EU Textile Strategy: civil society's demands to MEPs

1) **AMBITIOUS AND HOLISTIC ECODESIGN REQUIREMENTS**
There is an opportunity for the EU to ensure that only textile and garment products complying with ambitious and holistic minimum sustainability standards access the EU market. Existing standards can be taken as a baseline and the scope should be broad. Ecodesign criteria should ensure that textile products last longer and are easier to repair. They should also take action on microplastics. Social aspects need to be covered too, including through the Digital Product Passport and mandatory criteria for green and socially responsible public procurement. There cannot be sustainability without respect for human and labour rights.

2) **TACKLING GLOBAL OVERPRODUCTION**
It's vital to recognise that new consumption is largely driven by marketing and over-supply. Global textile production almost doubled between 2000 and 2015, and synthetic and man-made fibres make up 69% of total global fibre production. This is why we need a binding resource use reduction target with specific objectives for textile products – an idea the European Parliament has already shown support for, while ensuring a Just Transition for all regions and workers. The re-use and repair sector – including social enterprises offering quality jobs for vulnerable individuals while fostering the circular economy – should also be promoted, notably with minimum or zero VAT for the repair and sale of second-hand textiles products.

3) **ENSURING A JUST TRANSITION**
In moving away from global overproduction, and transforming to a more sustainable and digital textiles ecosystem, we must also ensure a Just Transition with no worker or region being left behind. Clothes are made by people, not machines, and workers in the sector, the majority of whom are female and low-paid, should not suffer as a result of this transition. While ensuring business models are no longer based solely on the churn of more and more new products, it is vital to safeguard employment and pay workers fairly, and to ensure that all jobs in the circular economy are good jobs.

4) **FAIRER PURCHASING PRACTICES**
The Textile Strategy contains no action on the harmful purchasing practices imposed by buyers on their suppliers, which underpin the industry's overproduction and exploitation of workers. The EU should bring forward strong legislative action to ban the most damaging unfair trading practices (UTP) from the textile sector, namely an EU Directive similar to the 2019 agri-food UTP Directive.

5) **TRANSPARENCY OF SUPPLY CHAINS**
There is a great need for more transparency and traceability in the supply chain and at product level. The Digital Product Passport should provide full supply chain traceability, transparency and facility disclosure as well as provision of environmental and social information. Suppliers lists should be mandatory, publicly available and stay with the product to enable full supply chain transparency and remediation. Transparency is key to ensuring living wages for garment workers worldwide and remediating human rights abuses including forced labour.

6) **DUE DILIGENCE ACCOUNTABILITY**

All European companies should be included in the scope of the EU's forthcoming Directive on corporate sustainability due diligence, including SMEs in the textiles ecosystem. The legislation should apply throughout the entire value chain and cover all workers. It must include environmental criteria, such as the impact of chemical use on the local environment, and social criteria, such as the implementation of the core ILO conventions as well as purchasing practices as they are a root cause of many abuses common in the sector such as forced overtime or wage theft. Furthermore, given the prevalence of forced labour within the textile and garment sector, this Directive should complement the upcoming forced labour legislation.

7) **ACTION ON ULTRA-FAST FASHION**

Bulk ordering and online sales have increased rates of return and it is a widespread practice for viable consumer products to be purposefully destroyed by retailers or manufacturers. We must ban the destruction of unsold and returned goods and tackle the root causes of why so much unsold stock is generated. Companies should not be able to bypass applicable laws and fiscal obligations. This will require enhancing market surveillance in Member States and setting strong provisions when it comes to how the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation would apply to the online market platforms which generate obscene profits with little environmental or social accountability.

8) **AN END TO GREEN & SOCIAL WASHING**

Citizens' interest in adopting sustainable lifestyles and reducing environmental impact when shopping has led to a proliferation of greenwashing. The EU should ensure that only reliable claims are made, while the underlying methods should be holistic and cover all relevant environmental and social impacts of textiles. Civil society should be involved in the development of requirements underpinning green claims and labels through a robust governance process.

9) **EU TRADE POLICY THAT REWARDS SUSTAINABILITY**

The EU should ensure that trade agreements and preference programmes, such as the Generalised Scheme of Preferences, are used as levers to promote sustainable development, human rights, and fair and ethical trade around the world, and to improve the responsibility of value chains. Furthermore, EU trade criteria should be used to increase global standards and in turn ensure a more level global playing field for textile products.

10) **MAXIMIZING LOCAL REUSE OF TEXTILES**

Ensure that Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes effectively enforce the waste hierarchy. We need waste prevention and preparation for reuse targets, to involve key reuse operators such as social enterprises in the governance of the scheme, guarantee their access to the waste stream, and design eco-modulation of fees in a way that ensures waste prevention. In addition, we call for a revision of Article 8a on cost coverage in the 2024 Waste Framework Directive to also ensure the involvement of social enterprises in the functioning of the scheme and cover the cost of non-reusable volumes. Finally, the proximity principle should be strongly implemented to maximise local reuse while only prepared for re-use or recyclable textiles which have been approved by the recipient country should be allowed for export.

11) **PHASING OUT HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS IN TEXTILES**

Hazardous chemicals used in the manufacturing of textiles are harmful to workers and the environment. They can also remain in garments and household textiles exposing consumers to a cocktail of hazardous chemicals. As promised in the Sustainable Chemicals Strategy, the EU should adopt binding targets through the REACH Regulation to ensure that by 2026 all the most harmful chemicals are banned in textiles. Through Ecodesign and the Digital Product Passport, the EU should also ensure full traceability of chemicals used in manufacturing processes and disclosure of any hazardous substances present in textiles.

12) **ENSURING SUSTAINABLE TEXTILE PRODUCTION IN EUROPE**

The European textiles ecosystem requires specific funding, sound metrics and legal incentives to transform into a truly sustainable and resilient sector. This transition must be managed in coordination with social partners, to ensure that no worker or region is left behind and ensure EU production is the gold standard for fair and sustainable textiles.

Everyone has a role to play from policy makers, to civil society, manufacturers, brands and consumers, if the European textiles ecosystem is to be a truly sustainable sector by 2030. There is no time to lose.