Minutes of the Labor Standards and Human Rights Committee Meeting
October 26, 2000

Members Present: Kristen Ablauf, Louis Green, Sioban Harlow, Robert Howse,
Kevin Kolben, Larry Root, Stevan Rosenberg, Scott Trudeau

Present via Speakerphone: Veronica Johnson  Members Absent: Alan Deardorff

The Committee discussed the issue of the disclosure of manufacturing sites by licensees. It was noted that both the WRC and the FLA are in the process of examining disclosure information. A copy of the current disclosure information (provided on a quarterly basis) was circulated, so that individual Committee members could see format and extent of the current reporting. The Committee will review the progress of the WRC and the FLA in their efforts to examine disclosure data.

The Committee then turned to consideration of the Codes of Conduct. Using the documents prepared and distributed at the last meeting, the Committee was able to begin its examination of the “Draft Code of Conduct” in comparison with several other codes (the WRC code, the FLA code and the CLC code). At the last meeting, the discussion of the several different codes in existence suggested that one viable approach could draw upon the model of a “Mutual Recognition Agreement”. This approach is used internationally when standards are roughly equivalent although not necessarily the same. In this context, participants agree to recognize the codes of others so long as they meet the essential goals of one’s own code. The Committee thought that this would be a useful way of thinking about the variety of codes, which exist. For example, if the University of Michigan adopts its own specific code, we may choose to recognize other codes if the provisions of those codes, while different than ours, meet the same essential goals. This kind of approach is particularly relevant the current situation, in which a number of the different codes have many of the same or similar provisions.

The Committee began the task of looking at the provisions of the “University of Michigan Draft Code” (developed by the Advisory Committee last year) and comparing these provisions with the codes of the WRC, the FLA and the CLC. The comparison of provisions on forced labor and child labor suggested that the “Draft U-M Code” and the 3 other codes were essentially the same. The Committee also began to discuss suggested modification in the draft language of the U-M code. It was decided that the Committee should continue to examine the “U-M Draft Code”, making changes when warranted, and at the same time make a determination about whether the other codes (WRC, FLA & CLC) meet our essential expectations. Committee members are encouraged to look at the U-M code prior to the next meeting and send suggested changes to the group via e-mail.

The Committee had previously decided to have a working group session (no observers) at the end of this initial meeting. During this time the Committee discussed a web site for reporting on Committee operations. The Committee also suggested that the expectations for observers (whether they can address the Committee, etc.) should be established and made available to observers. A draft set of guidelines will be developed.

The next meeting will be on November 2, 2000, from 8:30 –10:00 AM in Room 2609, Social Work Building (International Institute).

Respectfully submitted,

Lawrence S. Root, Chair