MEDIA RELEASE

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Employers’ Action on HIV/AIDS presented at AIDS 2012

At a special session of the XIX International AIDS Conference currently being held in Washington DC, Mr Frederick Muia, Senior Adviser at the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), reported today on a range of actions by national employers’ organisations to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in their countries.

With a theme this year of “Turning the Tide Together”, the high-level Conference is attended by more than 25,000 leaders from the world of science, diplomacy, politics, business and philanthropy, as well as representatives of UN agencies, government, and civil society groups, to assess the current status of the epidemic, to evaluate recent scientific developments and lessons learned, and to chart the way forward.

At today’s session bringing together representatives from UNAIDS, the ILO, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, and the United States President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, Mr. Muia presented the latest IOE publication documenting employers’ organisations’ efforts to sustain their response to HIV/AIDS in the most affected countries. In the context of diminished funding for HIV and AIDS as a result of donors’ budgetary constraints, the IOE report shows how key local actors have been scaling up their efforts to sustain recent positive developments, with the business sector playing a vital role by mobilizing its expertise, knowledge, healthcare infrastructure and resources through win-win Public Private Partnerships. “As the disease has tended to affect the most active segment of the population,” added Mr Muia, “it is in the interest of employers to join efforts with other key actors to preserve the skills and experience of workers who would be difficult to replace.”

IOE member, the United States Council for International Business (USCIB) was represented at the session by Ms Paurvi Bhatt, Senior Director of Levi Strauss & Co., who reaffirmed the commitment of the international business community to fully play its part in helping to stop the spread of the epidemic. Ms Bhatt provided several examples of successful initiatives by Levi Strauss & Co. to assist employees and their communities, both in the United States and around the world, to respond to the epidemic and noted, “Three decades after our first response to HIV and AIDS, we remain firmly committed to creating an informed, healthy workplace, free of stigma and discrimination, where our employees around the world feel free to disclose their HIV/AIDS status.”

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The International Organisation of Employers (IOE) is the world’s largest network of representative employer and business organisations, with 151 members in 144 countries around the world.