

## 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles

28 November 2024, the anniversary event ‘10 years of the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles’ took place at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in Berlin.

The focus was on honouring the achievements of the Partnership, which has been working for a decade to improve social and ecological conditions along the textile supply chain. Together with Development Minister Svenja Schulze, Parliamentary State Secretaries Dr Bärbel Kofler (BMZ), Dr Bettina Hoffmann (BMUV) and State Secretary Lilian Tschan (BMAS) as well as almost 130 high-level representatives from the economy, civil society, trade unions, standard organisations and producing countries, the event addressed the Partnership’s achievements and future prospects.

A central point on the programme was the signing of a declaration of intent to ‘strengthen local trade unions and NGOs as legitimate representatives of rights holders - because together we can achieve more’. Gina Burgard, head of the Textiles Partnership Secretariat, summarised: “The Textiles Partnership has always been and will continue to be a platform for the exchange of experience and impactful project work on site – far beyond legal requirements.”

Elke Hortmeyer, Director of Communications and International Relations, represented the Bremen Cotton Exchange.



Svenja Schulze, German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development © Partnership for Sustainable Textiles, Photo: Julia Merkel

## 7<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Cotton Roads

On 28 November 2024, the 7<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Cotton Roads Conference took place in Izmir, Türkiye, where leading cotton nations of the Mediterranean region met. It was hosted by the Izmir Commodity Exchange, in collaboration with the Hellenic Cotton Association and the Centro Algodonero Nacional de España.

The event brought together representatives from countries such as Türkiye, Greece, Spain, Italy and Egypt, which are among the leading cotton producers in the region. Topics covered included economic, social and ecological aspects of the cotton value chain – from production and trade to final textile products.

Jens Wirth, Managing Director of the Bremen Cotton Exchange, took part in the panel ‘The Future of the Cotton Industry in the Axis of Sustainability and Traceability’. In his presentation, he introduced the Bremen Cotton Exchange and the Make the Label Count initiative. The Bremen Cotton Exchange was also one of the sponsors of the event, which offered the opportunity to show presence at numerous contact points and strengthen international networks.

The day ended with a gala dinner, which gave participants the opportunity to continue the discussions in an informal setting and further deepen existing partnerships.



Jens Wirth, Managing Director of the Bremen Cotton Exchange



## GTAI: China's Private Enterprises Are Investing More in Africa

“The decline in Chinese public investment in African infrastructure over the past five years is being replaced by increased private investment, especially in industrialisation projects.” Germany Trade and Invest (GTAI) adds to the conclusion of a study by the Carnegie Foundation from May 2024: Chinese private investors are also breaking new ground in Africa.

According to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in August 2023, 3,000 Chinese companies have a portfolio of investments in Africa. Over 70 percent of these companies are private. Unlike in the past, private Chinese investments are now also flowing into infrastructure to a greater extent. This was previously the domain of state-owned companies.

### Most Chinese production in Africa is for Africa only

In addition to investments in infrastructure, there are numerous private Chinese investments in the manufacturing industry on the continent. However, this mostly involves small-scale production for domestic markets. “After decades of experimentation, only a few [Chinese] manufacturers of low-quality clothing and footwear are able to supply the global market from Africa,” Carnegie study says. The reasons include the small market size as well as shortcomings in quality and logistics, and sometimes also the supply of raw materials. This can be seen in Ethiopia.

The Eastern Industry Park, founded in 2007, is a private Chinese investment. It is regarded as a model for such parks in Ethiopia. 95 percent of the companies in the park with a total of around 20,000 employees come from China, according to the park administration during a visit in 2022. 2022's largest employer was LiDa Jeans. The

Guangzhou-based company produces trousers for customers in China and neighbouring countries. The quality is not good enough for markets in Europe or the USA, as even the management says.

### The example of Ethiopia and textiles

Given the limited purchasing power and low demand in Africa, manufacturers also produce relatively low quantities. This keeps unit costs high. And the markets are not only small, they also seal each other off. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is intended to change this. A manufacturer like LiDa, who also sells to neighbouring countries, would benefit from its functioning.

So why don't Ethiopia's clothing factories, with their extremely low wages, export more to Europe? “The logistics are worse than in Pakistan or India, for example,” says Brigitte Heuser from the Esslingen-based company 4YOU Modevertrieb. “The ships in the seaport of Djibouti leave too infrequently,” says the consultant, who accompanied a group of European buyers to Ethiopian textile and clothing factories in mid-November.



Source: [GTAI](#)

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