

**Statement by Ms. Daniela Bas
at the Opening Session of the Global Forum and Workshop on Cooperatives: “Harnessing
the Cooperative Advantage to Build a Better World.”**

**4 September 2012
(Video Message)**

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome your participation in this 3-day forum and workshop on cooperatives.

Recent economic and political events across the globe have shown us the importance of strengthening the real economy and for concentrating our development efforts on empowering people and building their capacity to participate fully in social and economic life. As such, cooperatives, and the potential that they represent, are a significant and growing feature of the development strategies promoted by the United Nations. Not only in the work of the Division for Social Policy and Development in DESA, but across the system.

Most recently, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio +20, the international community recognized the role that cooperatives play in forwarding key aspects of development such as social inclusion and poverty reduction. In Rio, Member States of the United Nations also placed particular emphasis on the real and potential role of cooperatives in promoting rural development and access to decent work and sustainable livelihoods.

Acknowledging such potential is only a first step.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We know the advantages that well-run and properly integrated cooperative enterprises can bring to any society. The cooperative model has shown proven comparative advantage for achieving gender equity both from the income generation perspective and through provision of services. It has also proven advantageous in positively affecting livelihood opportunities among other vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities. The model also presents a promising avenue for empowering the young women and men of the world who are disproportionately affected by issues of unemployment and under-employment. If that is not enough, the cooperative enterprise model has proven itself both efficient and sustainable, and thus a strong contributor to sustainable economies.

To harness these advantages, and to ensure that that they are as effective as possible, requires understanding how and why they exist, and being clear on the types of internal and external structures that allow them to work at their best.

In your discussions and workshop experiences throughout this event, it is just this type of understanding that we hope to evoke. We hope that you, the participants, will learn from each other's experiences and leave here, not only with greater understanding of the cooperative advantage, but with the skills and information necessary to build strategies of engaging with cooperatives within your own national and local contexts.

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I regret that I could not be present with you in Addis Ababa, as I would have loved to participate in the rich dialogue, which this meeting promises.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the African Centre for Gender and Social Development at UNECA, for agreeing to host the event. I must also thank the members of the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives and the Ethiopia IYC National Committee, for their assistance in sourcing resource persons and other participants. Finally, I must also express my gratitude to Rabobank for their overall support of the United Nations during this International Year of Cooperatives.

Thank you again for your participation and for your contributions to what I know will be a productive experience.