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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Social Investors and Human Rights Activists Pressure Government of Uzbekistan to Stop Using Forced Child Labor

****UPDATE** (11:40am EST 8/15) Please note that the meeting referenced in this press release has been postponed.**

NEW YORK CITY/SAN FRANCISCO/WASHINGTON, August 15, 2008 – Socially conscious shareholders, pension funds and human rights advocates have joined together to demand that the government of Uzbekistan stop using forced child labor in its cotton harvest. Every year, the government of Uzbekistan reportedly mobilizes hundreds of thousands of children – many from ten to fifteen years old – for the manual harvesting of cotton.

U.S. and international shareholders with combined assets of over \$250 billion, along with human rights advocates, sent appeals today to [Uzbek President Islam A. Karimov](#), [Director General Juan Somavia, the head of the International Labor Organization \(ILO\)](#), and [U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice](#). Also today, representatives of four major textile, apparel and retail trade associations will meet with the Uzbek Ambassador to the United States to express similar concerns.

“We commend the four trade associations for using their influence to change these intolerable practices,” said Patricia Jurewicz, Associate Director from As You Sow Foundation, a non-government organization (NGO) that promotes corporate social responsibility. “Combined, these trade associations represent almost 100% of all purchases of cotton products in the United States. The fact that they are meeting with the Ambassador of Uzbekistan, are publicly condemning forced labor and asking for international monitoring sends a clear message that forcing children to pick cotton must end immediately.”

Credible evidence exists that the use of child labor in Uzbek cotton fields continues on a systematic scale despite Uzbekistan’s ratification of several ILO conventions relating to forced and child labor. Investors and human rights organizations are urging the Government of Uzbekistan to take immediate, concrete steps toward ending the use of forced child labor in cotton harvesting. These steps include full implementation of the ILO child labor conventions, inviting the ILO to conduct an assessment mission of the current situation, and allowing independent monitoring of cotton-picking practices from international NGOs and media outlets during the fall 2008 harvest.

“We need to see concrete, measurable actions taken immediately by the Government of Uzbekistan” said Bama Athreya, Executive Director of the International Labor Rights Forum, a labor rights advocacy group. “We have heard only denials and empty promises coming from this government for too long.”

Earlier this year, investors started engaging global corporations to track the source of cotton in their supply chains and sent letters to more than 100 corporations in North America, Europe and Asia that produce or retail cotton-based products.

“Although many companies have said that it is impossible to trace the source of their cotton — purchases that may occur several steps down the supply chain — we have found that where there is a will, there is a way,” said Adam Kanzer, Managing Director and General Counsel at Domini Social Investments. “Companies are finding that it is indeed possible to trace the source of their cotton, and we believe responsible companies have an obligation to do so.”

The coordinated campaign began after published reports and news articles described the coercive use of children aged 10 to 15 years old to harvest cotton in Uzbekistan, the world’s third largest cotton exporter. Reports by NGOs, the BBC and other media outlets documented children performing arduous work in harsh conditions and threatened with expulsion from school if they didn’t meet Soviet-style production quotas. These reports indicate the Uzbek government itself is orchestrating the forced employment of children for several months during the harvesting season.

“We have heard from several of our portfolio companies that they feel their efforts are best placed in industry initiatives. While those initiatives play a crucial role, we believe retailers must address child labor within their own global supply chain — right down to the cotton fields where some of the most egregious human rights and environmental violations occur” said Lauren Compere, Director of Shareholder Advocacy at Boston Common Asset Management.

The investors and NGOs are working in partnership with major brands and retailers such as C&A, Gap Inc., Levi Strauss & Co., Marks & Spencer, Target, Tesco, Victoria’s Secret and Wal-Mart to take measures to exclude Uzbek cotton from their merchandise because of the use of child labor during the cotton harvest.

“It is our experience that collaborative efforts of investors, non-governmental organizations, trade unions, companies and industry associations can make a difference” said Rev. David Schilling, program director of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, a coalition of 275 faith-based investors. “We would like to see many more U.S. companies join in our shared goal and publicly take actions to help address ending forced child labor in Uzbekistan.”

“We know this situation is not going to change over night,” Bennett Freeman, Senior VP for Social Research and Policy at Calvert Asset Management Company, said. “By leveraging influence from a number of different angles simultaneously, we have the opportunity to make significant and lasting change. This type of change will benefit children, workers, investors and consumers world wide.”

For additional background information, please refer to:

- <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/docs/declworld.htm> (ILO ratifications)
- http://www.ejfoundation.org/pdf/white_gold_the_true_cost_of_cotton.pdf (report)
- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/7068096.stm> (news video)
- <http://www.iwpr.net/galleries/centasia/grabka/01.html> (photos)

Social investors and non-governmental organizations leading this effort are listed below with available contacts for interviews.

As You Sow Foundation

As You Sow is a non-profit organization that utilizes capital markets, shareholder leverage, innovative legal strategies and grantmaking to transform corporate behavior to create a more socially and environmentally just society. www.asyousow.org

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Boston Common Asset Management

Boston Common Asset Management is an employee-owned social investment firm serving individual and institutional investors. We offer U.S. large cap equity and balanced portfolios as well as international and small cap strategies. Boston Common tailors portfolios to each client's social and financial goals, combining prudent investment management, diligent in-house social research, and dynamic shareholder advocacy. We manage \$1 billion in assets including subadvised assets. www.bostoncommonasset.com

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Calvert Asset Management Company, Inc.

Calvert is a diversified investment management firm with over \$15 billion in assets under management. Calvert is a leader in sustainable and responsible investing and manages over \$6 billion in sustainable and responsible asset management strategies for institutional and individual investors. Over the past 30 years, the firm has built a core line-up of mutual funds ranging from equity to fixed income, large-cap to small-cap, and domestic to international. www.calvert.com

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Center for Reflection, Education, and Action (CREA)

CREA is a social economic research and education center focusing on issues related to corporate social responsibility, human rights, labor rights, economic, social and environmental sustainability and human security. www.crea-inc.org

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Domini Social Investment LLC

Domini Social Investments manages more than \$1.2 billion in assets for individual and institutional mutual fund investors seeking to create positive change in society by integrating social and environmental standards into their investment decisions. Two fundamental principles underlie the global investment standards that Domini applies to each of its investment products: the promotion of a society that values human dignity and the enrichment of our natural environment. Domini views these twin goals as crucial to a healthier, wealthier, and more sustainable world.

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Environmental Justice Foundation

EJF is a UK-based NGO working internationally to protect the natural environment and the people and wildlife that depend upon it by linking environmental security, human rights and social need.

EJF makes a direct link between the need for environmental security and the defense of basic human rights. www.ejfoundation.org

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Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR)

The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility is a coalition of nearly 300 faith-based institutional investors, representing over \$100 billion in invested capital. ICCR members bridge the divide between morality and markets by envisioning a civic economy that integrates ethical, environmental and social values. Inspired by faith, committed to action, ICCR members work to build a just and sustainable global community. www.iccr.org

David Schilling, Director, Global Corporate Accountability

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International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF)

ILRF is an advocacy organization dedicated to achieving just and humane treatment for workers worldwide. [www. http://www.laborrights.org](http://www.laborrights.org)

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Organic Exchange

Founded in 2002, Organic Exchange facilitates expansion of the global organic cotton fiber supply by working closely with farmers, leading brands and retailers and their business partners to develop organic cotton programs. OE has hosted numerous organic cotton conference and trainings in supply chain centers around the world, including China, India, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, the UK and U.S. www.organicexchange.org

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