June 19, 2013

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

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write today in support of the U.S. Department of State’s decision to place Uzbekistan in Tier 3 in the 2013 Global Trafficking in Persons Report. We appreciate the efforts of officials from the offices of the Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights and the Ambassador at Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, the Bureaus of Human Rights and South and Central Asian Affairs, and the U.S. embassy in Tashkent for their efforts to persuade Uzbekistan’s government to eliminate the scourge of forced and child labor in the cotton sector.

While many governments fail to effectively curb human trafficking, the Uzbek government organizes, orchestrates and benefits from forced labor on a massive scale. The State Department’s decision to downgrade Uzbekistan to Tier 3 is well-justified and an important step in international efforts to persuade the government in Tashkent to change its practices.

While these efforts have had some effect, more pressure is still needed. At a minimum, Tashkent must invite a high-level International Labour Organization tripartite observer mission to monitor this fall’s harvest and begin to work with the ILO to address the use of forced labor in the cotton sector.

If Tashkent fails to invite the ILO prior to the fall harvest, the State Department should examine options for applying sanctions available under the TVPA for Tier 3 countries, including travel restrictions for Uzbek officials involved in the forced labor system and utilizing votes at the World Bank and other international financial institutions. In light of increased participation of private-sector employees who are Uzbek nationals in the state-sponsored forced labor system in recent years, we urge U.S. officials to stress to American companies operating in Uzbekistan the importance of fulfilling their due diligence requirements with respect to human rights.

For our part, the corporations, unions, industry associations, investors, trade unions and NGOs that form the Cotton Campaign will continue efforts to raise corporate, public, governmental and international awareness of the problem and press the Uzbek authorities to move beyond public denials and end their annual mass mobilization of forced labor for the cotton harvest.

Sincerely,

The Cotton Campaign:
Advocates for Public Interest Law
Aeropostale
American Apparel and Footwear Association

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

American Federation of Teachers

Anti-Slavery International

Aquinas Associates

Awareness Projects.org

Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

Boston Common Asset Management

Calvert

Catholic Health East

Center for Reflection, Education and Action

The Child Labor Coalition
Dignity Health

Dominican Sisters of Hope

Eileen Fisher

European Center on Constitutional and Human Rights

Eurasian Transition Group

The Expert Working Group

Fifth & Pacific

Freedom House

Human Rights Watch

INKOTA-netzwerk e.V.

International Labor Rights Forum

Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union

Marianists International

Mercy Investment Services, Inc.
National Consumers League

National Retail Federation

Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment

Open Society Foundations

Pax World Mutual Funds

Region VI Coalition for Responsible Investment

Responsible Sourcing Network

Retail Industry Leaders Association

Sisters of Charity, BVM

Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati

Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia

Solidarity Center

Stop the Traffik Australia
Sunshine Coalition

Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

United States Association of Importers of Textiles and Apparel

Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk, U.S. Province

Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights

Walden Asset Management

Walk Free

cc: Seth D. Harris, Acting Secretary, Deputy Secretary of Labor
    William J. Burns, Deputy Secretary of State
    Robert O. Blake, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs
    Uzra Zeya, Acting Assistant Secretary, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
    George Krol, United States Ambassador to the Republic of Uzbekistan
    Luis CdeBaca, Ambassador-at-Large, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons