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Presidential remarks: Announcing  
Measures to Improve Working Conditions  
in the Apparel Industry and an  
Exchange with Reporters, The Rose  
Garden, The White House, Aug 2 96

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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Before I begin, let me say one word about the new job figures. The economy created nearly 200,000 new jobs in July. This is further good news for the American people. The economy is growing, creating good jobs. Thanks to the good hard work of employees and businesses here in America, we have the economic equivalent of the Dream Team -- strong growth, millions of new jobs, low inflation, low unemployment. <sup>using statistics</sup> That's the lineup we want for America.

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

8-14-96

**Acknowledgments:** Vice President Gore, Secretary Reich; Phil Knight of Nike; Kathie Lee Gifford; Senator Tom Harkin; Congressman George Miller; distinguished leaders and guests...

I have just had a very productive meeting with representatives of some of the nation's largest apparel and footwear companies, as well as representatives of labor, consumer and human rights groups and the religious community. They all accepted my invitation to meet here this morning to deal with an issue that is rightly on the minds of millions of American consumers.

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One year ago today, the discovery of more than 70 people working in virtual slavery, behind barbed wire, in a garment factory in El Monte, California, awakened Americans to the fact that some of the clothes and shoes they buy are manufactured by people who work under deplorable conditions.

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The well-documented episode involving Kathie Lee Gifford also awakened many people to this problem. We are all outraged by these awful revelations. But, as leaders, we have a responsibility to do something about them. When Kathie Lee learned that some of the garments with her name on them were being produced under terrible working conditions, she didn't bury her head in the sand.

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She reacted quickly, decisively and responsibly. That's what we all must do.

America has always stood for human dignity and the fundamental rights of working people. We believe that everyone should work but no one should have to put their lives or health in jeopardy to put food on the table for their family.

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That is why I am so pleased to announce that the companies gathered here today have agreed to begin working together to put an end to this terrible problem.

**They have agreed to do two things. First, they will take additional steps to ensure that the products they make and sell are manufactured under decent and humane working conditions.**

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**Second, they will develop options to inform consumers that the products they buy were not produced under those exploitative conditions. They have agreed to report back to me within six months on their progress.**

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**Human and labor rights are not brand names. They are the most basic products of our democracy.**

8-14-96

I want to compliment Nike, Liz Claiborne,  
 Phillips/Van Heusen, L.L.Bean, Patagonia and all the  
 companies who have pledged to live up to that  
 responsibility, but I want to see their results. The  
 ultimate test of their commitment will be for them to  
 produce tough criteria to make sure that sweatshops are  
 not used and to make sure consumers know it.

*Wise Niles Karm Karm Wamalo*  
*Three's*  
*Frank + Katherine*

I do not know what final strategies they will come up  
 with. It is my hope that they will develop methods that  
 might include labels, clear signs in stores or other means of  
 getting information directly to consumers at the point of  
 sale.

This is a good start. As I have said before, we know that business has to produce a profit. That is the foundation of the vibrant free enterprise system we enjoy here in America. But I believe that for the system to succeed, good corporations must also be good citizens. America's success in the 21st century depends more than ever on partnerships between government and business.

We are already working with the high tech community to put computers in every classroom and the media and entertainment industry to improve the quality of the television our children watch every day.

Today, we are embarking on a new partnership. We hope that it will become a vital part of the battle against sweatshops here in the United States and against abusive working conditions everywhere.

Thank you.