

August 15, 2008

Mr. President Islam Abduganievich Karimov
Office of the President
Uzbekistan Street 43
Tashkent, UZBEKISTAN

Dear President Karimov,

We are writing as members of the U.S. and international investment community – including financial firms, faith-based investors and public pension funds – as well as shareholder advocates, investor rating agencies, and labor and human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The undersigned investment firms manage more than US\$250 billion in capital for both individuals and institutions, and are invested in many of the most significant private sector purchasers and manufacturers of cotton and cotton-based merchandise in the world. The purpose of our letter is to share with you our concerns regarding published reports and news articles describing the coercive use of children aged 10 to 15 years old to harvest cotton in Uzbekistan.

The undersigned investors recognize that human rights violations, such as the use of child labor, impose unacceptable costs to individuals and society. They also pose legal, operational and reputational risks to the value of the involved corporations we hold in our portfolios. As both fiduciaries and concerned citizens, therefore, we seek to use our leverage as owners of these corporations to underscore these risks and to encourage companies to take responsible actions to address them, such as embracing and implementing the core conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO).

The undersigned organizations are dedicated to the eradication of the worst forms of child labor by educating corporations, consumers, and policy makers about the reality of these violations and by proposing practical steps that will create the structure to end these harmful practices and ensure they do not repeat themselves.

We recognize that Uzbekistan recently ratified Convention 182, relating to the Worst Forms of Child Labor, and is in the process of officially ratifying Convention 138, the Convention on Minimum Age. Further, Uzbekistan is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and two ILO Conventions prohibiting forced labor. These are positive and important steps. But, while Uzbek laws against the use of forced child labor exist, we have seen credible evidence that the use of child labor in the cotton fields continues to occur on a systematic scale.

We encourage global corporations to adopt and implement strong codes of conduct for their supply chains that incorporate the core ILO conventions. Many leading companies are beginning to take action to ensure that cotton is not sourced in violation of these codes. C&A, Debenham's, Gap Inc., Levi Strauss & Co., Marimekko Corporation, Marks & Spencer, Target, Tesco, Victoria's Secret and other retailers and brands have already taken measures to exclude Uzbek cotton from their merchandise because of the use of

child labor in cotton production. Should the situation in Uzbekistan not be remedied expeditiously, other brands and retailers are preparing to take necessary steps to exclude Uzbek cotton from their supply chains as well.

In light of the above described situation, we urge the Government of Uzbekistan to take decisive and immediate actions to end child labor in the cotton fields of Uzbekistan. Specifically:

1. Immediately complete the needed information to have Convention 138 recognized as “ratified” by the ILO.
2. Take significant and measurable steps to implement Conventions 138 and 182 including action plans to eliminate the use of children in the cotton harvests by fall 2008, recognizing that cotton harvest work, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health of children and in many cases, falls under the category of forced labor.
3. Invite an ILO assessment mission, which has full freedom of movement and timely access to workers and locations, to advise on the implementation of Conventions 138 and 182 during the 2008 fall harvest season (beginning mid-September through the end of November) and throughout 2009.
4. Following the above actions, request ILO technical assistance for effective implementation of child labor eradication policies and programs, including ongoing and transparent child labor monitoring mechanisms.
5. Allow other independent organizations, including international NGOs and media, to monitor the situation during the 2008 fall harvest season and beyond.

We thank you, Mr. President, for your immediate attention regarding this critically important matter. We will be contacting your office in the near future to confirm the receipt of our letter and to hear from you regarding the corrective actions taken by the Uzbek Government to address these alleged violations and to ensure that all cotton from Uzbekistan is harvested free of forced child labor.

Sincerely,

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cc: Uzbek Ambassador to the United States
Uzbek Ambassador to the United Nations