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## **COMMUNIQUE ON THE RESULTS OF THE JOINT MEETING BETWEEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS' "GROUP IN MEDIATION" (GM) AND REPRESENTATIVES OF HAMKORBANK**

On July 26, 2019, the office of the Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman (CAO) convened a meeting between GM human rights defenders and representatives of Hamkorbank in Tashkent.

In June 2016, human rights defenders filed a complaint to CAO related to the International Finance Corporation's (IFC) projects with Indorama and Hamkorbank in Uzbekistan. The July 2019 meeting was a continuation of the conversations that have taken place between the relevant parties, which focus on how relevant parties can work together to demonstrate and ensure the absence of forced labor in IFC's Indorama and Hamkorbank projects and related supply chains.

The meeting between human rights defenders of GM and representatives of Hamkorbank was an important event and is notable for the fact that these parties signed a Framework Agreement, the purpose of which is to establish the basic rules for the dialogue process in order to find solutions to the issues raised by the human rights defenders in the June 2016 complaint.

The outcome of this event is a joint effort by human rights defenders and business representatives to eradicate forced labor, and the result of these joint activities presents a vivid example for other banks in Uzbekistan, which will contribute to changing the situation in the country - in the cotton sector - for the better. Also at this meeting, representatives of Hamkorbank presented the results of their social and environmental risk assessment and on the existing complaint mechanisms in the bank. Mechanisms for joint actions were developed and agreed by the meeting participants.

Also, the participants of the meeting noted that the branch of Hamkorbank in Bukhara installed escalators and facilities for disabled people who use the services of the bank, and that there is a program of assistance for children with autism, and that it is the bank that pays attention to the vulnerability of disabled people when entering inside of the bank.

The meeting was constructive, and parties actively discussed joint actions. The parties agreed to continue to maintain regular communication. Photos were taken with handshakes of human rights defenders of GM and representatives of Hamkorbank after signing of the Framework Agreement.

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### **About CAO:**

*The Office of the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO) is the independent accountability mechanism for the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), members of the World Bank Group. CAO reports directly to the President of the World Bank Group, and its mandate is to assist in addressing complaints from people affected by IFC/MIGA-supported projects in a manner that is fair, objective, and constructive, and to enhance the social and environmental outcomes of those projects. For more information, see <http://www.cao-ombudsman.org/>*

