

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party  
*for the South East of England*

Commissioner Ashton  
DG Trade  
The European Commission  
200 Rue de la Loi  
B1049  
Brussels

May 29<sup>th</sup> 2009

Dear Commissioner,

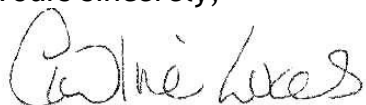
I am writing further to correspondence with your predecessor from September 2007 concerning the social and environmental abuses associated with cotton production in Uzbekistan. As you will know, the EU is a major importer of cotton from Uzbekistan, where extensive use is made of child labour. It is, therefore, critical that the Commission applies pressure for social and environmental improvements in the cotton industry.

Commissioner Mandelson advised me that the EU's priorities for action in Central Asia included some of the potential causes of child labour - social protection coverage, inadequate governance, poverty and lack of education. I am aware that the EU has also launched a human rights dialogue with Uzbekistan. I am, therefore, interested to learn what progress has been made as part of this dialogue since 2007; whether the EU has continued its efforts to engage Uzbekistan more in the area of human rights; and what progress has been made to eradicate forced child labour from Uzbek cotton production.

I would also like to know why, given its record on child labour, the Commission allows Uzbekistan to benefit from preferential import duties for its cotton exports to the EU and what step might be taken to remove these benefits in order to ensure independent monitoring of the cotton harvest.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.