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Oral statement – 24th Session of the Human Rights Council

Universal Periodic Review – Uzbekistan

Mr. President,

FIDH deeply regrets that Uzbekistan rejected key UPR recommendations based on its international obligations, in particular in relation to the rights to free expression and association, human rights defenders, and torture.

While we welcome the Uzbek authorities' commitment to adopt a plan of action in the field of human rights, grave human rights violations continue to be committed on a daily basis.

They include the **targeting of civil society**, including by enacting oppressive legislation directly threatening NGO personnel and harassing human rights defenders through legal proceedings, arbitrary arrests, as well as daily surveillance. Human rights defenders live in constant fear for their safety. On 24 June 2013, **Ms. Tolekan Ismailova**, a Kyrgyz NGO Director and FIDH Vice-President, was denied entry into Uzbekistan, and deported, despite the fact that Kyrgyz citizens do not need a visa to enter Uzbekistan. The border police officer explained to Ms. Ismailova that she was on a "black list" due to her human rights activities.

Since its last UPR, Uzbekistan has taken no measures to combat **torture and ill-treatment**, which remain a routine practice during investigation. It is deeply regrettable that the Uzbek authorities have failed to recognize existing problems and rejected recommendations aiming to put national legislation into line with international standards. The ICRC recently stopped visiting detainees due to lack of constructive dialogue with the authorities.

We therefore urge the government to release human rights defenders and political prisoners, to enable independent NGOs to operate freely, and to guarantee that they as well as journalists enjoy the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association. Moreover, we urge Uzbekistan to ratify key instruments such as the Convention Against Torture and its Optional Protocol.

Thank you.