



PRESS RELEASE

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STAR & AFTEX Unite to Strengthen Sustainability and Industry Collaboration Across Asia

Phnom Penh, February 24, 2025 – In a significant step towards a more environmentally and socially responsible future, the Sustainable Textiles of the Asian Region (STAR) Network, and the ASEAN Federation of Textile Industries (AFTEX) have officially joined forces by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This partnership, witnessed by GIZ FABRIC, signals a shared commitment to enhancing sustainability within the textile and garment sector in the ASEAN region.

The ASEAN Federation of Textile Industries (AFTEX) and the Sustainable Textiles of the Asian Region (STAR) Network are collaborating to jointly tackle key industry challenges. Through this partnership, both organizations aim to strengthen regional cooperation, align industry standards, and amplify the collective voice of manufacturers globally. This MOU builds on the success of the inaugural joint STAR-AFTEX Trade & Sustainability Summit, held in Bangkok on June 6, 2024.

"This MOU marks an interesting moment for the textile and garment industry in ASEAN. By joining forces with the STAR Network, we are not only addressing critical sustainability challenges but also paving the way for a more collaborative and resilient future. Our shared commitment to reducing audit fatigue and promoting sustainable practices should benefit all members involved," said Mr. Albert Tan, Chair of AFTEX

A key focus of this collaboration is addressing the issue of 'Audit Fatigue' by promoting mutual recognition of its adverse effects and the need to streamline audit processes, thereby reducing the burden on manufacturers. This is especially timely as new Human Rights Environmental Due Diligence (HREDD) legislation comes into effect. While STAR-AFTEX members support stronger policies for responsible supply chains, they stress that, in line with the spirit of the legislation, compliance costs should not simply be shifted onto manufacturers.

Additionally, AFTEX and the STAR Network are committed to strengthening sustainability across the textile supply chain, including promoting Rooftop Solar Systems (RTS) to encourage a more environmentally responsible approach to production.

Mr. Thomas Hesketh, Head of STAR Secretariat, also expressed enthusiasm for the partnership: *"We are thrilled to partner with AFTEX, a long-established association representing the textile industry in one of the world's fastest-growing economic regions. This partnership not only expands STAR's reach but also connects us with a network that has been shaping ASEAN's textile sector for decades."*

To facilitate the exchange of knowledge, the hosting of joint regional conferences and online seminars will be explored, promoting sustainable textile production methods and innovative solutions. Both organizations will also share information on the implementation of Human Rights Environmental Due Diligence (HREDD) legislation, working to ensure that all members are well-informed with evolving global standards. AFTEX and STAR Network intend to address areas of joint concern with a unified voice, amplifying the industry's collective influence on regional and international platforms.

This collaboration underscores the STAR Network, and AFTEX's commitment towards upholding sustainability, longevity, and competitiveness of all members involved.

"This MOU represents a stride towards a unified manufacturer voice in the textile industry. This aligns with the long-term vision of FABRIC, that by fostering collaboration and sharing best practices, we can collectively address the pressing challenges of sustainability," said Mr. Marc Beckmann, Project Director of GIZ FABRIC.

About AFTEX

The ASEAN Federation of Textile Industries (AFTEX), founded in 1978, is a key player in the textile and garment sector in the ASEAN region. Currently representing garment associations from 9 of the 10 ASEAN countries, AFTEX promotes regional cooperation, harmonizes standards, and amplifies the industry's collective voice on the global stage. AFTEX operates under a rotating Chairmanship every two years. In 2025, the leadership will transition from Cambodia to Indonesia.

About STAR Network

The Sustainable Textiles of the Asian Region (STAR) Network, established in 2016 with the support of the GIZ FABRIC Project, is the first cross-Asian network of garment producer associations. It brings together nine associations from Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Vietnam, representing over 35,000 members and around \$400 billion in export value. The network serves as a platform for dialogue and trust-building, helping its members find solutions to common challenges, particularly those related to sustainability.

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