

WHEREAS: Plastic, with a lifecycle social cost at least ten times its market price, actively threatens the world's oceans, wildlife, and people.¹ The growing scale and impact of global plastic pollution has elevated the issue to crisis levels.² 193 United Nations member states are currently negotiating a global treaty to end plastic pollution, which will have profound impacts on the plastics value chain.³

Textiles provide the third largest market for plastic, consuming roughly 14% of total plastic production.⁴ Synthetic plastic fibers comprise 63% of global fiber production, equal to 80 million tons.⁵ During production and wear, small synthetic fibers called plastic microfibers are shed from garments. As a result, an estimated 200,000 to 500,000 tonnes of plastic microfibers from textiles enter the world's oceans annually.⁶ This chronic release of plastic microfibers causes the textile industry to be one of the largest contributors to the growing microplastic pollution problem.

Plastic microfibers have been detected in every major ocean and freshwater environment; remote polar regions, seabeds, and pristine mountaintops; indoor air; tap water, bottled water and beverages; and foods. Plastic microfibers are particularly dangerous due to their propensity to absorb toxins, such as dioxins, pesticides, and heavy metals from water, transferring them to the marine food web and potentially to human diets.

VF needs to develop timebound actions and goals to reduce shedding of its apparel. Such steps might include disclosing the extent to which VF is testing fabrics for fiber shedding and developing procedures to provide customer guidance about which fabrics have the highest shedding rates. VF could also ensure that the manufacturing facilities it utilizes have robust wastewater management systems and optimized effluent treatment processes, such as ultrafiltration and reverse osmosis, which can remove and trap nearly all plastic microfibers shed during production.⁷

VF lags its peers in addressing this growing crisis. Competitor Under Armour has committed to produce 75% of fabrics from low-shed materials by 2030.⁸ Unlike competitors such as Gap, Nike, Lululemon, and PVH, VF is not a member of the Microfibre Consortium. Only one VF brand is signatory to the Consortium pledge to work towards zero impact from fiber fragmentation by 2030.⁹

Taking meaningful action would help position VF to compete for consumers increasingly concerned about plastic microfiber shedding from clothing, while reducing the risk of being caught unprepared for plastics-related government regulations.

RESOLVED: Shareholders request the Board issue a report, at reasonable expense and excluding proprietary information, describing opportunities for VF to reduce microfiber pollution from its garments.

SUPPORTING STATEMENT: The report should, at board discretion:

- Evaluate ways to make its fiber shedding data publicly available, including to consumers;

¹ https://wwfint.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/wwf_pctsee_report_english.pdf, p.15

² <https://www.unep.org/resources/pollution-solution-global-assessment-marine-litter-and-plastic-pollution>

³ <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/nations-agree-end-plastic-pollution>

⁴ <https://www.regulations.gov/document/NOAA-NOS-2022-0061-0002>, p.1

⁵ <https://www.regulations.gov/document/NOAA-NOS-2022-0061-0002>, p.1

⁶ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/microplastics-from-textiles-towards-a>

⁷ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11356-017-0528-7>

⁸ <https://about.underarmour.com/en/stories/2023/12/under-armour-s-breakthrough-fiber-shed-test-method-now-available.html>

⁹ <https://www.microfibreconsortium.com/2030>

- Discuss existing, planned, or available manufacturing treatment technologies to minimize fiber shedding, such as ultrafiltration and reverse osmosis; and
- Discuss planned capital expenditures to control microfiber shedding.