Session Minutes

Julie M. moved to approve the minutes

Kyle seconded the motion

All board members approved

Executive Director's Report

Accord – Laura Gutierrez

There have been great strides in the building safety remediations in Bangladesh. Most collegiate licensees are signed on to the Accord. There are 85-100% remediations in collegiate licensee factories. Although the Accord was renewed through 2021, there is a political fight surrounding the continued work of the Accord. An MOU was signed with the Accord Steering Committee and the BGMEA. Next steps for the Accord are unclear. There will be a push to complete all remediations before the Accord expires. Looking forward, the WRC hopes to expand the Accord to Pakistan.

Nien Hsing – Rola Abimourched

Through non-collegiate monitoring work, the WRC uncovered several violations of international labor laws. Most notable was the pervasive gender-based violence and harassment workers experienced. Over the last year, the WRC has been working with US partners, NGOs in Lesotho,

brands, and the factory to develop and implement a program across Nien Hsing's factories to conduct gender-based violence and harassment trainings and an independent investigative body to address allegations and remediate violations. While creating this binding agreement, the WRC worked to include freedom of association in order to bolster the ability for workers to advocate for themselves.

JS International – Tara Mathur

At the last Board meeting, Nidia, a factory worker from Guatemala, joined to discuss her efforts to organize and collectively bargain at the factory. After she was fired, the WRC intervened, and she was reinstated and received back pay. Once she returned to work, she experienced serious death threats from coworkers. Management refused to intervene. After pressure from the WRC, the parent company of the factory agreed to some remediations. However, too much time had past with workers being threatened, and Nidia, herself, had resigned from the factory fearing for her own safety. The WRC continues to work with brands and the factory to push for systemic change so this will not occur again.

Cambodia – Vincent DeLaurentis

The political climate in Cambodia is complex. The current regime is not supportive of labor rights and has a history of punitive measures against union leaders. The regime has been under scrutiny due to its accessibility to the European Union market with the Everything but Arms initiative. Recently, Jess Champagne and other labor experts testified at the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission on the situation in Cambodia.

Set Next Board Date

January 31, 2020

Roundtable Discussion with the WRC Field Directors

WRC Field Directors held a questions and answer panel with the WRC Board. Highlights, challenges, and thoughts on the global labor movement were shared.

Executive Session

An executive session was held to discuss confidential financial and other sensitive matters.

Forced Labor and the Apparel Supply Chain in Xinjiang, China – Penelope Kyritsis and Scott Nova

Forced labor was found by the WRC to be used at Hetian Taida, a factory in Xinjiang province. Collegiate licensee, Badger Sport, was sourcing apparel from this factory. Due to the perilous situation of workers in Xinjiang province, remediation for this violation could not include any direct benefit to the workers. Thus, the collegiate licensee, Badger, was prescribed the remediation plan to donate \$300,000 to organizations aiding the victims of the Uyghur crisis. These organizations will be identified by the Human Rights Watch.

Furthermore, the US Customs and Border Patrol banned all goods from Hetian Taida. Days after this decree, the WRC discovered that Costco had received a large order of pajamas from Hetian Taida.

The crisis in Xinjiang is dire. This is the largest detention of a religious minority since World War II. The human rights violations are egregious, including torture, rape, forced labor, and separation of families. The massive increase in forced labor has made it almost impossible to determine what is made freely versus forced. Xinjiang produces 84% of China's cotton. China has also recently invested in yarn spinning facilities in these areas; it currently makes up about 5% of the Chinese yarn market. This taints apparel all over the global market, especially the Asian market. Bangladesh, for example, sources about 50% of their cloth from China. We reached out to CLC to discuss their willingness to seek more detailed disclosure further down the supply chain. CLC has agreed to request full disclosure from licensees. They will begin with the largest 10 brands, which they think will include the majority of data. Then, they will proceed with the top 100 brands, and so on until the list is complete.

Field Report

PT Kahoindah – Jess Champagne

The WRC shared a video highlighting workers' stories from the successful remediation achieved in Indonesia.

PT Kukdong – Vincent DeLaurentis

The PT Kukdong factory closed on September 21, 2019. This is a case where buyers, Fanatics and Nike, pre-emptively ensured the factory paid severance funds in full. After requests from allies, the WRC agreed to monitor the distribution of the severance funds to workers. Our field representative calculated the funds and confirmed that workers received the funds.

Posmi – Laura Gutierrez

The WRC began an investigation in April 2018 after receiving complaints from several workers. The WRC uncovered violations in wage and hours at this collegiate facility. Workers in one section of the factory were compelled to work 12 hours a day for eight hours pay. After extensive engagement, the WRC reached an MOU with management to pay over \$100,000 in back pay to 91 workers. The WRC will continue to monitor the situation to ensure full remediation is achieved at this factory.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.