



## FESI statement

### **in response to concerns raised by Members of European Parliament on report of forced labour cases in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region**

#### **1. Specific concerns about the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region**

The Federation of the European Sporting Goods Industry (FESI) represents responsible brands and retailers, dedicated to upholding the highest international standards of ethical and responsible business practices. The Sporting Goods Industry does not tolerate forced labour within its supply chains.

FESI members reiterated that suppliers must maintain a supply chain that is free of involuntary and forced labour. They are working together to identify and eliminate forced labour, and conditions that can lead to forced labour, in sourcing countries. Moreover, the industry will continue to enhance efforts to mitigate and address risks of forced labour in their supply chains in the future.

#### **2. Business practices considerations**

Sporting Goods companies are frontrunners when it comes to responsible management of their supply chains. Our members have a long-standing experience of being involved with and in global multi-stakeholder platforms such as ILO and OECD. Many of our members have been operating supply chain compliance management systems for many years that contributed to significant improvements for textile workers in manufacturing countries. The complexity of our members' supply chains however requires a large amount of time and effort in order to establish a consensus and trust with numerous actors. Therefore, our members are proactively engaged in many public, private and international initiatives such as the Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC), Ethical Trading Association, BSCI, the Fair Labour Association (FLA), The Fair Wear Foundation, the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI)

Moreover, our members have very comprehensive code of conducts, based in international law and ILO conventions, which they implement with their sourcing partners and are involved in both external and internal compliance initiatives to audit the social performance of their suppliers and to foresee and mitigate labour rights violations in their supply chains. Social audits have an important part to play in corporate due diligence efforts and they can be a helpful complement to governmental labour inspections. However, they cannot replace the State's duty to enforce the law. The latter underscores the importance and need for governments to align with international standards, as set forth in the ILO labour conventions and provide capacity-building for national labour inspection systems. Especially as this



enables the ability to address deficits in all production sites within an entire economy and not just those connected to global supply chains and the textile industry.

### **3. Working together toward solutions**

As acknowledged by Members of the European Parliament and civil society organizations, the conditions and treatment of ethnic minority workers present profound challenges to the integrity of the global supply chain, including issues of transparency and auditing that should be addressed and solved.

Companies across our membership are considering all available approaches to address the situation especially at global level where policy discussion need to be framed under the United Nations (UN) Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment & Footwear Sector.

While our members are continuing to individually evaluate how to best monitor their compliance standards considering the complexity of this situation, joint efforts must be improved to implement requirements prohibiting any type of forced labor, including detailed provisions for freedom of movement and prohibitions on discrimination based on ethnic background or religion.

A successful solution for all, including the workers, will require collaborative partnerships across all stakeholders in the supply chain with an emphasis for government dialogue between importing and sourcing countries. As mentioned in the past our sector is willing to contribute to a multi-stakeholder group led by public authorities to collectively address the current situation at a European and global level.

This matter cannot be addressed by one company, one sector or one organization on its own and should be tackled globally.