



**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION**

**Special Session of the General Assembly  
Twenty-sixth Session**

**Review of the problem of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired  
immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) in all its aspects**

**Statement by  
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**New York, 27 June 2001**

President of the General Assembly,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished representatives,

I am before you today to state that the ILO and its constituents are team players in the global effort to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic. We wholeheartedly support the leadership of Secretary General Kofi Annan in his personal commitment to spearhead the international community's global action against HIV/AIDS.

The ILO will implement at the workplace the Declaration of Commitment of this General Assembly. It contains many principles that reflect the core mandate of the ILO--non-discrimination, social protection, gender and prevention strategies—and its long-standing commitment to protecting rights at work.

HIV/AIDS is not just a public health issue, it is a workplace issue, a development challenge and the source of widespread insecurity. This is why in January of last year, the Security Council took the unprecedented step to discuss HIV/AIDS and concluded that the epidemic constitutes a threat to human, national and international security.

ILO's commitment to be a partner in this challenge stems from its social mandate in the field of rights at work, as well as the threat posed to its primary goal of providing men and women with decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

Initially, we have responded to this challenge by developing a Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work which was unanimously adopted by our Governing Body last Friday 22 June. It was formally launched here in the United Nations on Monday, when I transmitted this document to the Secretary-General.

This code is a pioneering and comprehensive blueprint for addressing HIV/AIDS in the workplace. It is the result of consensus reached by government, employers' and workers' representatives from all 175 member states of the ILO. It represents a balanced approach to problems of discrimination, confidentiality, employee benefits, care and treatment and other AIDS-related workplace issues.

It is a major human tragedy for those affected, but also for all of us individually. Nobody can look the other way - although denial continues to be prevalent in so many attitudes.

I recall the address by a Head of State to this Assembly during the Millennium Summit in which he shared with us the dramatic fact that his country stands to lose half of its population within a decade because of AIDS.

We must react to the crisis unfolding in so many places where skilled and experienced workers are dying? Or, where children are forced to work and head

households because all the adults either are too sick to work or have died? Or when there are no longer enough teachers to keep school systems functioning? Or, health workers to take care of the sick? All of these examples have been cited by speakers at this Special Session.

Hard won gains in terms of employment and social protection are being reversed because of HIV/AIDS. At the enterprise level, the effects of AIDS include loss of earnings, loss of skills, reduced productivity, and the loss of markets as the consumer base is whittled away, leading to lower profit margins and falling revenues and investment resources.

The ILO's new programme on HIV/AIDS in the world of work is a beginning. Through it, we will work with our tripartite constituents at national and regional levels to promote prevention in the workplace and mitigate the social and economic impact of the epidemic. The next step will be to prepare a manual on information, education, and communication to help implement the Code in practice.

Concern for HIV/AIDS is reflected in other ILO activities. The ILO Programme on child labour (IPEC) will expand its efforts to address the needs of children orphaned by AIDS and forced into the world of work. The gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS will be addressed within the framework of the ILO's programme on gender and other activities to help reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to the disease.

We want to put the ILO's unique tripartite structure and our doctrine of social dialogue at the service of the global struggle against HIV/AIDS. To this end we have become a co-sponsor of UNAIDS, which will strengthen the basis for partnerships with the other co-sponsors and organizations of the UN as a whole.

In the spirit of hope raised by the Secretary-General, let us work to implement the Declaration of this UN Special Session on HIV/AIDS. For the sake of all those affected by HIV/AIDS, in the interest of protecting development gains and social progress, and for future generations, we must make it work.

I thank you.