



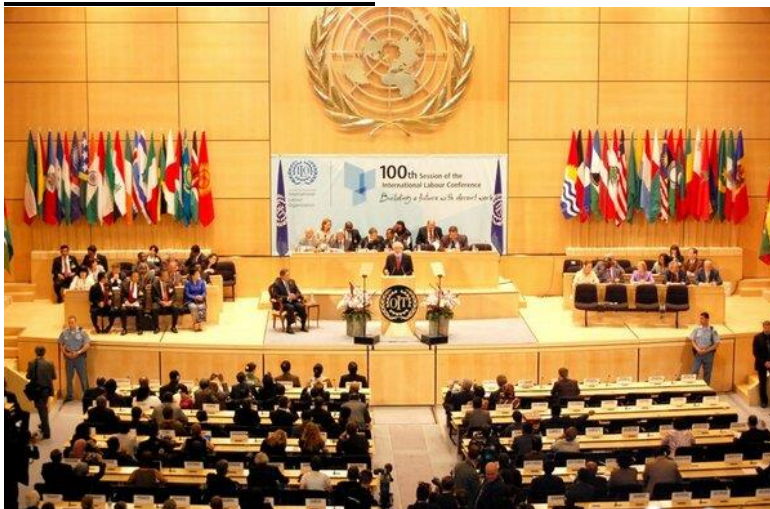
EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN IN JAPAN



INFORMATION BULLETIN

International Labor Organisation - Activists welcome progress towards eradication of forced labour, child labour in Uzbekistan

A conference in Brussels has welcomed an ILO report that found the **Uzbek government did not systematically use child labour or forced labour during the 2018 cotton harvest.**



A new report ILO shows the Uzbek government did not systematically use child labour or forced labour during the 2018 cotton harvest. Human rights activists welcomed the progress.

The report, presented at a conference in Brussels, found that 93 per cent of those involved in the 2018 cotton harvest were not forced to work and that the **systematic recruitment of students, teachers, doctors and nurses was a thing of the past.**

Child labour, which was previously a serious problem during harvest time, is no longer a major concern.

«My country is really changing. People can feel the difference».

**Mr. Azam Farmanov
an independent Human Rights Activist**

«Various awareness-raising programmes and capacity-building initiatives in educational institutions and for local authorities were introduced, and feedback mechanisms have been implemented,» said Tanzila Narbaeva, Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan, who attended the conference. «We look forward to continue our cooperation with the ILO, the World Bank and civil society to further sustain progress in this area.»

Other independent human rights activists, representatives of workers' and employers' organizations, as well as European Commission, World Bank and ILO representatives were also at the conference in Brussels to discuss the report, Third-party monitoring of measures against child labour and forced labour during the 2018 cotton harvest in Uzbekistan .

The report is based on more than 11,000 unaccompanied and unannounced interviews with a representative sample of the country's 2.5 million cotton pickers. The ILO has been monitoring the cotton harvest for child labour since 2013. In 2015, it began monitoring the harvest for forced labour and child labour as part of an agreement with the World Bank.



«The 2018 cotton harvest was an important milestone in Uzbekistan's reform process and successful fight against child labour and forced labour. This effort has encompassed not only government institutions but also journalists and all groups of civil society, including critical voices of individual activists. This is an encouraging sign for the sustainability of these results,» said Heinz Koller, ILO Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia.

Cotton pickers' wages have been increased in line with recommendations by the ILO and the World Bank. The ILO recommends that the government continues to increase wages and also addresses working conditions more broadly, to attract voluntary pickers.

The ILO Third-Party Monitoring (TPM) project in Uzbekistan will now focus on the remaining challenges, particularly the gradual transfer of responsibility for monitoring to labour inspectors, trade unions, local human rights activists and investigative journalists. **There will also be a focus on enabling responsible foreign investment and trade with the Uzbek garment and textile industry**, which has the potential to help create hundreds of thousands of decent jobs for the country.



The monitoring also shows that rising wages for cotton picking benefits women in rural areas in particular. The cotton harvest provides many women with a unique opportunity to earn extra income which they control and can use to improve the situation of their families.

The ILO TPM Project is funded by a multi-donor trust fund with major contributions from the European Union, the United States and Switzerland.