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136 International Brands Valued at Over \$1 Trillion Sign Pledge Against Forced Labor in Uzbek Cotton Fields

*IKEA, Marks & Spencer and Other Apparel Brands
Join Coalition for Responsible Sourcing*

In the lead up to Uzbekistan's annual cotton fair, a mounting number of international brands and retailers have declared their refusal to source from the country until the forced labor of children and adults in the cotton fields ceases. Representing an estimated \$1.024 Trillion USD in market cap*, 136 brands and companies have now signed the "Company Pledge Against Forced Child and Adult Labor in Uzbek Cotton."

Since 2011, [Responsible Sourcing Network](http://www.sourcingnetwork.org) (RSN), a nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing together investors, companies, and human rights activists to create sustainable supply chains, has been collecting signatories to the pledge. By signing, companies commit to not knowingly source Uzbek cotton until the practice of forced labor is eliminated. In doing so, they add their economic influence to a growing number of companies using their combined leverage to raise awareness and pressure the Uzbek government to stop this egregious practice.

"We welcome IKEA, lululemon athletica, and Marks & Spencer to the growing coalition of apparel companies taking a stand against oppression and forced labor in the Uzbek cotton industry," said Patricia Jurewicz, Director at Responsible Sourcing Network. "Signing this common pledge demonstrates solidarity by the industry to block cotton using any form of slave labor from entering the global market."

Although the Government of Uzbekistan for the first time is allowing the International Labor Organization (ILO) to conduct an inspection mission during the 2013 cotton harvest, ILO representatives are being accompanied by Uzbek officials, making it difficult for citizens to speak openly with ILO monitors. Tragically, regardless of the inspectors, the death of six-year-old Amirbek Rachmatow on September 15th was the fourth fatality in the first month of the harvest. Continued forced mobilization of children and adults has been well documented this year.

The pledge has united an unprecedented number of American and European apparel brands and consumer favorites. Powerhouses such as Carrefour, INDITEX, Target, and Walmart have already signed the pledge. The message being sent by industry is that the Uzbek government must meet its commitments to international labor standards in order to participate in global markets. The full pledge text and list of signatories is available at <http://www.sourcingnetwork.org/the-cotton-pledge>.



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Responsible Sourcing Network (www.sourcingnetwork.org) is a project of the nonprofit organization As You Sow (www.asyousow.org). RSN is dedicated to ending human rights abuses and forced labor associated with the raw materials found in products we use every day. RSN supports network participants in leveraging their influence to achieve significant and measurable solutions in the areas of conflict minerals and slave labor.

* The estimated Market Capitalization was derived on October 10-13, 2013. The Market Cap for privately held companies was calculated using an average P/S ratio of the public companies that signed the pledge and revenue information available in the public domain.