



June 8, 2009

Mr. Juan Somavia
Director General
International Labor Organization
4 Route des Morillons
CH-1211 Genève 22
Switzerland

Dear Director General Somavia,

We are writing as members of the U.S. and international investment community, including faith-based investors affiliated with the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility and other responsible institutional investors. The undersigned investor groups are shareowners 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 express our deep concerns regarding published reports and news articles describing the Uzbek authorities' coercive use of children aged 10 to 15 years old to harvest cotton, which we believe to be the largest mobilization of forced labor on the part of any government in this decade. We have called upon the Government of Uzbekistan (GOU) to publically acknowledge and address this grave situation. We have also urged the GOU to complement the efforts it must undertake primarily on its own with technical assistance and monitoring by the International Labor Organization (ILO), the international organization with the greatest legitimacy and expertise to do so.

The undersigned investors recognize that human rights violations, such as state-sponsored 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. We therefore are encouraging companies to take responsible actions, such as embracing, implementing and promoting the core conventions of the ILO throughout their global supply chains.

Through active engagement, we as shareowners are bringing this egregious violation of human rights to the attention of corporations around the world that source cotton from Uzbekistan. Over the past year, we have written letters to 130 apparel and home furnishing companies asking how they are addressing the violation of children's rights resulting from state-sponsored forced child labor in Uzbekistan's cotton industry. A number of companies have responded by instructing their suppliers not to use cotton from Uzbekistan due to the GOU's use of forced child labor in cotton production. This growing list of companies includes C&A, Gap Inc., Levi Strauss & Co., Marks & Spencer, Target Corporation, Tesco plc, The Walt Disney Company and Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. During May 2009 three multi-stakeholder meetings bringing together investors, human rights groups, trade associations and companies were held in San Francisco, Washington and London to plan further collaborative action to address the ongoing situation in Uzbekistan.

We recognize that Uzbekistan recently ratified Convention 182, regarding the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Convention 138, the Convention on Minimum Age. This positive development must now be followed up with transparent steps to implement these important commitments. We note the Government decree announced last September to prohibit the use of forced child labour in the cotton fields. But in-country investigations undertaken by the Environmental Justice Foundation and other groups on the ground found within days, schoolchildren across the major cotton-producing regions were once more participating in the

harvest, facilitated by government agencies and public employees, in order to fulfill cotton production quotas set by the Uzbek Government.

As you know, the International Organization of Employers filed a submission to the ILO's Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (17 October 2008) concerning the violation by the Government of Uzbekistan (an ILO member) of the Forced Labor Convention 29 and the Abolition of Forced Labor Convention 105 in the cotton sector. Some of the undersigned have contacted the U.S. employers' and workers' representatives to urge them to ensure that the complaint be taken up as a special case at the June conference, and to recommend that the ILO issue a comprehensive report on its findings and recommendations. We are deeply concerned that the case will not be considered as a priority in this session due to the late arrival of the GOU to the conference.

We have conveyed our concerns directly to the Ambassador of Uzbekistan to the U.S. on December 19, 2008 and again recently on May 14, 2009. Through the Ambassador, we urged the GOU not only to move forward with implementation of Conventions 182 and 138 but also to acknowledge and address the reality of government-directed forced child labor in the Uzbek cotton industry. We believe that such an acknowledgment must be public to be credible. It must also include a focused, practical plan with the necessary dedicated resources to ensure implementation and enforcement of Uzbekistan's ILO obligations on forced and child labor in the cotton sector. Moreover, the commitments the GOU must make to address the problem can only be effective if complemented by international involvement, primarily through the ILO.

With the fall 2009 cotton harvest fast approaching, we have urged the GOU to invite the ILO to deploy an initial expert observer and assessment mission immediately as a prelude to long-term engagement by the ILO, including monitoring on a multi-year basis. We understand that there have been consultations between the Uzbek government and the ILO in March and again in May. We urge the ILO to be prepared to accept such an invitation if it is forthcoming, provided that it is coupled with such a public acknowledgment of the problem and a commitment to work with the ILO on its terms—not only to implement the conventions but to curtail forced child labor in the cotton sector beginning immediately.

As investors we will continue to build corporate support for the elimination of forced child labor in Uzbekistan, and we believe that our concerted actions thus far have helped to focus attention on both the problem and necessary solutions. We understand that this goal can be achieved only by serious and systematic commitments and actions on the part of the GOU. But we believe that the scale of government-directed forced child labor in the Uzbek cotton fields compels action not only by the GOU, but also by the international community working through the ILO to end this unjust and unacceptable practice.

We have great respect for the ILO and the impressive progress it has made over the past decade under your leadership to eliminate child labor and to ensure decent working conditions for all. We sincerely hope that the ILO will be prepared to apply its global and regional expertise and credibility to work with the Government of Uzbekistan on an urgent and appropriate basis.

Respectfully yours,



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