

# 36<sup>th</sup> IAF Convention: "Transition of the Global Fashion System" Key to sustainable operations: Cross-Collaboration & Resilience

by Yvonne Heinen-Foudeh

Gaining knowledge and insight represents the key criterion for any conference, seminar or else event in which we want to invest time and money. How much we as social beings are ultimately controlled by direct interpersonal contact in order to achieve the best possible creativity and effective consensus, we know at the latest after a large number of encounters that were inevitably conducted at a distance, virtually. After a Pre-Convention in November 2020, which due to the pandemic was inevitably held purely digitally the IAF and EURATEX again invited to their Conventions in presence with their annual international summits at the beginning of November this year. JSN INTERN had been onsite, at this year's event venue, the Belgian port city Antwerp.

Wisely and contemporary orchestrated in a hybrid format - ergo the option to participate in presence or via streaming - both associations, representing the interests of the global textile and apparel industry - were able to score points in every such respect.

The new normal will require transition in fashion business on all levels from design to production – from operations to sourcing. And there is consensus among stakeholders from all levels: In light of ever growing demands and decreasing prices, there will be more emphasis on quicker processes to support a more customer-centric organization with speed. The awareness already pre-pandemic was aimed towards various structural problems the industry faces. Yet as per demand from societies, from consumers and the planet's ecosystem to act sustainably and in a climate-saving manner it gets rather obvious change has to happen briskly. So once again, the IAF hit the nail on the head with the guiding theme World Fashion Convention 2021 event dedicated to the theme "Transition of the Global Fashion System".

Brisk and mindful one wants to add: The International Apparel Federation, the world association of the apparel industry, came up with an agenda covering precisely those perspectives with top-of-the notch keynotes, inspirational expert and user panels. Deep dives into what works – or at least could work - food for thought and reflection supplied to around 300 delegates from all over the world - having attended in presence or via the streaming service. Approximately 145 professionals from apparel and textile industry, particularly from a large number of EU countries, a large delegation from Turkey, a significant delegation from Bangladesh and also delegates from the UK, Switzerland, the US, Morocco, Pakistan enjoyed to mingle onsite.

## In a nutshell

Major take away from Antwerp for all stakeholders can be summarized in two essential aspects:

Sector players need to join hands to move from transactional relationships to business partnerships, executives believe.

The industry's transition to a more efficient, sustainable and transparent industry hinges on the adoption of technology, collaboration in the supply chain and on a switch to future oriented business models.

Vivek Ramachandran, CEO of HSBC-founded supply chain solutions provider SERAI brought it to the point, when saying, "...as an industry we need one global platform for everybody to access". Obviously such type of database to be fed with valuable, real-time data.

## Synergistic industry convergence

Antwerp, fashion metropolis, worldwide leading diamond center since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with Europe's second largest industrial port important logistical hub was the venue of choice for the 36<sup>th</sup> IAF World Fashion Convention at November 8. Synergistic event concept for holistic thinking decision-makers: Same site, next day EURATEX, the European Apparel and Textile Confederation, held its 9th Convention back to back with the IAF's: Comprehensive content were transferred with interactive sessions covered by experts, institutional and industry representatives along the theme "A new Paradigm for the European Textiles and Clothing Industry". Whereas the IAF conference viewed industry transition through the lens of global supply chain collaboration, the EURATEX conference took a more legislative perspective: In view of the comprehensive package of rules on sustainability and labor conditions with a large effect on the apparel industry that will be coming from Brussels – on the part of the EU Commission - in the coming years.

## 37<sup>th</sup> World Fashion Convention in Dhaka

In 2022 IAF will return to Southwest Asia (2019 Convention: Lahore, Pakistan) for its World Fashion Convention: Site selection in face of Bangladesh's key role as one of the largest exporters of apparel in the world, the sector accounting for 83% of total export earnings of the country. 37<sup>th</sup> World Fashion Convention will be held on November 13– 17, 2022 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, hosted by local associations BGMEA, BKMEA and IAF.

Only 15% of apparel companies that took part in a

survey conducted by KPMG China and SERAI have full traceability of their supply chain, which includes all of the materials and components used in a product from their origins through each step of processing and manufacturing (traceability).



Guy Ryder, Director General ILO

Guy Ryder pointed out how the pandemic demonstrated the fragility of supply chains. "Recovery must be both sustainable and inclusive and this will require for all of us to be pro-active to shape a future with more equality and social justice", the ILO (International Labor Organization) Director underlined. And - "...I see technology as a source of better pay, more skilled jobs, increased productivity and cleaner greener business practices.... Technology should be applied to help create sustainable and resilient businesses and the jobs that we need, more than being a substitute for decent jobs."



Christopher Veit, VP VEIT GROUP

Christopher Veit, over discussion on Digitalization Panel: „3D design points the way, but the next steps into ready-to-wear and, most importantly, a comparison of the finished 3D garment with the original 3D model are still missing. At Veit, together with startup partner Thullex, one developed an automatic 3D scanning process

for finished pants during the ironing/finishing process. This eliminates the need for 2-dimensional checks on the measuring table. The Veit VP: "The data can be transmitted in real time to the producer or even the brand owner in a target/actual comparison. Two steps become one, and the potential human error in both measurement and data entry is eliminated. Currently, we are still looking for future-oriented brands that would like to collaborate on this project to explore the potential and contribute their needs, ideas and experiences in an open innovation process."



Kick off Panel Sessions

"Everyone talks about the resilience of the value chain. The topic comes up in almost every exchange, event or media article", remarked David Sävman. As contributor to the panel session pro Transparent Supply Chains he underlined the demand for a common logic with regard to price and flexibility – on conditions accounting for all market partners. H&M's Global Head of Global Supply Chain further more explained how a cross-collaborative rather than a transactional approach is an integral part of H&M's new supply chain policy aimed at supply chain resilience. Miran Ali of Bitopi Industries and BGMEA In the same session rolled out how the global apparel manufacturer community is collaborating with major involvement of the IAF in the Sustainable Terms of Trade Initiative.



Leontine Hasselman-Plugge, CEO SIM

Learning from the food industry: Leontine Hasselman-

Plugge takes transition to a more transparent and circular supply chain from what she calls the “pizza perspective”: Having enabled clients such as Lidl or Jumbo over a period of 12 years in that most demanding sector to become impact buyers and going even beyond compliance the SIM CEO provided most motivating insight on what is feasible.



Saskia Hedrich, McKinsey

“The global fashion industry’s profit is expected to fall by 93% in 2020. And yet there are silver linings among the clouds”, Saskia Hedrich, Senior Partner Mc Kinsey at Antwerp provided a sneak preview on the management consulting firms facts & figures with “The State Of Fashion 2021 Report”\*: Key findings on: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/state-of-fashion>



3D Panel

The enlightening panel session between a 3D fashion artist, an enthusiastic manufacturer and two retail visionaries displayed yet another time the immense potential of three-dimensional model simulation for fashion business. Onsite (left): John Thorbeck Chainge Capital, PlatformE-CEO Conçalo Cruz, telling success story of his Portuguese. Connected from overseas (left): Brad Ballentine, Fox River Mills and Stanley Szeto, Lever Style.



Jelle Vanhove, Tonickx

“The big challenge is to now encourage the whole fashion industry to work much more digital instead of analog in a profitable way”, stressed Jelle Vanhove from Tonickx, Project Leader for 3<sup>rd</sup> party 3D Services at the Belgium garment manufacturer.



Cem Altan and Han Bekke

Handing over office & insignia: IAF’s new president Cem Altan, manufacturer himself, emphasized in his inaugural speech: “As entrepreneurs we more than ever hold the key to create the future...”. Han Bekke will remain active on the executive committee. Cem Altan is the founder of Aycem Textiles, member of the board of directors IHKIB (Istanbul Apparel Exporters Association) and of TCMA (Turkish Clothing Manufacturers Association). Additionally, he is head of Istanbul Fashion Week and Koza Young Designers. Altan has been a member of the IAF board since 2014.



MoMu – Antwerp’s Fashion Museum made the perfect venue for EURATEX and IAF’s walking dinner. Models: Martin Margiela – Years w./ Hermès  
Photo: Stany Dederen  
©: MoMu Antwerp



**If you can’t measure it...**

you can’t manage it: The accompanying exhibition provided plenty of opportunities to get to know solution providers, especially from the supply chain management and optimization segment, and to take a closer look at them - including:

- <https://antevorte-pm.com/>
- <https://www.etic.info/>
- <https://www.pivot88.com/>
- <https://www.qima.com/>
- <https://www.k3btg.com/>
- <https://www.seraitrade.com>
- <https://www.simsupplychain.com/>
- <https://www.theindustrywewant.com/>

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