**United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland**

**Statement**

**44th Universal Periodic Review – Uzbekistan**

**Wednesday 8 November 2023**

Thank you, Mr President,

The United Kingdom **[**thanks the Uzbek delegation for setting out its efforts to protect human rights and**]** welcomes steps taken by Uzbekistan in 2023 by enacting specific legislation criminalising gender-based violence **[**,and eliminating systemic forced labour in the cotton harvest**]**. We urge the Government to improve implementation of this legislation, by increasing the number of cases taken to court and successful prosecutions.

**[**Following President Mirziyoyev’s re-election, and his commitments to a free and open media,**]** we urge the Government to ensure the protection of freedom of the media by decriminalising defamation and insult, and to strengthen legal protection guarantees for journalists, the media and civil society.

We recommend that Uzbekistan:

1. Sign and ratify the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

1. Ratify the 1951 convention and 1967 protocol relating to refugees.
2. Improve transparency around registration and foreign funding declaration requirements for NGOs operating in the country.

Thank you.