



**3RD MEETING OF
BRANDS AND RETAILORS COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 5 April 2023
8 am Washington, DC time**

Minutes

The ICAC Secretariat members present at the meeting: Parkhi Vats, Kanwar Usman

1. The Chair, Mr Nate Herman, started the meeting and introduced himself.
2. Other Committee members and attendees introduced themselves.
3. Update on correspondence with the EU from Parkhi:
 - Workflow updates are required from PSAC at the Standing Committee (SC) meetings.
 - PSAC meeting minutes will be approved by the Standing Committee before publishing.
 - If any government policies are debated within PSAC, those governments should be contacted directly before bringing the discussion to the public level.
 - Mr Peter Wakefield presented the PSAC workflow at the SC meeting in March 2023 and some comments were received.
 - The EU delegates were glad to know about the decisions mentioned above; they are working on the reply to the PSAC, and they suggested that any PSAC statements should be approved by the SC before publication or public discussion.
 - The USA delegates stated that considering the voluntary basis of PSAC members' work they should not be discouraged from providing true advice to the governments.
 - At the moment the PSAC is waiting for the EU's reply and comments on the PSAC Final Statement.
4. Update on government policies from Ms Vats: the EU Green Labelling Directive Proposal was released on 22 March 2023 and the European Commission admitted that the PEF is not ready because of multiple controversies, for example, regarding microplastics. Currently, the PSAC is drafting a detailed email about the Directive and an article about the French PEF which will be circulated later.
5. Nate: based on all the feedback we received, we decided to focus on traceability this year.



6. Parkhi: PSAC or ICAC cannot design a global standard, but they can advise on what is important for governments to consider. The EC will collect comments from the Permanent Committees and compile them into one guide which will be presented at the Plenary Meeting 2023.

7. Nate's presentation on the US-Mexico-Canada regulations.

8. Discussion of the presentation.

Mohamed: This is going to enforce monopoly of the large retailers.

Nate: if cotton-producing countries can step in and provide sustainability, it gives hope to smaller producers. The countries want as many buyers as possible, not just several large retailers and this is another reason to drive traceability.

Peter: that is why we want to ensure that governments know about these concerns.

Usman: what is the reason for checking the shipments?

Nate: US customs has a targeting system based on reports from academia and NGOs as well as private solutions (relationship risk mapping systems). It is not 100% accurate because about 30% of detained shipments are being released later. They also do not inform the importer why the shipment was detained.

Usman: Is there any scientific progress on the cotton DNA question?

Nate: there are two types of technologies which are supposed to be able to trace the origin of cotton: DNA mapping and isotopic testing. The first technology makes it possible to map all the cotton producing regions except for Xinjiang (because they could not access the actual region). Isotopic testing allows pretty much the same thing based on chemical characteristics. Those tools can help to validate the information you collected but if you still don't have an idea where the cotton came from and how it moved through the supply chain, you still don't have full traceability. For example, US customs does not recognise these tests as proof; they still require all the documentation to be presented.

Claudia: In Europe it is also not sufficient.

9. Parkhi: The third objective is PSAC expansion. ICAC has never invited private companies and brands so we will require a considerable modification of the rules to do that. This has been put on the agenda for the next PSAC Executive Committee meeting; once we have a decision there, we will put it on the agenda of the Standing Committee meeting. If you know a brand we can invite, please let us know.

10. Parkhi: If the committee wants to work on another subject besides traceability, please let me know. Nobody voted.

11. The date and time for the next meeting will be late May or early June.