

May 11, 2010

The Honorable Sandra Polaski  
Deputy Undersecretary  
Bureau of International Labor Affairs  
U.S. Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Room C-4325  
Washington, D.C. 20210  
Phone: 202-693-4770  
Fax: 202-693-4780  
Email: [Contact-ILAB@dol.gov](mailto:Contact-ILAB@dol.gov)

Dear Deputy Undersecretary Polaski,

As you know, it has been widely documented that each autumn the Government of Uzbekistan systematically mobilises hundreds of thousands of children to pick cotton in the country's cotton fields. We are working within a broad network of garment brands and retailers, NGOs, trade unions, industry associations and others, in a joint effort towards eradicating this practice.

Although Uzbekistan has recently signed two ILO conventions on child labour, Nos. 182 and 138, and issued a decree ostensibly prohibiting the practice, information from around the country demonstrated that the government continued to rely on the state-orchestrated mass mobilisation of children to bring in the 2009 cotton harvest.

Under ILO procedures, international employers and trade unions have brought forward information related to the use of forced labour in Uzbekistan's cotton sector and requested an ILO review of the country's compliance with its commitments to ILO conventions on forced labour (Nos. 29 and 105).

This year the ILO's Committee of Experts has requested that Uzbekistan supply full particulars to the International Labour Conference on its implementation of Convention No. 182 at its next session in June. We therefore urge the Government of the United States to do everything it can to ensure that the Government of Uzbekistan fully participates with the Conference in Geneva in June.

We hope that the Government of the United States will raise this issue bilaterally with the Government of Uzbekistan, and will specifically recommend that:

1. The Government of Uzbekistan fully participate in the upcoming International Labour Conference in Geneva in June 2010;
2. The Government of Uzbekistan invites an ILO observer mission that will have full freedom of movement and timely access to workers and civil society actors, to assess the implementation of Conventions 138 and 182 during the 2010 cotton harvest.

In order for the Government of Uzbekistan to fully appreciate the importance of participating in the Conference in June, and subsequently inviting the ILO to Uzbekistan for technical assistance, it must be encouraged to do so by a range of national governments. Therefore, stakeholders are making similar requests to the governments of Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Due to the approaching date of the International Labour Conference, we encourage you to raise this issue bilaterally with the Government of Uzbekistan in a timely manner, so they have adequate time to consider this issue before the conference commences in June.

We would also like to request a meeting with you, to discuss the issue in more detail. Please contact Bama Athreya at (202) 347 4100 ext. 106 or [bama.athreya@ilrf.org](mailto:bama.athreya@ilrf.org) at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Bama Athreya  
Executive Director  
International Labor Rights Forum

Erik Autor  
Vice President, International Trade Counsel  
National Retail Federation

Kevin M. Burke  
President & CEO  
American Apparel and Footwear  
Association

Bennett Freeman  
Senior Vice President for Sustainability  
Calvert Investments

Monica J. Gorman  
Senior Director, Corporate Responsibility  
and International Trade Compliance  
American Eagle Outfitters

Colleen Von Haden  
Senior Manager Code of Conduct  
The Timberland Company

Julia K. Hughes  
President  
United States Association of Importers of  
Textile and Apparel

Patricia Jurewicz  
Director  
Responsible Sourcing Network  
a project of As You Sow

Rajan Kamalanathan  
Vice President, Ethical Standards  
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

Patricia Keefer  
Assistant Director, International Affairs  
Department  
American Federation of Teachers

Sandy Kennedy  
President  
Retail Industry Leaders Association

Darryl Knudsen  
Director of Public Policy and Stakeholder  
Engagement  
Gap Inc.

Karina Litvack  
Head of Governance and Sustainable  
Investment  
F&C Management Ltd.

Rev. David Schilling  
Director of Human Rights  
Interfaith Center on Corporate  
Responsibility

Kay Schultz  
Senior Group Manager - Global Compliance  
Target

Michael D. Singer  
Director, Customs and Social Compliance  
Macy's, Inc.

Julie Tanner  
Assistant Director of Socially Responsible  
Investing  
Christian Brothers Investment Services

Anna Walker  
Senior Manager, Government Affairs and  
Public Policy  
Levi Strauss & Co.