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Universal Periodic Review Working Group – 16th Session

Universal Periodic Review of Uzbekistan

Statement by Australia

(4)

Australia recognises Uzbekistan's ratification of a number of human rights treaties, but underlines the need for full implementation and translation into national law and practice.

Australia welcomes steps taken by Uzbekistan to improve labour practices in the cotton industry, but is concerned by the continued use of forced labour, including of students and teachers, in its annual cotton harvest. **Australia recommends Uzbekistan improve compliance with International Labour Organisation standards, including in relation to forced labour.**

Australia acknowledges Uzbekistan's stated commitment to freedom of expression, association and assembly, but notes that fundamental freedoms remain heavily curtailed. **Australia recommends Uzbekistan take appropriate action to guarantee freedom of expression, association and assembly – including by allowing independent media, political parties and civil society groups to operate.**

Australia commends Uzbekistan's adoption of *habeas corpus* legislation and accession to the second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Australia notes the need to improve further the police, prison and judicial systems and that Uzbekistan is yet to enable independent monitoring of places of detention and to consider complaints. **Australia recommends Uzbekistan release all political prisoners and address torture and prisoner welfare – including by allowing independent monitoring of prisons.**

Australia recognises Uzbekistan's efforts to combat the trafficking of women – an issue Australia supports through the OSCE's work to prevent human trafficking in Central Asia. **Australia recommends Uzbekistan take measures to protect further and promote the rights of women, including through international cooperation to prevent human trafficking and by criminalising domestic violence and marital rape.**

Speaker: Ms Lauren Stasinowsky