

**Statement by Ms. Daniela Bas
at the Informal Roundtable: Cooperative Enterprises Build Another World:
Contributions to Sustainable Development
on the Occasion of the Launch of the International Year of Cooperatives**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to add my warm welcome to those that have spoken before me.

As the distinguished speakers before me have noted, the matter being discussed here today is a very strategic component of our work in the United Nations, particularly in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, because it will draw attention to a model of enterprise that happily marries issues of social and economic development.

Not only has the cooperative enterprise model proven itself both efficient and sustainable, but it has shown proven comparative advantage for achieving gender equity in both operational and servicing elements, and for positively affecting livelihood opportunities among indigenous peoples and local rural communities, persons with disabilities and other especially vulnerable groups. Cooperatives, as a form of social entrepreneurship, also present a promising avenue for empowering the young women and men of the world heavily affected by issues of unemployment, and enhancing the resilience of the communities in which they operate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, our expert panelists will enrich our knowledge on the agency of cooperatives in forwarding and maintaining social, economic and environmental sustainability. Bringing with them perspectives from across varied sectors and geographic locations, they will share real life examples that provide us deeper understanding of the cooperative enterprise model – how it works and why it works. We will gain insight into the root of their resilience and sustainability, their agency in, and further potential for, enhancing rural development and food security, as well as other comparative advantages of this value-driven, people-centred model of enterprise.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I hand over now to the distinguished chair, let me thank you all again for your patronage today, as we usher in the International Year of Cooperatives 2012.