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European companies compensate Bangladesh workers two years after factory collapse *Notable exception is Carrefour*

For immediate release

Amsterdam, April 10, 2007 - Survivors and families of the 64 workers killed in the collapse of the Spectrum garment factory two years ago received their first payment on April 1 from a fund set up by some of the European companies sourcing at the factory that will compensate them for loss of income, reports the Clean Clothes Campaign. The factory, located in Bangladesh, produced for such major European companies as KarstadtQuelle, Carrefour, and Inditex (Zara).

"The announcement that workers have finally received initial payments from the fund is welcome news," said Ineke Zeldenrust of the Clean Clothes Campaign, which has supported the Spectrum families' demand for compensation since the collapse in 2005. "This is long overdue. Families are living in extreme poverty as a result of what happened at Spectrum, in many cases having lost their only source of income and having to resort to loans to get by."

Several companies producing at Spectrum and the adjoining Shahriyar Fabric – Inditex (Spain), KarstadtQuelle (Germany), New Wave Group (Sweden), Scapino (Netherlands), and Solo Invest (France) are committed to participate in the fund to compensate survivors and families of those who died at the factory that produced their garments. Those who have not committed to the compensation trust fund include: Carrefour (France), Cotton Group (Belgium), New Yorker, Steilmann, Kirsten Mode, and Bluhmod (Germany).

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The fund, pegged at 533,000 euros, was initiated by Spanish-based Inditex. The distribution of a US\$ 60,000 advance is now underway to the desperate families. Local organizations Oxfam GB Bangladesh Programme, Incidin Bangladesh, and trade union representatives are involved in administering the fund, which will pay the injured survivors and families of the dead a monthly pension. So far 22 workers have received these first payments (in total about US\$3,000). It is our understanding that the remainder of the eligible workers/families will receive their first payments shortly.

“It has been a long wait for these families, but their perseverance has yielded results,” said Amirul Haq Amin, general secretary of the National Garment Workers Federation, one of the garment workers’ unions representing Spectrum workers. “The struggle locally, supported by people internationally who spoke out about this injustice, pushed the companies sourcing at Spectrum to finally do the right thing. We will continue however to push for all the buyers to face up to their responsibility to the Spectrum workers, as well as Bangladeshi garment workers in general, many of whom continue to work in very unsafe workplaces.”

The CCC calls upon Carrefour and the other companies who have so far refused to join the Spectrum compensation fund to immediately commit to paying into the fund and to work with local trade unions and labour rights organizations on this initiative.

For additional details on the Spectrum-Shariyar case, including past efforts to provide medical and emergency relief, see <http://www.cleanclothes.org>

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EDITORS: Photos of Spectrum survivors/families available, please contact the CCC-IS, tel. +31-20-412-2785
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The Clean Clothes Campaign is an international network of trade unions and NGOs that aims to improve conditions and empower workers in the global garment industry.