

ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work

In 2001, Levi Strauss & Co. (LS&CO.) was named by the International Labor Organization (ILO) to represent U.S. business during its Tripartite Meeting of Experts on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work in Geneva. Having been involved in the issues since the early 1980's, the company had developed experience and leadership in the corporate response to HIV/AIDS and in creating and advancing a nondiscriminatory workplace environment.

The objective of the meeting was to develop, negotiate and adopt a workplace code of practice that would set voluntary global standards for countries and companies to utilize in setting workplace policies on HIV/AIDS. The experts outlined standards for establishing nondiscriminatory workplace environments through education, benefits programs and prevention and treatment strategies.

The result was the *ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work* (ILO Code of Practice) and was supported by the United Nations' Secretary General in a special session of the general assembly on HIV/AIDS in New York in June 2001. A declaration of commitment was issued by the United Nations to encourage the worldwide adoption of the internationally recognized guidance.

LS&CO.'s Worldwide Government Affairs and Public Policy representative to the meeting successfully advocated inserting language into the ILO Code of Practice's definition of discrimination to highlight that individuals are often discriminated in the workplace based on perceived HIV status and sexual orientation. This was the first time that an ILO code deviated from the definition and scope of discrimination since the adoption of the Convention on Discrimination of 1958. LS&CO. also worked with the Global Business Council on HIV/AIDS to conform its nondiscrimination policy to that of the ILO code.

Following the development of the international guidance, LS&CO. worked with the International Organization of Employers and UNAIDS in developing a best practices guide – "Employers' Handbook on HIV/AIDS: A Guide for Action" as a way to share our experiences with other companies interested in developing progressive HIV/AIDS programs.