



Launch of the International Year of Cooperatives Programme

31 October 2011, General Assembly Hall

As outlined in General Assembly resolution 65/184, the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) is to be launched during a plenary meeting of the 66th session of the General Assembly. The assigned date for said meeting, as requested and confirmed by the main sponsor of the resolution, Mongolia, is 31 October 2011.

Resolution 65/184 also stipulates that the IYC launch will involve 1) an informal interactive roundtable discussion which includes Member States, observers, organizations of the United Nations system, cooperatives, and non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, and 2) a plenary session. The outcome of the roundtable is to be presented to the plenary, by a representative of cooperatives.

Launch of the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC)

Monday, 31 October 2011

IYC Launch: Informal Round-table Discussions Conference Room 4, NLB

10:00-10.30am	<p>Opening remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film screening “Cooperative enterprises build a better world”, produced by the ILO for the IYC • Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General, Department of Economic and Social Affairs • Ms. Jane Stewart, Director, ILO Representative to the United Nations, to deliver statement by Mr. Juan Somavia, Director-General, International Labour Organization • Ms. Daniela Bas, Director, Division for Social Policy and Development, DESA
10.30-1:00pm	<p>Informal round-table discussion: “Cooperative Enterprises Build a Better World: Contributions to Sustainable Development”</p> <p><i>The round-table will discuss the impact of cooperatives in development with specific focus on food security, financial and economic stability, and environmental sustainability, while highlighting the uniqueness and resilience of the cooperative enterprise model as driving their strong role in these areas. It will also touch on their role in peacebuilding and creating bridges of communication in areas of conflict. It will discuss the roles of stakeholders in developing the internal capacity and policy space for strengthening cooperative enterprises.</i></p>



	<p>Moderator: H.E. Enkhsetseg Ochir (Mongolia)</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr. Jack Wilkinson, President of ex-IFAP now World Farmers' Organization, Canada 2. Mr. Li Chengyu, President of the All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Co-operatives (ACFSMC), China 3. Mr. Piet Moerland, Chairman of the Executive Board at Rabobank, Netherlands 4. Mr. Carlos Heller, Chairman of Banco Credicoop, Argentina 5. Ms. Maria Arantzazu Laskurain, Director of the General Secretariat, Mondragón, Spain
1:00-2:45pm	<i>Lunch time side events</i>
3:00-6:00pm	<i>IYC Launch: Opening ceremony and plenary meeting, GA Hall</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly • H.E. Dr. Asha-Rose Migiros, Deputy Secretary-General, on behalf of the Secretary-General • Dame Pauline Green, Cooperative Representative to present Outcome Statement from the morning's Informal Panel • The Right Honourable Gordon Brown MP, former British Prime Minister • Member States and observers
Closing Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Jean-François Regis Zinsou, Vice President of the General Assembly

Taken as a whole, the launch programme seeks to highlight the cooperative model of enterprise as values-based, member-owned, successful and sustainable, by showing the ways in which they support the pledge of the UN Charter to “promote higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development”. The programme will highlight the unique aspects of cooperatives and their impact in the market as a complementary model of enterprise; it will identify the role that cooperatives can play in bringing greater security to global social and economic systems, and promote a drive for cooperative growth around the world.



Background

What are cooperatives? Cooperatives, as economic enterprises and as autonomous self-help organizations, play a meaningful role in uplifting the socioeconomic conditions of their members and their local communities, as well as running major international businesses. Over the years, cooperative enterprises have successfully operated locally-owned people-centred businesses while also serving as catalysts for social organization and cohesion. Within the membership of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) alone, more than 800 million people are members of cooperatives.

Cooperatives represent a model of economic enterprise, which when effectively implemented, promotes democratic and human values as well as respect for the environment. It is compelling to consider cooperatives as another model of economic enterprise that promotes community self reliance and benefits society in general. Cooperatives help create, improve and protect income as well as they generate employment opportunities and contribute to poverty reduction. As of 2007, cooperatives were responsible for more than 100 million jobs world wide.¹ Cooperatives also promote social integration and cohesion as they are a means of empowering the poor and marginalized groups. As such, they also play an ever-increasing role in the promotion of gender equality and the social and economic empowerment of women. The cooperative sector, especially in developing countries, can therefore contribute to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

Why an International Year of Cooperatives? The United Nations has long recognised the importance of the cooperative movement as an important partner in the implementation of the United Nations development Agenda, defined by the UN global conferences and summits since the 1990s. In light of the current global economic crisis, the IYC draws on the potential of cooperatives for job creation and income generation, local empowerment, and the linking of local populations to local and global markets. The IYC will give visibility to the contributions of cooperatives in addressing food security, social inclusion and gender empowerment. The IYC will also raise awareness of the strength and reach of cooperative in both developed and developing countries. This awareness is vital for promoting cooperatives formation and growth which will help leverage cooperative contributions for development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The 2012 IYC is a concrete step towards promoting and strengthening cooperatives and recognizing their important contributions to socio-economic development. The IYC has three main objectives:

1. to increase public awareness about cooperatives and their contributions to socio-economic development and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs;
2. to promote the formation and growth of independent and sustainable cooperatives for socio-economic empowerment; and
3. to encourage Member States to establish policies, laws and regulations conducive to the formation, growth and stability of cooperatives.

¹ ILO (2007). Fact Sheet: Cooperatives and Rural Employment. ILO Cooperative Branch: Geneva

