



## **UK's Marks and Spencer to ban Xinjiang cotton over Uighur 'abuses'**

London, Jan 6, 2021 -British supermarket chain Marks and Spencer vowed Wednesday not to use cotton from China's Xinjiang region in its clothes in response to the country's alleged treatment of its Muslim Uighur minority.

In a statement on its website, the group said it had become "one of the first companies to formally sign the call to action on human rights abuses" in relation to Xinjiang.

*"This is in line with the company's long-term focus on ensuring its supply chains are sustainable and ethical, where workers are treated fairly, and their human rights are respected," the company said.*

It added it was "already one of the few retailers that does not work with any supplier in or source from Xinjiang".

M&S, as it is known in Britain, noted 80 percent of China's cotton is grown in the Uighur region, representing almost 20 percent of global production.

A number of international human rights groups have decried mounting evidence of forced labour in Xinjiang, in northwest China.

"We welcome the leadership shown by Marks and Spencer today... providing assurance to its consumers that M&S products will not be linked to the abuses of Uighurs," Jasmine O'Connor, Executive Director of Anti-Slavery International said.

She added a recent "call to action" by rights groups set out a clear path for brands to follow that is in line with the United Nations' guidance on business practices and human rights.

Two years ago, US firm Badger Sportswear announced it would stop sourcing clothing from the Chinese apparel company Hetian Taida, over concerns it was using forced labour from internment camps in Xinjiang.

Meanwhile last month, French footballer Antoine Griezmann announced that he would "immediately terminate (his) partnership" with telecom giant Huawei, citing "strong suspicions" that it was involved in the Chinese authorities' surveillance of the Uighur minority.