

UNECE makes verifying sustainability claims easier for garment sector



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The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) member states have endorsed a toolkit of policy recommendations, implementation guidelines and standard, making it easier for asserting and verifying sustainability claims in the garment and footwear sector. The toolkit provides traceability and transparency solutions for tracking any garment.

From raw components to point of purchase, the UNECE toolkit delivers solutions for generating an immutable record of provenance and composition for any item of clothing or pair of shoes. Armed with such information, consumers, regulators and companies themselves can check claims around sustainability and ethical production, UNECE said in a press release.

"Greater transparency and traceability can also contribute to efforts towards building a circular economy, as prioritised by the European Union. With precise information on product composition, goods can be more easily recycled keeping materials in use and practices that generate waste, pollution or damage the natural environment cannot be hidden from regulators," UNECE said. The UNECE member state endorsement includes a Call to Action or 'The Sustainability Pledge', inviting governments, garment and footwear manufacturers and industry stakeholders to pledge to apply the toolkit of measures and take a positive step towards improving the environmental and ethical credentials of the sector. "Commitments should be made in time for the next multi-stakeholder policy dialogue, planned to take place on 21-23 September in Milan, Italy," the release said.

"We're incredibly proud and excited about the highly pragmatic, workable and opensource solutions that have been endorsed by UN member States for improving the sustainability and circular practices in the garment and footwear sector," said Olga Algayerova, executive secretary of the UNECE.

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“With this endorsement, we have a clear roadmap for change and I encourage all actors, regulators and governments to join The Sustainability Pledge.”

The Sustainability Pledge is a result of the UNECE project ‘Enhancing Transparency and Traceability of Sustainable Value Chains in Garment and Footwear’ that is being implemented with UN/CEFACT, in collaboration with the International Trade Centre (ITC) and with funding from the European Union. The goal of the project is to establish a mechanism that enables governments, industry partners, consumers and all other relevant stakeholders to make risk-informed decisions and achieve accountability for sustainability claims.

The Sustainability Pledge meets growing demand from consumers for more information on how clothing, textiles and shoes are sourced, manufactured and made. According to Euratex, the EU textile and clothing industry alone has a turnover of €162 billion. Millions of people are employed through the sector’s global supply chains, which are complex and opaque creating opportunity for the exploitation and abuse of workers many of whom are women.

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