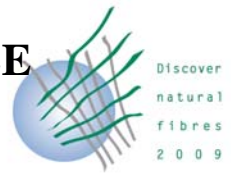




INTERNATIONAL COTTON ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1629 K Street NW, Suite 702, Washington, DC 20006 USA
Telephone (202) 463-6660 • Fax (202) 463-6950 • email secretariat@ICAC.org



Aide Memoire

To: Delegates to the Standing Committee, Coordinating Agencies and Members of the PSAP and Members of SEEP

From: Executive Director

Subject: Meeting with Civil Society Activists of Uzbekistan

Date: April 14, 2008

A group of Civil Society Activists from Uzbekistan distributed a petition in November 2007 to international organizations and governments to boycott cotton from Uzbekistan and products made from cotton grown in Uzbekistan. The ICAC was copied on the petition. The allegations of forced child labor in cotton production in Uzbekistan have risen to a level of public awareness that could result in decreased demand for cotton as a result of negative public perceptions linked to the allegations. Consequently, an objective response to the Activists petition is warranted.

The executive director met with representatives of the Activists on April 4, 2008 in Bremen, Germany on the margins of a cotton conference. The purposes of the meeting were to improve communication through an exchange of contact information and descriptions of the activities of our respective organizations, and a review of the sources and citations for the allegations in the petition sent in November 2007 and an additional letter sent in January 2008.

Jan Wellmann, Executive Director, and Elke Hortmeyer, Director of Economic Research, Bremen Baumwollbörse attended the meeting. Zbigniew Rostwitalski, Executive Vice President, Andrzej Drozd, Chief Cotton Expert, and Alois Schönberger, Member of the Board, Gdynia Cotton Association attended the meeting. Nadejda Atayeva, President of the Association Human Rights in Centrale Asia (France), Alisher Ilkhamov, Research Associate at SOAS University of London, Bernard Clasen, member of International Working Group for Peace Making, Masha Feiguinova, researcher on Central Asia, Juliette Williams, Director, Environmental Justice Foundation, Ismoil Dadajnov from Uzbekistan, Shahida Tulaganova from Uzbekistan, and Sean Ansett of At Stake Advisors attended the meeting. A representative of the Open Society Institute was in attendance.

Francesca Mancini and Jens Soth, members of the ICAC Expert Panel on Social Environmental and Economic Performance of Cotton Production (SEEP) attended the meeting. Rafiq Chaudhry, Head Technical Information Section, and the executive director of ICAC participated in the meeting.

During the meeting, information was exchanged on the topics of defoliant use in cotton production in Uzbekistan, the structure of prices within the Uzbek cotton industry in relation to world norms, the practicality of mechanical harvesting of cotton in Uzbekistan and the personal experiences of the Activists in the Uzbek cotton sector and their experiences relevant to the issue of child labor, adult labor and the economics of cotton production in Uzbekistan. Data collection methods and sources of information available to the Activists and the Secretariat were discussed.

The executive director reported that efforts were underway between the Secretariats of the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the ICAC to conduct an objective study of labor conditions in the Uzbekistan cotton sector. He said that such a study would conform to strict standards of objectivity and integrity, based on survey research methodology employed by ILO and UNICEF, and that the ICAC would be able to contribute expertise relevant to cotton production and harvesting methods in helping to design the survey. A working Group will be formed from among interested organizations to provide advice on the design and conduct of the study.

All participants agreed to continue dialogue through sharing of information by e-mail and by providing information about activities of relevance to each. The executive director agreed to interact with ILO and UNICEF and to inform the Activists as soon as possible about the formation of a working group on the objective study of labor conditions.

(Subsequent to the meeting on April 4 in Bremen, the executive director has been in communication with a representative of UNICEF in Geneva, and plans are moving forward in the development of a proposed survey of labor conditions in Uzbekistan, including child labor in cotton harvesting. The Government of Uzbekistan is in the process of ratification of certain international conventions, including ILO 138 and 182. Under ILO 182, governments commit to the conduct of objective surveys of social conditions to provide a baseline of information for future comparison. The enactment of ILO 182 by Uzbekistan will serve as a point of entry for the proposed survey of cotton harvest practices.)