

PRESS RELEASE

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A four year global collaboration to develop industrial solutions and new technologies for textile recycling

The non-profit H&M Foundation and The Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel (HKRITA) have entered into a four year partnership to develop the required technologies to recycle blend textiles into new fabrics and yarns. The technology will be licensed widely to ensure broad market access and maximum impact. Apparel and textile products made from blended materials account for a high proportion of all textiles and apparel in the market today. As yet no commercially viable separation, sorting, and recycling technologies are available for many of the most popular materials, such as cotton and polyester blends.

Today it is possible to mechanically recycle single fibre fabrics such as denim jeans and wool sweaters. However garments are very often made from a blend of different fibres to improve fit, style, comfort and longevity. Used apparel of blended or unknown materials are either discarded in landfills, or downcycled into insulation, carpeting, and other low value applications.

H&M Foundation is working with HKRITA to develop a series of research projects with a contribution of Euro 5.8 million. HKRITA will conduct the research and work to commercialize the outcomes. The Innovation and Technology Fund of the Hong Kong SAR Government will provide additional substantial research funding and support.

"This is one of the biggest and most comprehensive efforts ever for textile recycling. The overall aim for us as a Foundation is to protect the planetary boundaries and work to ensure living conditions. We want to develop at least one ready technology to recycle clothes made from textile blends into new clothes. This would be a major breakthrough in the journey towards a closed loop for textiles in the fashion industry." says **Erik Bang**, Project Manager at H&M Foundation.

"HKRITA is very excited about the work in this series of applied research projects. We look forward to providing practical solutions to a pressing local and global challenge. We are grateful to partner with H&M Foundation for making our work possible. Sustainability is one of our key research focuses. We aim to develop technologies that are scalable and commercially viable." says **Edwin Keh**, Chief Executive Officer of The Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel.

The exact financial contribution from H&M Foundation is determined by the surplus from H&M's global in-store garment collecting program, which is donated to H&M Foundation. Half of this donation is allocated to research on textile recycling. To date the H&M Foundation has donated EUR 1.6 million to HKRITA.

The H&M Foundation, which initiated the global innovation challenge Global Change Award in 2015, had been looking for a world leading research institute to accelerate research on textile recycling, and found HKRITA to be the perfect match. H&M Foundation is the initiator and main funder of the research project 2016-2020 and HKRITA is co-funding. HKRITA, a publically funded applied research center, is the leader in practical and useful research in the textile and apparel area.

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The Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel was established in 2006 and is a publicly funded applied research center. It's one of five applied research centers sponsored by the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government. HKRITA engages in applied mid- and down-stream research to support the textile and apparel industries, to drive sustainable improvements, and to drive improvements for society.

The Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF), administered by the Innovation and Technology Commission, aims to increase the added value, productivity and competitiveness of our economic activities. The Government hopes that, through the ITF, Hong Kong companies could be encouraged and assisted to upgrade their technological level and introduce innovative ideas to their businesses.

H&M Foundation is a non-profit global foundation, privately funded by the Stefan Persson family, founders and main owners of the fashion company H&M. The mission of the Foundation is to create long lasting positive change and improve living conditions by investing in communities, people and innovative ideas. Through partnerships with prominent organizations around the globe, the Foundation drives change within four focus areas; Education, Clean water, Strengthening women and Protecting the planet. In addition, the H&M Foundation can also provide emergency relief. Since 2013, the Stefan Persson family has donated SEK 1.1 billion (USD 154 million/EUR 123 million) to the H&M Foundation. For further information, visit hm.com/hmfoundation.