



PLWF calls for transparency in international debate on fair and sustainable garment sector

What does a fair and sustainable garment sector look like and how can we achieve fairness and sustainability in this industry? Those were the central questions that fuelled the debate at The Industry We Want, an international event hosted by our partner Fair Wear and the Ethical Trading Initiative on Thursday, 14 January. Platform Living Wage Financials (PLWF) was represented at the event by ASN Bank-CEO Arie Koornneef. He addressed the international body of delegates.

At the event, representatives of garment companies, trade unions and NGOs as well as politicians, including Sigrid Kaag, the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, engaged in debate about a living wage and better working conditions in the garment sector. While it is true that awareness of the universal human right of a living wage is growing in this industry, much work remains to be done to achieve systemic change.

Arie Koornneef spoke on behalf of the Platform Living Wage Financials (PLWF) when he told the 250 delegates more about the role and ambitions of our platform, which now has 15 partners. He also elaborated on meaningful engagement, the term we use for the targeted dialogue they have with garment companies to get them to embrace real change. As an investor, ASN Bank does its own research, engages with companies to define concrete milestones and sells its investment if progress on these milestones grinds to a halt. Arie Koornneef stressed the urgency of the matter and said that, if there was ever a time to work towards a living wage, it would be now.

‘Many industries have been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has impacted garment companies and their supply chains. Textile workers deserve our support, now more than ever. They lack any form of social protection. They have the right to a living wage and better working conditions, so that their children can go to school and they can break the poverty spiral. This is about more than paying them minimum wage, which really isn’t enough to cover the cost of basic needs such as food, education or healthcare.’

Clear goals and transparent reporting

Speaking on behalf of PLWF, Arie Koornneef advocated improvements in the sector. In doing so, he referred to the methodology that ASN Bank and the platform developed earlier.

‘We’re seeing that many companies are motivated to take the next step. What we ask is that you be transparent about the wage gap in supply chains, that you define a strategy and

concrete goals to close this gap, and that you pay a fair price.' Finally, Arie Koornneef called upon garment companies to work together to create leverage.

Follow-up

Over the coming period, PLWF is looking to get more financials involved in their initiative and to inspire them to use their clout as investors to bring about sustainable change. As in previous years, the platform will publish its annual study of a living wage in the garment sector in 2021 as well.