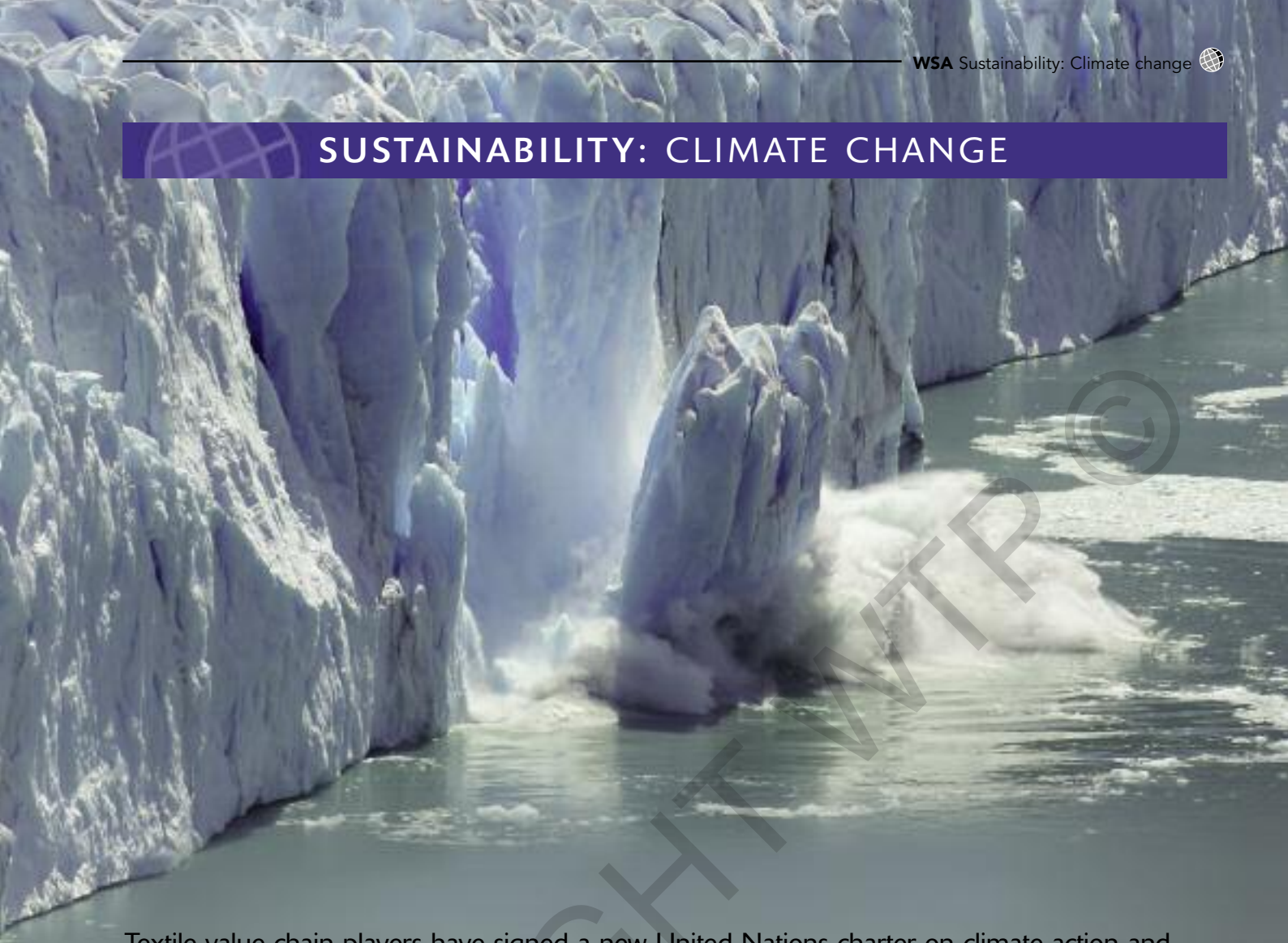
SUSTAINABILITY: CLIMATE CHANGE



Textile value chain players have signed a new United Nations charter on climate action and have said they will work together to meet its demanding targets.

Clarity in Katowice

by Stephen Tierney

The United Nations presented a new 'Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action' to the public at its 2018 Climate Change Conference in Katowice, Poland. This charter has the aim of encouraging companies in the apparel industry and other areas of fashion to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the textile value chain and achieve net zero emissions by 2050. As a first step, signatories to the charter have agreed to a 30% reduction by 2030. Plans are in place to define specific individual measures and create new working groups to establish the best way to put all of this into practice.

Steps will include the selection of climate-friendly materials as early as possible in the design process, monitoring and reporting on the effects of raw materials on the climate, disclosure of the preferred raw materials and respective energy sources, as well as the goal of being able to return the materials to "a value-retaining circular economy" after they are used.

Shared responsibility

At Puma, one of 43 companies to sign up, there is already an awareness that 90% of its carbon footprint is generated by the supply chain partners who make, not only its shoes and clothing, but those of other brands, too, according to chief executive, Bjørn Gulden. They have what he calls shared supply chains. "If we want to reduce carbon emissions in our supply chains, we need to work together with our industry peers," he says.

Peers to have put pen to paper on the charter include Sympatex, adidas, Peak Performance, Salomon, Mammut, Hugo Boss, H&M, Schoeller Textiles, Lenzing, Arc'teryx and

Companies have committed to play their part in keeping world temperature rises to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

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Inditex, in addition to key campaign groups involved in the promotion of sustainability in the textile industry such as the Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC), Textile Exchange and ZDHC (Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals).

A rise of 1.5

Lenzing chief executive, Stefan Doboczky, is proud to have added his name. He says this action is in keeping with previous commitments the fibre manufacturer has made, for example, in signing an open letter that the World Economic Forum sent to world leaders in the build-up to Katowice, urging them "to do more, faster, and together" to keep global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

"Business has an increasingly vital role to play in accelerating the shift to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy," Mr Doboczky says. "We are ready to facilitate fast-track solutions. One of these is the change from coal-fired to natural gas-fired boilers at our production facility in Nanjing, China. He says fashion can play "a crucial role on both sides of the climate equation" because it contributes to sustainable development but is also a contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. It is, however, a sector with "multiple opportunities to reduce emissions", in the eyes of the Lenzing chief executive; he is optimistic about the industry's ability to meet the 30% target and about his company's ability to help it. As well as the decommissioning of the coal-fired boilers in Nanjing, Lenzing has pointed to its Refibra product, which is based on its Tencel fibre with the addition of cotton scraps and wood, as a good example. It says this is the first commercial-scale cellulosic fibre to feature recycled material. Refibra came to market in 2017.

No excuse

It was clear at the Katowice event that the political mood around climate action is making progress difficult, according to Sympatex managing director, Dr Rüdiger Fox. However, he believes the global textile industry, including suppliers of performance materials for outdoor garments, must not use this as an excuse for inaction. "What's required is to show courage," he says, "to move forward and demonstrate that sustainability and economic success are not contradictory goals."

As an immediate step, Sympatex has set up a new social media campaign "to intensify the dialogue with consumers". It has invited them to post images of whatever small contributions they are able to make on climate action and is giving away a sustainable, functional jacket each month to one of the people taking part. Early submissions to the campaign, called 'It's In Your Hands', have ranged from people cycling instead of driving, recycling waste at home and picking up litter from the countryside.



Fashion and textile supply chain leaders at the signing of the charter in Katowice.

UN Climate Change

The 16 principles

1. Support goals limiting global temperature rise to below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels
2. Commit to 30% greenhouse gas emission reductions by 2030
3. Set a decarbonisation pathway for the fashion industry
4. Make each signatory company's greenhouse gas emissions public
5. Work in partnership
6. Prioritise materials with low impact
7. Pursue energy efficiency
8. Invest in no new coal-fired energy sources after 2025
9. Give preference to low-carbon logistics
10. Support moves to circular business models
11. Establish a closer dialogue with consumers about climate change
12. Push for scalable solutions for a low-carbon fashion sector
13. Advocate laws that empower climate action in the fashion industry
14. Establish a dialogue with government in countries from which companies source product
15. Communicate a shared vision
16. Support the efforts of the UN Climate Change secretariat.

Beautiful playground

For Swiss outdoor brand Mammut, signing the charter was about demonstrating leadership in the fight against climate change and affirming its commitment to responsible production. It says it will commit to and will implement the 16 principles and targets that underpin the document (see panel). Commenting on the development, Mammut's manager for corporate responsibility, Peter Hollenstein, says that, with glaciers melting, sea levels rising and entire regions drying out, every country, every industry, every company and every individual needs to contribute.

One of Mammut's most prominent sponsored athletes, alpinist Stephan Siegrist, says he is delighted the brand is taking "another big step forward" in sustainability. He concludes: "Nature is a beautiful playground that has to be protected by all of us."

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