

Telia stop supporting forced labor

TeliaSonera TLSN -1.07% **stop now support the huge, notorious program of forced labor during the cotton harvest in Uzbekistan.**

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The revelation last fall on the aid brought strong criticism from human rights organizations and politicians.

According to Telia has its operator in the country in one way or another contributed to the harvest since 2012. Last year was the equivalent of about 350 000 on food for the workers. But come it will not be there, got Telia's major shareholder told at a meeting on Friday.

- This year it is our ambition to not attend at all, says Michaela Ahlberg, head of the company's ethical rules are complied with, to TT.

Regional authorities have not been informed of the company's new line, but will receive no if they would come with requests under Ahlberg.

When TT in September last year reported on the support, it was the first time that it was confirmed that some foreign companies contributed to forced labor. Then it turned out that the Telenor-owned competitor Vimpelcom also did it. That local businesses did it was widely known. Otherwise, they risk retaliation. Telia also felt compelled to participate, even though it is not a legal requirement, but Ahlberg fears no problems now that it refrains.

Harvesting has been called the world's probably the largest program of forced labor. The conditions last year was dire, according to reputable Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights. The one million workers received pennies in wages, live in unheated, dirty and cramped spaces or tents, and working 10-16 hours a day, including weekends, for up to two months. 17 people died. Many 13-17-year-olds were forced out and deprived then their right to schooling.

Telia has many a time been criticized in for their actions in Uzbekistan. Among other things, when it last fall revealed that Telia had distributed 2,000 so-called "sponsored numbers" without subscription and bills. Something that critics felt was to be regarded as bribery. Then there were still 25 numbers remains unclear subscribers.

- Unacceptable, call Ahlberg presence of subscriptions and points out that



today they are under ten.

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