

## Report of the Round Table on **India's Sustainable Fashion Business Landscape**

**Date:** Friday, 30th August 2024

**Time:** 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM

**Venue:** SASMIRA Institute of Design & Textiles

**Organiser:** International Fashion Business Exchange Council (IFBEC)

### Introduction

On Friday, 30th August 2024, the inaugural Roundtable of India's Sustainable Fashion Business Landscape was meticulously organized by IFBEC at the prestigious SASMIRA Institute of Design & Textiles. Held from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM, this landmark event convened a distinguished assembly of industry leaders, innovators, and key stakeholders.

The roundtable was honoured by the presence of our Chief Guest, Smt. Roop Rashi, the Textile Commissioner of India, whose support and insights provided a significant impetus to the proceedings. Led by an esteemed panel of experts (enclosed list), the event featured a series of elaborate close door discussions designed to facilitate an in-depth exploration of crucial topics pertaining to sustainable fashion.

The gathering offered a profound platform for critical dialogue and strategic exchange, focusing on the advancement and implementation of sustainable practices within the textile sector. This event marked a significant milestone in the ongoing evolution of India's sustainable fashion landscape, fostering a collaborative environment aimed at driving meaningful and impactful change.

### Attended by :

Smt. Roop Rashi	Textile Commissioner, Gov. of India
Mr. Mihir Mehta	President, SASMA and Sasmira
Mr. Sandeep Bajoria	Chairman, All India Cotton Seed Crushers Association
Mr. Sunil Patwari	President, TEXPROCIL
Mr. Rajkumar Agarwal	MD, SVG Fashions Pvt. Ltd.
Mr. Bodhisatwa Mukherjee	Director Trade Promotion & Research WTC
Mr. Jawahar Lal Chaudhari	Ex Dy. CEO KVIC
Mr. Dharmesh Nandu	Founder, Apparel Manufacturers of India
Mr. Jaideep Sajdeh	Texool Ltd.
Mr. Milind Rane	E4F Resurrect Pvt. Ltd.
Ms. Anna Goncharova	Chambers Commerce and Industry, Russian Federation
Mr. Santosh Patil	Founder, Recycling Park, Kohlapur
Dr. Dhanashri Hardas	Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce
Prof. Dr. Sharmila J. Dua	Director, NIFT
Dr. Lipi Choudhary	Associate Prof, NIFT
Dr Kislaya Choudhary	Textile Design Dept, NIFT
Dr. Jayshree Parikh	Academician & Author, Environmental Studies

Dr. Ashok Tiwari	Director, Sasmira
Ms. Vikita Shah	Dean, SIDT
Dr. Sanjay Bhide	Trans Asian Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Mr. Hemang Palan	Palan Industries
Mr. Narottam Damani	Damani Tex
Mr. Umesh Bani	Textile Consultant
Ms. Neha Gupta	Founder, IFBEC
Mr. Vinit Parikh	Co-Founder, IFBEC

## **Opening Remarks**

The roundtable commenced with opening remarks by Mr. Vinit Parikh, Co-Founder of IFBEC. Mr. Parikh expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the Chief Guest and all attendees for their participation. He highlighted that the event was scheduled around World Fashion Day, celebrated on 21st August, to underscore its relevance and importance in the context of sustainable fashion.

## **Event Overview**

### **Introduction and Objectives**

Ms. Neha Gupta, Founder of IFBEC, extended a warm welcome to all attendees and conveyed her appreciation for their participation. She outlined the objectives of the Roundtable and shared the future plans of the organization. Ms. Gupta emphasized that IFBEC, as a Section 8 company, is dedicated to addressing issues related to fashion waste awareness and management via strategic partners. The company engages various stakeholders, including weavers, manufacturers, buyers, and sellers, to create awareness and drive change. She provided a brief overview of IFBEC's projects with KDMC, Indian Navy at Navy Nagar : Mumbai, MahaKhadi, and other global initiatives highlighting the positive public response and increased awareness about the challenges of fashion waste.

### **Institutional Perspectives**

Mr. Mihir Mehta, Director of SASMIRA, shared insights on the journey of the Roundtable from its inception to its realization. He discussed the role of SASMIRA and its partnership with the Ministry of Textiles, as well as the institute's efforts in creating networks, advancing R&D, motivating scientists and developing skilled manpower to handle modern machinery. Mr. Mehta also provided historical context on the production of art silk in the 1920s and emphasized SASMIRA's commitment to national and governmental objectives. Affirming further that SASMIRA's robust infrastructure is available for industry's sustainable growth.

### **Environmental Contributions**

Mr. Sandeep Bajoria, Member of the Environment Committee, presented on the benefits of bamboo as a sustainable resource. He discussed its versatile applications, including in boilers, ethanol production, furniture, and building materials. Mr. Bajoria stressed the need for increased bamboo cultivation and its potential for fibre production, advocating for its broader adoption in various sectors. Supported the promotion of fashion waste recycling and expressed confidence in the positive impact of such awareness programs, likening them to successful initiatives like effective use of Bamboo Textile for sustainable production.

### **Regulatory and Environmental Initiatives**

Mr. Sunil Patwari from TEXPROCIL addressed the role of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) in mitigating environmental pollution. He recounted historical issues with chemical effluent in industrial areas and the improvements achieved since the implementation of the Environmental Act of 1987. Mr. Patwari drew parallels between past and present trends, such as the increased use of millets due to digital media, and supported similar awareness efforts for fashion waste recycling.

### **Government and Regulatory Framework**

Ms. Roop Rashi, the Textile Commissioner for the Government of India, extended her appreciation for the "Roundtable" event and commended the efforts of the Founder and Co-Founder of the organizing company. She expressed her gratitude for being invited as the Chief Guest.

In her address, Ms. Rashi outlined the role of the government in enforcing the "Environmental Pollution Act" and its regulations, which are designed to manage and mitigate all forms of industrial waste, including that from the textile industry. She emphasized the importance of a collaborative approach involving both government regulations and rational behavior by all stakeholders—from manufacturers to recyclers. According to Ms. Rashi, every participant in this ecosystem must bear the responsibility to achieve sustainability, defining ecologically sustainable practices as those which aim to "sustain the sustainability."

Ms. Rashi argued that sustainability should be viewed as an asset for improving quality of life rather than as a mere opportunity to generate revenue from waste. She cited Japan as a prime example of how a country can effectively implement sustainable practices despite various challenges. In the context of India, she highlighted the need to balance "Volume vs. Value" and to seize every opportunity to advance sustainability goals.

She suggested that the model for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), particularly in the textile sector, should be reframed to recognize these enterprises as valuable resources. The traditional perception of the Handicrafts and Handlooms sector as underprivileged or neglected should evolve, particularly with the advent of digital technology, which could help reshape its image.

Ms. Rashi proposed that weavers should be regarded as artisans rather than mere workers and stressed the need to focus on recycling, including the recovery of fiber. She also advocated for the certification of recycled products and suggested that the government should establish dedicated spaces in government outlets for the sale of recycled goods. Additionally, she recommended that other marketing channels should support and promote recycled products to foster a more sustainable industry.

### **Business and Financial Insights**

Mr. Rajkumar Agrawal provided a detailed exposition on the concept of "business sense," using the example of solar energy implementation to illustrate his points. He noted that while the initial investment in solar technology—including costs related to installation, taxation, and duties—could be substantial over the first three to four years, the long-term benefits far outweigh these initial expenses. Over the subsequent 20 to 30 years, the cost of solar energy decreases significantly, and the system provides a reliable and cost-effective source of electricity.

Additionally, Mr. Agrawal discussed the advantages of improved credit facilities offered by banks, which can further support the financial viability of such investments.

The quorum also engaged in a discussion about the concept of a "circular" textile sector. This model envisions a continuous loop where fresh fiber is converted into products, used by consumers, and then collected by

producers for recycling. This cycle ultimately leads to the reintroduction of the recycled material back into the market, thus promoting sustainability and reducing waste.

Furthermore, the responsibility of manufacturers to innovate and refine processes was emphasized. An example cited was a unit in Surat that developed a process which uses only one-third of the usual water required, thereby conserving a vital resource while still achieving the desired product quality. Such advancements were highlighted as potential unique selling propositions (USPs) that could enhance a company's competitive edge and sustainability credentials.

### **Sectoral Recommendations**

Mr. Jawahar Lal Chaudhari, former Deputy CEO of KVIC, suggested several strategies for enhancing IFBEC's impact. He recommended closer collaboration with weaver centres, educational institutions such as SASMIRA, and businesses. He also proposed organising buyers-sellers meetings to strengthen industry connections and facilitate better coordination among stakeholders.

### **Consumer Perceptions and Challenges**

Mr. Nikhil Furia, representing Apparel Manufacturers of India (AMI, a renowned association of apparel manufacturer supporting Sustainable production, addressed the prevailing mindset of consumers regarding the elevated costs associated with sustainable apparel. He highlighted this perception as one of the significant challenges facing businesses within this sector.

Furthermore, Mr. Furia discussed the issue of Khadi, an artisanal fabric, which, due to its higher price point, often leads consumers to reconsider their purchases in favor of more affordably priced fabrics and garments. His insights underscored the complexities that eco-friendly and artisanal apparel manufacturers encounter as they strive to balance sustainability with market demand. The room also added to have Khadi and Handloom textile to be introduced at school levels in form of Uniforms, allowing early acceptability of the heritage of India.

### **Educational Contributions**

Prof. Dr. Sharmila J. Dua from NIFT, Navi Mumbai, examined consumer psychology regarding the lifecycle of fabrics. She emphasised the need for detailed product information beyond generic terms like "blended cotton." Dr. Lipi Choudhary from NIFT discussed ongoing pilot research on recycling and its role in educating fashion students. Both academics expressed optimism about the future of sustainable fashion and the active engagement of students in these initiatives.

### **International Perspectives**

Ms. Anna Goncharova from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of The Russian Federation expressed her appreciation for the proactive approach towards environmental sustainability in India. She noted the active efforts to recycle fashion and textile waste and wished success to IFBEC in its endeavours.

### **Government and Policy Recommendations**

Ms. Kamakshi highlighted the Government Resolution (GR) concerning the promotion of Khadi. She noted that the GR mandated the use of Khadi fabrics for government staff uniforms and in specific sectors. It also specified five certified fabrics to ensure quality and support for artisans. This directive was intended to guide artisans towards appropriate and recognised forums, thereby promoting the use of traditional fabrics and encouraging sustainable practices within the government sector. The resolution was seen as a measure to

enhance the visibility and acceptance of Khadi, thereby supporting artisans and reinforcing the role of certified fabrics in achieving sustainability goals.

### **Awareness and Problem-Solving**

Mr. Santosh Patil, Founder of Textile Park, underscored the importance of raising awareness across the sector and addressing ongoing challenges. He stressed the need for collaborative problem-solving and innovative solutions.

### **Conclusion**

The roundtable concluded with a summary of key takeaways and a commitment to advancing sustainability in the fashion industry. Ms. Neha Gupta and Mr. Vinit Parikh reaffirmed their dedication to spreading awareness about environmental issues and promoting sustainable practices. They expressed gratitude to all attendees and presented mementos to honour their contributions.

In her final remarks, Ms. Roop Rashi commended the discussions and constructive feedback provided. She emphasised the need for cost-effective recycling solutions and streamlined waste collection processes. She also encouraged the creation of a unified platform for better coordination among buyers, sellers, and manufacturers.

Based on these insights from the Roundtable Conference, the IFBEC has established consortiums focused on sustainability, handloom and traditional textiles, export promotion, research and development and policy advocacy. These consortiums aim to engage stakeholders across sectors, driving growth and development in each area to strengthen **India's position as a global leader** in the fashion industry and empower it to become the **fashion business capital**.

The roundtable was deemed a significant milestone in fostering dialogue and collaboration towards a more sustainable fashion industry in India.