



UNITED STATES FASHION INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

April 24, 2014

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

**RE: Uzbekistan Ranking in Upcoming Trafficking in Persons (J-TIP) Report**

Dear Secretary Kerry:

On behalf of the entire U.S. apparel supply chain -- from U.S. manufacturers and U.S. wholesalers to U.S. brands and U.S. retailers -- and our 3 million U.S. workers, the four undersigned trade associations urge the U.S. government to again place Uzbekistan in Tier 3 in the 2014 *Global Trafficking in Persons Report* (J-TIP Report).

Countless reports and evidence demonstrate that the Uzbek government in 2013 not only failed to make "significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance" with the minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, but also continued to mobilize the forced labor of adults and children for the fall 2013 cotton harvest.

The Uzbek government relented under international pressure and, for the first time, allowed monitors with the International Labor Organization (ILO) into the country to monitor the Fall 2013 cotton harvest, albeit under limiting restrictions. The Government of Uzbekistan's acceptance of ILO monitors in 2013 and its report to the ILO Committee of Experts that it is prepared to work with the ILO on the application of all fundamental labor conventions are positive developments and represent potential pathways for ending state-sponsored forced labor of children and adults in the cotton sector. However, ILO observers as well as the World Bank Inspection Panel reported serious and continued use of forced labor. The Uzbek Government's continued use of its forced-labor system of cotton production in 2013 raises serious concerns.

Based on the lack of substantial progress, we believe the only appropriate ranking for Uzbekistan in the 2014 Trafficking in Persons Report remains Tier 3. Such a ranking would communicate to the Uzbek government that its policy and practice of forced labor is unacceptable and would support a decision by the Uzbek government to work urgently with the International Labor Organization (ILO) to end forced labor.

Over the past few years, the United States has played a central, positive role in convincing the Uzbek government to cooperate with the ILO. Yet the Uzbek government continues to stand out among governments worldwide as an organizer and beneficiary of systematic forced labor on a massive scale. Given its orchestration of the state-order system of production, the Government has the capacity to unilaterally change and enforce policies. This year may be decisive in determining whether the Uzbek government genuinely commits to ending the forced labor practice or whether it uses cooperation with the ILO merely to deflect international pressure while keeping the practice in place. We urge you to build on the United States' leadership by keeping Uzbekistan in Tier 3 in the 2014 J-TIP Report.

We understand that you consider numerous important bilateral issues in your engagement with Uzbekistan. However, we firmly believe that the continuing reality of the government-sanctioned and government-orchestrated use of forced labor must be fully acknowledged in the report and in Uzbekistan's Tier 3 ranking. The credibility of the J-TIP process must be maintained, and the State Department's leverage should be used to its maximum possible advantage.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Steve Lamar  
Executive Vice President  
AAFA

Julia K. Hughes  
President  
USFIA

Sandra L. Kennedy  
President  
RILA

Matt Shay  
President & CEO  
NRF