

March 27, 2023

Ms. Linda Kromjong  
President  
amfori

via email: [REDACTED]@amfori.org



HRW.org

Dear Ms. Kromjong,

I am writing on behalf of Human Rights Watch, an international nongovernmental organization working on a range of human rights issues globally, including corporate accountability.

Human Rights Watch has been working on issues related to business and human rights for over two decades. In November 2022, we published a report, "[Obsessed with Audit Tools: Missing the Goal: Why Social Audits Can't Fix Labor Rights Abuses in Global Supply Chains](#)," which adds to our ongoing research on social audits.<sup>1</sup>

As part of our work, we are contacting amfori as one of the organizations that administers a third-party social audit scheme. We are writing to share our findings to date and to learn more about amfori's human rights due diligence policies and practices surrounding its products and services, including the amfori Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI) audit.

We recognise the significance of amfori's work given its geographical and corporate reach. We also recognise that amfori has a diversity of corporate members, which includes about 65 percent small and medium enterprises.<sup>2</sup> As of 2021, amfori has 2,400 members from 48 countries with a €1.6 trillion turnover. The top five members' countries are Germany, the Netherlands, France, Denmark, and the US. Of these members, 1,540 are importers.<sup>3</sup> As of 2021, amfori conducted over 25,000 amfori BSCI full audits and 7,388 follow-up audits.<sup>4</sup> The top five countries where these audits were conducted are China, Bangladesh, India, Turkey, and Vietnam.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See also, "Auditing firms shouldn't provide cover for the inaction of global brands on low wages," January 14, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/01/14/auditing-firms-shouldnt-provide-cover-inaction-global-brands-low-wages>; "Social Audits Reforms and the Labor Rights Ruse," October 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/07/social-audit-reforms-and-labor-rights-ruse>; "Combating Sexual Harassment in the Garment Industry," February 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/02/12/combating-sexual-harassment-garment-industry> (accessed March 16, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> amfori, Annual Report, 2021, <https://www.amfori.org/sites/default/files/amfori-Annual-Report-2021.pdf> (accessed March 16, 2023), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

We anticipate more scrutiny of corporate policies and practices in the wake of more laws and regulations around human rights and environmental due diligence. This scrutiny will also extend to companies' decisions around social audit schemes or certifications.

Consumer or competition and market authorities are also receiving more complaints about, and have increased their scrutiny of, the sustainability claims of companies. Voluntary industry initiatives have also come under scrutiny.<sup>6</sup> Other legal claims have been launched against audit firms and certification schemes.<sup>7</sup>

The evolving regulatory landscape will shape how organizations, including amfori, administer social audit schemes. amfori's products and services could come under regulatory scrutiny either directly or indirectly because of its members.

Brands and retailers, as well as suppliers, have human rights due diligence responsibilities. Organizations like amfori offering products and services to support companies in their human rights and environmental due diligence efforts have separate and distinct human rights due diligence responsibilities in relation to each product/service, including the amfori BSCI audit. amfori should take robust measures to identify, prevent, mitigate and/or remediate business operations that can have actual or potential adverse human rights impacts.

Two concrete concerns relevant to the amfori's social audits and related services are:

- The risk of contributing to, or being linked with, human rights abuses.
- The risk of contributing to, or being linked with, social- or greenwashing.

Key measures to prevent and mitigate the risk of contributing to, or being linked with, human rights abuses or to social- or greenwashing are:

- Recommending and integrating into the amfori platform, "supplementary measures" that go "beyond social audits," and tracking members' efforts to use them, with consequences for those that disregard amfori advice.
- Publicly acknowledging the limitations of amfori BSCI audits and other social audits in all amfori materials.
- Publishing any private disclaimers.

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<sup>6</sup> See for example, Rachel Deeley, "Dutch, Norwegian Regulators Issue Guidance on Controversial Higg Tool," <https://www.businessoffashion.com/news/sustainability/dutch-norwegian-regulators-issue-guidance-on-controversial-higg-tool/>; "Get Your Green Claims Right," [https://greenclaims.campaign.gov.uk/#what\\_are\\_green\\_claims\\_](https://greenclaims.campaign.gov.uk/#what_are_green_claims_); UK Competition and Markets Authority, "Global sweep finds 40% of firms' green claims could be misleading," January 28, 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/global-sweep-finds-40-of-firms-green-claims-could-be-misleading> (all accessed March 10, 2023).

<sup>7</sup> See for example, Leigh Day, "Tesco and Intertek face claims of forced labour and debt bondage at F&F fashion factory," <https://www.leighday.co.uk/latest-updates/news/2022-news/tesco-and-intertek-face-claims-of-forced-labour-and-debt-bondage-at-f-f-fashion-factory/> (accessed February 23, 2023).

- Suspending amfori BSCI audits and the recognition of other social audits on amfori platforms in extremely high-risk regions (such as in the Xinjiang region of China).
- Introducing transparency of audited sites.
- Instituting more robust audit quality controls.
- Instituting a robust grievance redress mechanism aligned with the criteria outlined in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs).
- Collaborating to help companies set up effective operational grievance redress mechanisms aligned with the criteria outlined in the UNGPs.

In Appendix I, we have outlined our findings to date and included questions so we can more fully understand how amfori currently operates, including any forthcoming reforms.

We request additional information for questions in Appendix I, Part I, “Tracking members’ measures ‘beyond social audits’ on health and safety” **by April 15, 2023**. We request additional information for the remaining questions in Appendix I by **May 31, 2023**.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for more information, schedule a discussion, or to send written responses via email to [REDACTED]@hrw.org. The information provided by amfori would be useful to inform our research and advocacy and may be reflected in our forthcoming publications.

Best regards,

[REDACTED]  
Aruna Kashyap  
Associate Director  
Economic Justice and Rights Division  
Human Rights Watch

CC: Kate Dechaene, Personal assistant to amfori President, [REDACTED]@amfori.org

## Appendix I: Summary of Information and Questions

### I. Tracking members' measures "beyond social audits" on health and safety

As amfori is aware, two factories located in the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh, which collapsed in 2013, were audited using amfori BSCI systems.<sup>8</sup> After the collapse, amfori stated that "BSCI focuses on monitoring and improving labour issues within factories and relies on local authorities to ensure the construction and infrastructure is secure."<sup>9</sup>

The auditing firms TUV Rheinland and TUV India stated that amfori BSCI's audit does not include a structural analysis of buildings, and auditors do not have the necessary technical expertise, in response to a complaint submitted to the German National Contact Point of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.<sup>10</sup> amfori acknowledged that the "Accord and its implementation plan are a *comprehensive set of measures which are complementary* to the activities within the BSCI framework focusing on working conditions in the factories."<sup>11</sup> amfori is therefore fully aware of the limitations of its program, and the ways these can be complemented through joining the Accord.

amfori states: "We help our members monitor with *world-class tools*."<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Watch believes—and amfori's statements agree—that the Accord complements BSCI audits. In Human Rights Watch's view, the International Accord should be part of amfori's suite of "world-class tools" that amfori actively recommends and tracks the use of.

### Questions

1. What features does amfori have in its platforms to track members use of the International Accord (especially members from sectors covered by the Accord)?
2. How many producers (across all sectors) using amfori BSCI audits are in Bangladesh and Pakistan? How many of these are from the garments, footwear, and textile sector?
3. How many amfori members (importers, brands, and retailers) source from Bangladesh, but *have yet to commit to the Accord* in the sectors it covers?
4. How many amfori members (importers, brands, and retailers) source from Pakistan, but *have yet to commit to the Accord* in the sectors it covers?

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<sup>8</sup> amfori, "BSCI saddened by the collapse of Rana Plaza in Savar, Bangladesh," <https://www.amfori.org/news/bsci-saddened-collapse-rana-plaza-savar-bangladesh> (accessed March 17, 2023).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> German National Contact Point, Final Statement in response to a complaint filed by the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights e.V. et al. against TÜV Rheinland AG and TÜV Rheinland India Pvt. Ltd, <https://www.oecdwatch.org/download/29087/?tmstv=1679000522> (accessed March 16, 2023), para. 16.

<sup>11</sup> amfori, "BSCI welcomes steps towards implementing the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh," July 8, 2013, <https://www.amfori.org/news/bsci-welcomes-steps-towards-implementing-accord-fire-and-building-safety-bangladesh> (accessed March 16, 2023).

<sup>12</sup> amfori, "amfori BSCI: Improving Social Performance in Global Supply Chains," <https://www.amfori.org/content/amfori-bsci> (accessed March 17, 2023).

5. What consequences, if any, including and up to a withdrawal of amfori membership, can members face, if they do not participate in the International Accord, which amfori describes as a “comprehensive set of measures which are complementary” to the BSCI framework?
6. Will amfori periodically publish (such as annually) an update of which of its members are signing the Accord to go beyond social audits and those that are not? **If yes**, when is the public reporting expected to commence?

## II. Tracking members’ measures “beyond social audits” on forced labor

Our research as well as research by other organizations and academics shows that standard social audits present greater risks for labor abuses being under-detected or undetected, especially issues like discrimination and harassment, forced labor, child labor, and freedom of association violations, which are inherently difficult to detect without sufficient time and tailored methods.<sup>13</sup>

While our report was not specific to amfori BSCI, the information presented there is relevant to amfori BSCI given its methods. Audits under the amfori BSCI program are conducted over a few auditor days,<sup>14</sup> during which time, auditors are expected to cover a huge scope, covering a variety of complex issues, including forced labor, child labor, harassment and discrimination, and freedom of association. In the amfori BSCI reports we were able to collect, none of the reports included interviews with workers offsite.<sup>15</sup>

We have produced below an extract from our report for ease of reference.

Jason M., an auditing industry expert with nearly two decades’ experience of conducting hundreds of social audits spanning more than 50 countries, explained that auditors and firms know that short audits have significant flaws. He told Human Rights Watch:

[W]e know the weaknesses in sort of the shortchange audits  
[conducted] in a couple of days. It’s almost like you get what

<sup>13</sup> “Obsessed with Audit Tools, Missing the Goal,” November 2022, <http://www.hrw.org/report/2022/11/15/obsessed-audit-tools-missing-goal/why-social-audits-cant-fix-labor-rights-abuses>; Sarosh Kuruvilla, *Private Regulation of Labor Standards in Global Supply Chains: Problems, Progress, and Prospects* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021). Kuruvilla et al. analysed 21,041 social audit reports between 2011 and 2017 across different sectors. The sectors included agriculture, apparel, accessories, electronics, food, footwear, furniture, hard goods (other), jewelry, kitchenware/housewares, toys, and other soft goods. The analysis revealed that these social audits generated a low number of findings on a range of issues, including child labor, discrimination, forced labor, freedom of association, and harassment and abuse. The study argued that the low number of findings could be because of the limitations of audits spanning a few days.

<sup>14</sup> amfori, amfori BSCI System Manual, <https://www.amfori.org/sites/default/files/amfori-2019-12-03-amfori-BSCI-system-manual-2018.pdf> (accessed March 17, 2023), p. 53.

<sup>15</sup> amfori BSCI audit reports on file with Human Rights Watch. None of the BSCI audit reports Human Rights Watch reviewed noted off-site interviews. In one report, the auditors had indicated that there were 35 workers in the factory; that they had conducted 35 onsite interviews and 35 off-site interviews. This appears to be a typographical error.

you pay for. If you just want to send one person for a day, you're going to get one-person-for-a-day level of results.... For complicated issues like forced labor, traditional audits [conducted over a few days] under many types of audit regimes do not detect these issues and are inadequate to both understand what's going on, but most importantly, understand what the root causes of the problems are.

Taking monitoring for forced labor as an example, he explained how there needed to be enough time to tailor the methodology to the context and complexity of the issue, saying:

So, there's a worker part, but there's also the complexity of the issue.... We've gone into suppliers and one example from Thailand, they had 21 different labor brokers, and a couple dozen different migration corridors. Each of which had its own problems. It doesn't mean that there's not overarching ways to address that, but you're not going to unpack all of that if you have a couple of people, for a day or a couple days.

Developments over the last few years have repeatedly raised questions about amfori BSCI.<sup>16</sup> In Malaysia, for example, Top Glove is among one of the most high-profile cases that raised serious questions about amfori BSCI audits. Following labor abuses that came to light in the Top Glove case, amfori issued a statement saying it supports companies “embark on a journey of continuous improvement.”<sup>17</sup> The statement did not explain what amfori's BSCI historical audits found, what improvements they drove, and why the improvements had been of such poor quality that it ultimately resulted in a US Customs and Border Protection withhold release order against Top Glove. After the US CBP order in July 2020, Top Glove set up a remediation fund, announcing that it would reimburse foreign migrant workers recruitment fees worth about RM53 million (US\$ 11.8 million).<sup>18</sup>

Promoting amfori BSCI, especially in countries or regions that are known high risks for forced labor, as incorporating “world-class tools,” instead of highlighting the risks they carry for

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<sup>16</sup> Since amfori does not publish social audit reports, the lack of transparency makes it difficult to conduct a quantitative analysis of amfori BSCI reports.

<sup>17</sup> amfori, “Our Approach to Serious Allegations Concerning the Rubber Glove Industry,” <https://www.amfori.org/news/amfori-bsci-continuous-improvement-approach> (accessed March 17, 2023).

<sup>18</sup> Top Glove, “Top Glove Commences Remediation Payment to Migrant Workers & Remains Committed to Continue Improving Worker Welfare,” <https://www.topglove.com/single-press-release-en?id=96&title=top-glove-commences-remediation-payment-to-migrant-workers-and-remains-committed-to-continue-improving-worker-welfare> (accessed March 17, 2023).

workers and businesses, when businesses rely on amfori BSCI audits alone, contributes to actual and potential human rights abuses of businesses, and to social washing.

### **Questions**

7. Of the 25,048 social audits conducted across countries, please indicate if any of the audits were from the following regions/countries, and if yes, how many: a) the Xinjiang region in China b) Turkmenistan c) Uzbekistan d) Saudi Arabia and e) Qatar.
8. Does amfori periodically commission in-depth forced labor investigations for a subset of audited sites that have previously used amfori BSCI audits to evaluate the extent of under-reporting of forced labor indicators? **If yes**, please provide more details.
9. What steps has amfori taken to replicate the Top Glove remediation fund model in countries where there are foreign migrant workers?
10. What “supplementary measures” does amfori recommend that its members take to go “beyond social audits” to detect and remedy forced labor?
  - 10.1. How does amfori track the implementation of these “supplementary measures?”
  - 10.2. What consequences, up to and including withdrawal of amfori membership, can members expect to face if they continue to remain in amfori but disregard amfori’s recommendations to go beyond social audits?
11. Please indicate if amfori will periodically publish (such as annually) a report providing aggregate data with forced labor indicators generated through its BSCI audits, the number of amfori members who have taken measures “beyond social audits” by country and sector; how many amfori members/suppliers have created remediation funds; and the number of members facing membership consequences for not following amfori’s recommended steps.
12. Does amfori plan to publish a searchable database of all its members, indicating the date when they first joined amfori and the status of their membership (active, downgraded, terminated)?

### **III. Instituting more robust audit quality controls**

We note that amfori undertook public consultations and revised its amfori BSCI system, including introducing a Code of Conduct.

We also note that amfori operates an Audit Integrity Program, as part of which it has approved 13 auditing firms.<sup>19</sup> At this writing, these are ABS Group, ALGI, APCER, Eurofins, Bureau Veritas, ELEVATE, Intertek, SGS, TUV Nord, TUV Rheinland, TUV Sud, UL, QIMA.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> amfori, “Enabling Partners,” <https://www.amfori.org/content/enabling-partners> (accessed January 20, 2023).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

In 2022, amfori issued 8 warning letters to approved audit companies, and suspended 2 individual auditors. In addition, there was one “self-suspension by an approved audit company following an amfori led investigation.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Price and Business Pressures, and Conflicts of Interests**

Based on information published on amfori’s website as well as information from amfori BSCI reports that Human Rights Watch collected, we have yet to understand how amfori exercises oversight over auditor independence and conflicts of interests *in each amfori BSCI audit*. These should be a critical part of amfori’s Audit Integrity Program.

amfori audit reports that Human Rights Watch reviewed do not carry any relevant disclosures by the audit firm about whether they or a sister audit firm (where the audit firm is part of a group) provides (or provided) any other services to (a) the supplier or (b) the supplier group (if the supplier is part of a group of companies) or (c) the buyer/importer commissioning the audit (if a buyer/importer commissioned it), the nature of these services, and when they were provided. In the absence of such disclosures, it is difficult to gauge auditor “independence” in each audit.

amfori BSCI audit reports also do not require the audit team to disclose whether members of the team have/had any business or other personal relationships with suppliers or brands. For example, Human Rights Watch learned of numerous ways in which audit integrity and quality can be compromised, including through revolving doors; translators used by audit teams being appointed by suppliers, and so on.

Human Rights Watch review of amfori BSCI audit reports showed that the reports do not explicitly state who paid for the audit, who appointed the auditing firm, and who commissioned the audit.<sup>22</sup> amfori states that “RSP-holders” can initiate auditing activities, which appears to include importers and suppliers. Human Rights Watch has learned that suppliers can themselves select audit firms to conduct amfori BSCI audits. Audit costs play a huge role in determining which audit firm is selected. The pressure on audit firms to reduce costs and the number of auditor days significantly influences audit quality. Other academic studies have shown that putting the burden of audit costs on suppliers or getting suppliers to appoint auditing firms are serious design flaws in a social audit system, that pose risks for audit integrity and quality.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> amfori, Annual Report 2021, <https://www.amfori.org/sites/default/files/amfori-Annual-Report-2021.pdf> (accessed January 20, 2023), p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> amfori BSCI audits reports on file with Human Rights Watch.

<sup>23</sup> Sarosh Kuruvilla, “Chapter 2: Practice Multiplicity in the Implementation of Private Regulation Programs,” in Sarosh Kuruvilla, *Private Regulation of Labor Standards in Global Supply Chains: Problems, Progress, and Prospects* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021), p. 53; 2 Jodi L. Short and Michael W. Toffel, “The Integrity of Private Third-Party Compliance



### **Transparency about amfori's audit quality control**

amfori is not sufficiently transparent about its Audit Integrity Program. It has yet to publish the minimum acceptance criteria used to approve audit firms and the month/year when an audit firm was first approved.

There is no information on whether amfori's Audit Integrity Programme allows suspended, terminated, or self-suspended audit firms to be re-approved, and if so, under what conditions, and whether they are subject to any minimum cool-off periods before they become eligible for re-approval. amfori also does not provide a summary of the nature of corrective actions that a firm is required to take, and how these measures are verified before allowing a firm to be re-approved.

Further, where amfori sanctions an approved audit partner, it has yet to publish the names and street addresses of facilities/sites audited by the sanctioned firm. Publishing the names and street addresses of sites audited by a firm, at a minimum where amfori suspends or terminates its business relationship with such a firm, would also alert workers and their representatives.

As part of the audit integrity program, amfori and its audit assurance partner can initiate own-initiative (or suo motu) inquiries.<sup>24</sup> But amfori does not reveal how many such inquiries are conducted every year into its audit systems, against whom, and the outcomes of such measures. For example, on December 5, 2022, SAAS suspended the India accreditation scope of four SA8000 certification bodies, stating that these were a result of surveillance visits undertaken after allegation of conflicts of interests between auditors, consultants, and certified organizations.<sup>25</sup> These four certification bodies were Bureau Veritas Certification, RINA, SGS, and TUV Rheinland. At this writing, two of these firms continue to be listed as amfori's audit partners. There is no information about whether amfori or its audit assurance partners have initiated inquiries following suspensions by SAAS.

### **Questions**

13. amfori states, "100% of BSCI audit reports are analysed using data analytics to identify trends or flag issues or concerns."<sup>26</sup>

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Monitoring," Working Paper RPP-2015-20, December 10, 2015, Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government, Harvard Kennedy School, [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2695429](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2695429) (accessed March 10, 2023).

<sup>24</sup> amfori, Audit Integrity Programme.

<sup>25</sup> Social Accountability International, "Details on SA8000 Certification Body suspensions in India," <https://sa-intl.org/details-on-sa8000-certification-body-suspensions-in-india/> (accessed March 10, 2023).

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.amfori.org/content/audit-quality-programme>

- 13.1. For the past five years (ie dating back to 2017), please provide the relevant results of such data analytics as well as trends, concerns, or issues flagged. At a minimum, please summarise what has been identified over the last five years.
- 13.2. How does amfori share the findings of its trends analysis with its membership and how frequently?
- 13.3. Does amfori plan to periodically publish (such as annually), a report of its trends analysis that has flagged concerns or issues for the broader public, and especially unions and worker rights organizations? **If yes**, by when is such public reporting expected to commence?
14. Please provide a list of audit assurance partners amfori has approved.<sup>27</sup>
15. Has amfori and/or its audit assurance partners conducted *suo motu* monitoring, investigation, or analysis of BSCI audits where a supplier conducting a BSCI audit subsequently faced a withhold release order by the US Customs and Border Protection?<sup>28</sup> If yes, please provide more details regarding such *suo motu* inquiries going back to 2017.
16. Please share a summary of *all suo motu* monitoring/investigation that amfori or its assurance partners have conducted going back to 2017 and the outcomes of these.
17. Will amfori periodically (such as annually) publish summaries and outcomes from its own or its audit assurance partners investigations? **If yes**, please indicate by when amfori will start publishing this.
18. For each of the audit firms approved by amfori, please provide additional information about when the firm was *first* approved?
19. Please provide a summary of all auditing firms that have been sanctioned (including suspension and terminations) since the inception of amfori's Audit Integrity Programme; the reasons why they were sanctioned; and the corrective actions taken (if any of these entities were re-approved by amfori).
20. Is the information requested in Qs 18 and 19 maintained within the amfori platform so all users can see the historical information (for e.g., dating back 5 years) for every audit firm approved by amfori (including previously sanctioned, corrective actions, re-listed and so on)? **If yes**, please indicate the month/year when this feature was introduced. **If no**, please indicate whether amfori will introduce such a feature and by when.
21. On the amfori platform, does amfori publish and update a list of the names and street addresses of sites audited by a firm that has since been sanctioned, to alert buyers and

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<sup>27</sup> amfori, "Audit Integrity Programme," <https://www.amfori.org/sites/default/files/amfori-Design-Final-highres.pdf> (accessed March 22, 2023). amfori states that "evaluation activities" to approve auditing firms are "managed and conducted by the Audit Integrity Assurance Partner (AP) who then provides recommendations to the Secretariat. The final approval is given by the amfori President."

<sup>28</sup> This would be aligned with "continuous improvement" and part of human rights responsibilities under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights principles 20 and 31 (g).

- suppliers? **If yes**, please indicate the month/year when this feature was introduced. **If no**, please indicate whether amfori will introduce such a feature and by when.
22. What measures will amfori take to alert worker rights organizations and unions about sites recently audited (such as going back at least to the most recent full audit or at least one year) by audit firms that have since been sanctioned?
23. Does amfori have additional guidance for its members and affiliate audit firms on mitigating conflicts of interests? **If yes**, please provide a copy of the guidance document (including month/year since the guidance has been in place.) **If no**, please indicate whether amfori will develop additional guidance and by when?
24. Does amfori require an audit firm, the site being audited, and the commissioning brand (if any) to make any disclosures to assess conflicts of interests *before* the audit firm can proceed with an BSCI audit of a particular site? **If yes**, please provide more details about the nature of disclosures required and where these disclosures are made. **If no**, please indicate by when amfori will require such disclosures.
25. Does amfori plan to revise its audit report formats to require detailed written disclosures regarding conflicts of interests of audit firms, the audit team members viz-a-viz the supplier and the commissioning brand (if any)? **If yes**, please indicate a timeline by when the revised format will be issued.

#### IV. Publicly acknowledging the limitations of social audits in all amfori materials

amfori has not taken sufficient measures to acknowledge the limitations of social audits consistently and publicly, including on its website where it describes and promotes amfori BSCI.

On its website, amfori describes the BSCI stating:

- “We help our members monitor with *world-class tools*.”<sup>29</sup>
- “Since 2003, amfori BSCI has *enabled* companies to trade with purpose by *improving social performance* in their supply chain.”<sup>30</sup>
- “Our [Auditing Integrity Programme](#) aims to maintain transparency and reliability in our monitoring process... the programme provides a *comprehensive, robust and independent* acceptance process for audit companies to engage with amfori BSCI activities and ensure *excellence in audit quality at the audit company and auditor level*.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> amfori, “amfori BSCI,” <https://www.amfori.org/content/amfori-bsci> (accessed March 22, 2023).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

- “By taking part in amfori BSCI members can: ... *Improve the social performance of their supply chain; Have a clear and consistent approach that highlights best practices.*”<sup>32</sup>

These statements do not clarify that conducting amfori BSCI audits alone do not constitute effective human rights and environmental due diligence. amfori’s failure to consistently and publicly acknowledge the limitations of social audit generally, and amfori BSCI audits specifically, is an omission. It fails to check against actual and potential adverse impacts of social- or greenwashing by buyers and suppliers. Companies can use amfori’s BSCI audits as the predominant or only form of human rights due diligence, allowing abuses to go under-detected or un-detected.

### Questions

26. By when will amfori publicly acknowledge the limitations of its BSCI audit in all its materials, including prominently on its webpages where it describes amfori BSCI?
27. Please provide a copy of the latest standard form BSCI audit report as well as the underlying terms and conditions, under which the audit reports are issued.

## **V. Suspending social audits in high-risk regions such as in the Xinjiang region of China**

It is unclear whether amfori permits its amfori BSCI program to be implemented in the Xinjiang region of China and/or recognizes self-assessment, second party audits, or other third-party audits conducted in the region on amfori platforms. In December 2020, an amfori BSCI meeting presented that it was developing additional “Auditors’ Guidelines on State-Imposed Forced Labor.”<sup>33</sup>

In September 2020, at least five audit firms announced that they would not conduct social audits in Xinjiang. In March 2020, a representative of another audit firm told Human Rights Watch they would not conduct social audits in Xinjiang because of the pervasive Chinese state surveillance, which posed extremely high risks to workers as well as the audit team. Since 2017, [Human Rights Watch](#) and [Amnesty International](#) have revealed how the Chinese state is committing severe abuses in Xinjiang. Human Rights Watch in 2021 concluded that those abuses constitute “crimes against humanity.” In 2022, a report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights also found that the human rights abuses in the Uyghur region committed by the Chinese state may amount to crimes against humanity.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> amfori, “amfori BSCI System PG [Project Group] Call Minutes 14 December 2020 – Video Call,” <https://www.amfori.org/sites/default/files/amfori-2021-03-04-Minutes-amfori-System-Project-Group-Call-December-2020.pdf> (accessed March 17, 2023).

The [Coalition to End Forced Labour in the Uyghur Region](https://enduyghurforcedlabour.org), of which Human Rights Watch is a member, considers it impossible to “verify that any workplace in the Uyghur Region is free of forced labour or to prevent the use of forced labour in these workplaces in line with human rights due diligence.” In particular, the coalition also notes that “[w]orker interviews, which are essential to the methodology of any labour or human rights investigations, cannot generate reliable information in these circumstances. No worker can speak candidly to factory auditors about forced labour or other human rights issues without placing themselves and their families at risk of brutal retaliation; there are widespread restrictions and repression of fundamental freedoms and human rights defenders, and civic space has been shut down. Numerous audit firms have pulled out of the Uyghur Region due to the impossibility to conduct audits.”<sup>34</sup>

### **Questions**

28. Has amfori suspended the use of BSCI audits in Xinjiang? **If yes**, since when (date) has the suspension been in effect? Please provide a copy of any internal communication issued to amfori members about the suspension of amfori BSCI audits in the Xinjiang region. **If no**, are there any plans underway to institute such a suspension and when is it likely to become operational?
29. Please provide a copy of the Auditors’ Guideline for State-Imposed Forced Labor and please explain how this “goes beyond social audits” given the significantly high risks of forced labor.

## **VI. Transparency about amfori members and audited sites**

In May 2021, Human Rights Watch wrote to amfori, raising concerns about amfori’s lack of transparency regarding the amfori’s audits.<sup>35</sup> Over a year has passed and amfori has yet to release any public information about the names, street addresses, and other details (including the audit report) of all sites audited using amfori’s tools, including BSCI audit.

amfori responded stating that it “may exceptionally share amfori BSCI audit ratings and findings on specific producers with third-parties on a case-by-case basis.”<sup>36</sup> amfori stated that “our members range from very small companies to large multinationals and represent multiple industry sectors, are located in different geographies and hold varied roles in the supply chain. Due to this diversity and the fact that our members might be at different maturity levels when it comes to their due diligence journey, our approach is to support them to appreciate the benefits of transparency.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Coalition to End Forced Labour in the Uyghur Region, Call to Action, <https://enduyghurforcedlabour.org/call-to-action/> (accessed March 10, 2023).

<sup>35</sup> Human Rights Watch letter to amfori, May 4, 2021 and discussion between Human Rights Watch and amfori on June 30, 2021.

<sup>36</sup> amfori’s written response to Human Rights Watch, May 20, 2021.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

Human Rights Watch does not think the different levels of maturity of amfori’s members can be used to justify non-transparency as policy. amfori BSCI was set up in 2003.<sup>38</sup> Nearly two decades have passed since the implementation of the amfori BSCI program. Nothing prevents amfori from setting up a graded system, where companies that join recently are given a year or two to improve their systems, while those that have remained longer are required to demonstrate more mature systems with greater transparency. This would allow all companies with various maturity levels, including small and medium enterprises, time to improve their systems, while also ensuring that companies that have been members for a longer duration adopt more robust transparency.

Rather than pro-actively encouraging transparency, amfori appears to carry rules that makes it more cumbersome for suppliers and buyers to share the audit report to stakeholders. For example, an amfori BSCI audit report from 2020 carried a standard clause that stated “All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any, means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the amfori consent.”<sup>39</sup>

The near-total lack of transparency incentivizes companies to be a part of amfori and do the bare minimum in terms of human rights and environmental due diligence.

amfori falls behind even the small strides in transparency made by organizations like Initiative on Compliance and Sustainability, which publishes at least the names, street addresses, and a few other data points about factories that participate in the ICS audit—which are not enough.<sup>40</sup>

The lack of transparency about audited sites adversely impacts the effectiveness of amfori’s grievance redress mechanism. amfori promotes BSCI as a system designed for “continuous improvement” and should make it easier for workers and their representatives, including worker rights organizations, to know where precisely amfori BSCI audits are being conducted, by whom, the audit firms involved, and at a minimum, a summary of the findings, methodology, and the corrective actions.

amfori’s External Grievance Redress process requires that any party filing a grievance should file grievances that are “factual and evidence based.”<sup>41</sup> Currently, the grievance redress system expects unions, worker rights organizations, human rights defenders, or whistle blowers to

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<sup>38</sup> amfori, “amfori BSCI,” <https://www.amfori.org/content/amfori-bsci> (accessed January 20, 2023).

<sup>39</sup> amfori BSCI report on file with Human Rights Watch.

<sup>40</sup> International Trade Centre, “Sustainability Map,” <https://www.sustainabilitymap.org/network> (accessed March 10, 2023), filtered by data source: ICS – Initiative for Compliance and Sustainability.

<sup>41</sup> amfori, “The amfori External Grievance Mechanism,” <https://www.amfori.org/content/amfori-external-grievance-mechanism> (accessed January 20, 2023).

have sufficient resources to investigate if a supplier is participating in amfori’s programs to even be able to use amfori’s BSCI grievance redress system.

While amfori publishes members names on its site, it does not provide other details. For example, it does not indicate their membership status, how long they have been a part of amfori, and how amfori tracks the maturity of different members’ human rights due diligence systems compared with their revenues (including the extent to which they go beyond social audits). amfori also does not publish whether any members have been downgraded, suspended, or terminated.

This lack of transparency unfortunately risks contributing to social washing. Some companies can join amfori, pay membership fees, and opt to do the very minimum—that is use amfori’s BSCI audit—while other members can opt to use amfori BSCI audits and go beyond social audits, including by disclosing their supply chains, joining collaborative grievance redress mechanisms in-country, signing enforceable binding agreements, and so on. Companies with completely different approaches to human rights due diligence can be part of amfori without amfori making any distinctions between them.

### Questions

30. Please indicate whether amfori will commit to being more transparent by September 11, 2023, about audited sites?
31. If yes, please indicate which pieces of information outlined below will be published before September 11, 2023:<sup>42</sup>
  - 31.1. The name and street address of the audited site.
  - 31.2. Date when the site was first audited using amfori’s tools (BSCI and/or BEPI).<sup>43</sup>
  - 31.3. Date of the most recent audit and type of audit (full/follow-up).
  - 31.4. Nature of audit (announced, semi-announced, unannounced).
  - 31.5. Name of the firm that conducted the audit.
  - 31.6. Whether the approved audit partner that conducted the audit provided any other service (such as product or quality testing or other sustainability consultancy) in the past 2 years to the buyer and/or supplier relevant to the audit.<sup>44</sup>
  - 31.7. Name of the party that appointed the audit firm.<sup>45</sup>
  - 31.8. Name of the party that paid for the audit.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> These track key anniversaries.

<sup>43</sup> This would allow readers to understand how long a site/facility has been administering the program.

<sup>44</sup> This disclosure indicates “independence” of the party that audited the site in relation to the site and the brand that commissioned the audit.

<sup>45</sup> This disclosure indicates “independence” of the party that audited the site.

<sup>46</sup> This disclosure indicates “independence” of the party that audited the site.

- 31.9. Copy of the audit report (including corrective actions).<sup>47</sup>
32. Will the information about audited sites be published in open access, machine-readable formats, on the website?
33. How frequently will the information be updated?
34. Please indicate whether amfori will be more transparent about its members, publishing a list of all members, by membership status, and maturity of their human rights' due diligence levels? If **yes**, please provide more details and indicate by when such a system will be introduced, including whether the details will be published in open access, machine-readable formats.

## **VII. Instituting a robust grievance redress mechanism and other outcomes-based monitoring**

The effectiveness criteria outlined in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights state that grievance redress mechanisms should be legitimate, accessible, predictable, equitable, transparent, rights-compatible, a source of continuous learning to improve the mechanism, and whose design and performance is based on engagement and dialogue with “stakeholders’ groups for whose use they are intended.”<sup>48</sup>

amfori’s “External Grievance Mechanism” is open to grievances from third parties that are not amfori members, including “those with a formal mandate to represent individuals or communities directly affected by amfori activities and operations.”<sup>49</sup> These grievances should be lodged using an online grievance form, with pre-designed drop-down categories, and a box within which those with complaints have to write their grievance. This is not user-friendly.

### **Questions**

35. Please provide a summary of grievances received and the outcomes of the grievances in a format comparable to the disclosures being made by the International Accord on Health and Safety in Bangladesh.<sup>50</sup>
36. Please indicate whether amfori will commit to periodically publishing (such as annually) a summary of grievances received against amfori’s audits and how these were resolved on its website (in a format comparable to the disclosures made by the International Accord)?

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<sup>47</sup> This disclosure will be a strong deterrent against audit fraud.

<sup>48</sup> UN Guiding Principles, principle 29 commentary read with principle 31 and related commentary. In particular, “Since a business enterprise cannot, with legitimacy, both be the subject of complaints and unilaterally determine their outcome, these mechanisms should focus on reaching agreed solutions through dialogue. Where adjudication is needed, this should be provided by a legitimate, independent third-party mechanism.”

<sup>49</sup>

<sup>50</sup> International Accord on Health and Safety, “Complaints Mechanism,” <https://internationalaccord.org/workers/complaints-mechanism/> (accessed March 10, 2023).



37. What measures is amfori taking to improve the credibility of its grievance redress mechanism and align it more with the UNGPs criteria? Please specifically address any independent external assessment of amfori's grievance redress mechanism as well as plans to introduce independent external oversight over amfori's grievance redress and strengthen board oversight over grievances.

**VIII. Collaborating to set up effective grievance redress mechanisms**

38. Please outline any efforts that amfori has undertaken in collaboration with other MSIs and industry schemes to set up country-specific grievance redress mechanisms and the status of these efforts. In how many of countries where amfori's tools are applied have such collaborative efforts been pursued?

By email: Aruna Kashyap: [REDACTED] [@hrw.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@hrw.org)

16 May 2023

Dear Ms Kayshap,

Thanks once again for reaching out to us on the issues of human rights, and more particularly corporate accountability.

I believe the issues you raise are of strong mutual interest, and we are convinced that dialogue between organisations like yours and ours can only strengthen our common goal of advancing due diligence within supply chains. To this end, we have tried as much as possible to address all your questions and provide further background information in this area.

amfori was one of the first business actors to support the EU efforts on mandatory due diligence, we have followed the legislative process very closely, working in close conjunction with the European Commission, the European Parliament and other actors involved in putting this legislative act into place.

Furthermore, over the last 18 months we have created a number of opportunities for engagement on this topic between the different actors who will be impacted by this legislature in various fora, including the OECD, the WTO and the World Bank, to ensure that these acts are effectively complied with.

Our capacity building and training activities on our tools and broader due diligence are another lever that can be used to support the effective implementation of these legislative acts. Last year we organized about 250 training sessions. On average around 70% of these trainings take place in sourcing markets for our members' supply chains partners. These partners receive these trainings free of charge.

The supportive role towards mandatory due diligence of our tools and the services we offer our members under voluntary industry initiatives such as amfori BSCI have been recognized by many of the actors involved, including the EU. But as with many types of interventions aimed at addressing due diligence there are inevitable risks involved.

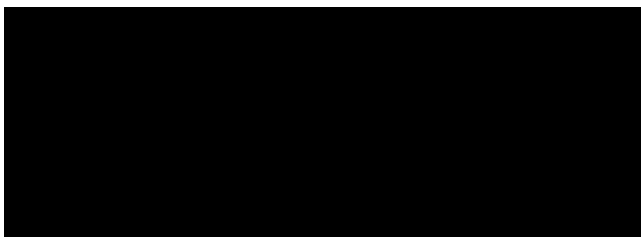
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It is important to recognize that the services and tools we provide cannot by themselves ensure our members' due diligence. They can only support and encourage actions that our member companies themselves have to take. Furthermore, amfori's mandate vis-à-vis its members has limitations, meaning we cannot guarantee behaviours and actions of member companies.

We believe our responses in the Annex below addresses many of the specific risks that you associate with our tools and services, but also point to the opportunities they provide for further progress on our common goal of robust due diligence.

We welcome your enquiry and comments on these tools and services and we do hope to maintain dialogue with you on this topic in the spirit of collegiality.

Yours sincerely,



Linda Kromjong  
President, amfori

## **Appendix: Responses to Questions**

### **Background**

amfori is a membership led business association for sustainable trade, enabling companies across the globe to operate responsible business by helping them improve the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) performance of their value chains through robust due diligence. We work collaboratively with our members, business partners and stakeholders to accelerate positive impact.

Our actions supporting our mission are multifold, involving amongst others:

- enabling our members to monitor their supply chains for both social and environmental performance (about 35 000 monitoring activities a year through [amfori BSCI](#) and [amfori BEPI](#)),
- capacity building of our members and business partners through the amfori academy
- upstream risk management through an ESG risk identification index,
- facilitating responses to grievances of affected stakeholders through a supply chain grievance mechanism,
- smart multi-level advocacy aimed at influencing the international, regional and national legislative frameworks to create a policy landscape that enables sustainable business.

These endeavours involve our 2 500 business members (retailers, importers, brands and national associations) from over 45 countries sourcing from all over the world and the ca 47 000 business partners connected to them in our platform.

### **I – Tracking measures beyond social audits on health and safety**

We believe that a safe and healthy environment is a fundamental right for everyone at work. To this end, occupational health and safety is an important principle of the [amfori BSCI Code of Conduct](#).

The Code of Conduct is a commitment document for amfori members and their business partners to exercise human rights due diligence and environmental protection in their global supply chains, in line with internationally recognized principles. It gives direction to amfori members and their business partners to conduct responsible business, and to identify, prevent, mitigate, account for and remediate adverse human rights, as well as environmental impacts in their supply chains.

While safety is covered here, both in the context of building and workers safety, please note that under the current amfori BSCI System Manual, an auditor is not expected to conduct “building integrity inspections” which go beyond their mandate as a social auditor. However, the auditor is required to report on the general description of the premises.

You will find the full set of questions that social compliance auditors assess under Performance Area 7 (OHS) in the amfori BSCI System Manual 2022 - Part 3 - P 47-66. See [updated amfori System Manual](#).

Further to these stipulations, amfori engages with other schemes that can complement the amfori BSCI system with provisions on building integrity. However, we do not make the signing of third-party agreements, particularly those relating to specific countries, mandatory for members. Noting, amongst others, that the different agreements prevailing in various countries could create a less than level playing field between members sourcing from different countries as regards the requirements they must fulfil as amfori members. Furthermore, as such agreements are not included in our Platform, we would not have proper oversight on their implementation.

Having said that, amfori is of the view that The Accord has played an important role in improving workers' safety in the Bangladeshi Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry and can potentially do the same in Pakistan. To this end, we have advocated for its continuation, ( see [report](#)) in close liaison with other multi-stakeholder and business initiatives in Bangladesh, and for its development in Pakistan. Notably, soon after the Rana Plaza tragedy unfolded, we called on our members to participate in the scheme, and now note that about half its signatories are amfori members. We are also encouraging our members to do the same in Pakistan. To date about 40% of the signatories in Pakistan are amfori members. (See [article](#)) But we recognize that the decision to join these schemes rests with our members alone.

It is also worth noting that amfori is continuing its efforts to build capacity through the organisation of several trainings on building and fire safety for business partners. Over the past five years, amfori has organised more than 70 sessions in China, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia and more are planned in the coming months.

At the time of response to your queries, we had 718 members sourcing from Bangladesh and 520 members sourcing from Pakistan. As per April 2023, we were aware of 1781 Business Partners in Bangladesh that are registered on the amfori Sustainability Platform (77% of them in the textile, apparel and luxury goods industry), and 778 Business Partners in Pakistan (83% of them in the textile, apparel and luxury goods industry).

## **II – Tracking members' measures “beyond social audits” on forced labour**

amfori's stance on forced labour is set out in the amfori BSCI Code of Conduct (CoC). The Code draws on important international labour standards protecting workers' rights including ILO conventions and declarations, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises.

Supply chains free of forced labour, bonded labour or compulsory labour are among the core labour rights that amfori members and their business partners commit to in adhering to the CoC. Furthermore, amfori considers these violations of labour rights as ‘zero tolerance’<sup>1</sup> behaviours that require collective action from concerned amfori members and their business partners. This position is reflected in a number of papers including [amfori Responds to Commission Proposal on Forced Labour](#) and [Combatting State-Imposed Forced Labour: A Path Towards More Effective Action](#).

In principle, members can request amfori BSCI audits to be carried out, in all the countries that they directly source from. At the time of response to your queries, we were not aware of any of our members sourcing from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, as none of them had mapped any suppliers from these countries to our Platform.

In Turkmenistan, according to our Platform, no audits have been carried out since 2018. But in recognition of the forced labour concerns in the country, we have been in regular dialogue with human rights NGO representatives and, based on the advice we received, have alerted our members on the risks in directly and indirectly sourcing from the country.

In Uzbekistan, as of April 2023, we had just 10 members sourcing from 8 suppliers in the country mapped in our platform. However, beyond supporting these members and their partners in this country through the facilitation of audits, over the last two years we have also been executing a project in the country together with GIZ, and with the support of ILO, to build capacity of workers in textile factories to, amongst others, reduce the risk of forced labour in the country. See [amfori-GIZ Improving Working Conditions Project in Uzbekistan Gathers Steam](#).

So, we do understand that any social audit system has limitations in not just addressing but also detecting labour abuses. To this end, we regularly engage with stakeholders, including those who may have assessments on situations that differ from audit results. On a number of occasions, on the basis of stakeholder assessments, we have conducted further audits to reassess situations to address problems that had not been initially detected. The Top Glove case you refer to is a case in point.

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<sup>1</sup> According to our zero-tolerance protocol, zero-tolerance behaviour refers to human rights violations and business behaviour that may endanger the independence of the audit. These are to be distinguished from regular social performance findings. When severe human rights violations such as bonded and forced labour are detected during an amfori BSCI audit, the auditor triggers a rapid zero tolerance alert within 24 hours. amfori and members linked are then notified. The aim of this protocol is to allow the business partner and linked members to collaboratively work on remediation. For further information on the protocol see Annex 5 of the BSCI manual.

Noting that our members are responsible for deciding which suppliers are audited based on their prioritization, we encourage them not to rely solely on these audits conducted but to use additional due diligence methods including the engagement of stakeholders to obtain a better understanding of the situation in the factories and farms from which they source.

We have carried out a number of member surveys enquiring if and how they monitor forced labour and other rights violations beyond commissioning audits. Data from these surveys are anonymised and compiled only in aggregate form due to the risks these responses could pose to certain actors engaged in monitoring were they to be identifiable.

We also cannot publish data from our audit reports as there are legal issues surrounding the publication of what may be considered proprietary and personal information. When it comes to information on our members, we do publish and regularly update a searchable [list](#) of companies that are current members of amfori on our website. But we do not classify them according to their activity levels. However, through a Business Intelligence Dashboard on amfori Insights, members have the possibility to review their own sustainability performance score in their supply chain as a first step towards an enhanced Membership Commitment Programme.

When it comes to remediation, the funding models we recommend are determined by the specificities of each case.

### **III. Instituting more robust audit quality controls**

amfori set up its [Audit Integrity Programme](#) with the aim of boosting the transparency, accuracy and reliability of audits. You can find a summary of our 2018-2020 Audit Integrity Programme on our [website](#). In the future, we plan to publish this annually. To further strengthen our work on audit integrity, we have also signed agreements with industry leaders in audits. These include amfori's commitment to [APSCA](#). All amfori BSCI auditors must be APSCA certified. amfori sits on the APSCA stakeholder advisory board, to jointly drive the Social Auditors profession and audit integrity.

In 2020 KPMG Advisory NV ('KPMG') was selected as the amfori BSCI Quality Partner from 2021 – 2023 (inclusive) through a competitive tender. This renews the mandate amfori previously held with KPMG from 2017-2020.

Together with our auditing partners, we have conducted several investigations on monitoring and the results of which have been shared with our members. However, we cannot share these beyond our membership for legal and contractual reasons.

For the same reasons, we cannot publicly share details of auditing firms that have been sanctioned, but this is made available to our members.

Note that amfori aims to develop further guidance on audit integrity for its members and affiliate members, and we would be happy to keep you updated.

#### **IV. Publicly acknowledging the limitations of social audits**

amfori believes that high quality social auditing is an important basis for human rights due diligence and a viable tool, to detect human rights violations. However, social audits are not a stand-alone solution. They offer a snapshot at a given point in time and can only help in improving labour standards when supplemented with other effective human rights due diligence tools. It is also necessary that audits be paired with a strategic approach to collaboratively engage business partners and other relevant stakeholders. This view is highlighted in [the revised amfori BSCI System Manual](#) and amfori's [response to the EU CSDDD proposal](#). It is also a view we repeatedly express in public fora. However, given the scale of audits that go through our system annually, it is only natural that these are the features which some stakeholders most associate us with. Our members, however, regularly make use of other due diligence tools including self-assessment tools, ESG indicators informing company's risk assessment, a capacity building portfolio, supply chain grievance channels such as our Speak for Change Programme (see below for further information on [Speak for Change](#)).

For further information on the amfori BSCI audit report please see [BSCI System Manual Part 3](#) <https://www.amfori.org/sites/default/files/Part III auditor guidelines.pdf>.

As regards Xinjiang, our data shows that we have not had any audit reports from the region in the last year as our members have not mapped any suppliers in Xinjiang to our platform. But we remain concerned and vigilant to the reports on the human rights situation in the region and are continuing our engagement with stakeholders that are close to these issues to better advise our members. This has led to, amongst others, our Auditors Guidance for State-Imposed Forced Labour that you refer to. However, due to security concerns of those involved we are unable to share this document publicly.

On the broader issue of transparency, we are continuing to look at ways at how this can be improved and do not have any specific deadlines as regards this process. While much of what you mention in relation to transparency is already provided in our audit reports, the names of the parties involved are not included. This is subject to a contractual agreement between the audit firm and the company that requested the audit, or the producer being audited. Furthermore, we are not able to share information on audited sites publicly for legal reasons.



## **VII. Instituting a robust grievance mechanism and other outcomes-based monitoring**

In 2021, we initiated our [Supply Chain Grievance Mechanism](#) known as ‘Speak for Change’, that allows workers and their representatives, communities, trade unions and NGOs, etc. to confidentially submit grievances about working conditions. This enables members to provide access to remedy in their global supply chains. Cases are investigated, tracked, published (anonymously), and where needed remediation to the affected persons is provided. Following the Vietnam pilot, amfori is expanding the Programme to **more countries in 2023** (Turkey, India and Bangladesh). From 2024 onwards we will continue to work on bringing this programme to additional relevant countries for amfori members.

The Programme is committed to transparency and continuous learning and acknowledges the importance of public access to its case information. For information on our reporting and publication please see [link](#).

The Speak for Change programme’s credibility is crucial to amfori, and the programme was established following extensive consultation with relevant stakeholders including UN representatives, workers representatives and other civil society groups. We also regularly gather feedback on its functioning. Furthermore, amfori’s independent [Stakeholder Advisory Council](#) includes a subgroup focused on the programme that regularly meets with amfori to exchange views.

We also understand that collaboration is key to the proper functioning of the programme. To this end, amfori is an active participant of the so-called CARE Platform involving, amongst others, [The Accord](#), the [Fairwear Foundation](#) and [PST](#). Within this platform we are piloting a collaboration protocol with some of the Platform members including Fairwear Foundation and the PST that allows grievance mechanisms to cooperate with each other in shared factories to make more efficient use of different resources as well as apply a stronger leverage where needed. Such collaborative efforts are foreseen in the abovementioned countries where the programme will be rolled out.