Foreword

After 70 years’ development, the cotton textile industry in Xinjiang has now become vital for people of all ethnic groups in the region, the textile and garment industry of China, as well as the global textile and garment value chain. Today, the industry, on the one hand, secures the livelihood of millions of people in Xinjiang, including cotton growers, cotton textile workers, and their family members, improves their lives, and promotes the realization of their economic and social rights. On the other hand, it provides quality raw materials and enables development conditions for China’s textile and garment industry, which benefits hundreds of millions of direct and indirect employees. Furthermore, the textile and garment products of superb quality and competitive price from Xinjiang meet billions of global consumers’ needs for clothing and pursuit of fashion.

This also means that Xinjiang’s cotton textile industry is not only mutually dependent on people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang and employees of China’s textile and garment industry, but also closely connected to the players of the global textile and garment value chain, including international buyers, brands producers, and consumers. In the past year, the international community has paid close attention to the cotton supply chain, as well as the employment situation and social impacts of the cotton textile industry in Xinjiang. Such attention fully embodies the above-mentioned close ties. But in the meantime, such attention needs to be established on the objective and thorough understanding of the unique local historical context, cultural background and industry reality in the region. Only in this way can confidence and trust be built in the international textile and garment supply chain. Fundamentally, cooperation and constructive improvements of the supply chain underpinned by confidence and trust will benefit not only cotton growers, cotton textile workers and their family members, but global consumers as well, and in the end, this will also help Chinese and international stakeholders jointly construct a fair, inclusive and sustainable global textile and garment supply chain.

To objectively and thoroughly present the history of Xinjiang’s cotton textile industry, its efforts in response to economic, social and environmental challenges, and the progresses achieved in the decades, Xinjiang Textile Industry Association, through extensive survey and in-depth study, compiles and releases this “Social Responsibility Report of the Cotton Textile in Xinjiang”, in hopes of clarifying facts, staking out positions, and building a communication bridge between Chinese and international stakeholders, which is based on shared values and common interests. This report consists of 7 chapters. Chapter One introduces the history and the current development of the cotton textile industry in Xinjiang; Chapter Two focuses on livelihood guarantee, Chapter Three on common prosperity for all groups, Chapter Four on lucid waters and lush mountains, and Chapter Five on global values, explaining the contributions and social impacts of the cotton textile industry in Xinjiang with reference to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 ; on the basis of the preceding chapters, Chapter Six elaborates on the sustainable development outlook and pathways of the industry. And Chapter Seven elaborates on call on Xinjiang’s cotton textile industry to jointly build an open, inclusive, and sustainable global textile and garment value chain.

As an important method and step for preparing this report, the survey group carried out a 10-day field study of the cotton textile industry in Xinjiang in May 2020. The group had visited 16 cotton textile enterprises in many prefectures and cities in Xinjiang. Through field trips, executive interviews, employee questionnaire survey and interviews, and data collection, the survey group conducted an in-depth look into the enterprises’ operations, social, environmental and economic impacts and performance. The group also interviewed 25 business executives, recovered 1427 valid employee questionnaires randomly distributed, interviewed 1320 employees in individual or group format (all the interviewed employees signed the “Employee Informed Consent” after fully understanding the survey purpose). Meanwhile, regarding enterprises’ performance in employment, corporate management and corporate social responsibility (CSR), the survey group distributed two questionnaires to cotton textile enterprises in Xinjiang, and received valid responses from 26 enterprises. The group also convened focus group discussions. Representatives of local industry organizations, Trade Unions and Women Federations, over 20 senior managers and about 50 representatives from the relevant organizations, were present at these discussions. It needs to be noted that, among the employees included in the questionnaire survey and interviews, more than half are from ethnic minority groups. Some speak Mandarin Chinese, while others speak their ethnic minority languages only, and still others speak both languages. The survey group worked with the employees who were in need.

We are convinced that this report will help stakeholders understand the present situation and outlook of the cotton textile industry in Xinjiang more thoroughly and objectively . We also hope that this report will support and facilitate Chinese and international stakeholders in constructively making decisions and taking actions, and jointly promoting and sustainable development of the cotton textile industry in Xinjiang.