



PRESS RELEASE



International Year of Cooperatives Closes with Special Observance

UN and stakeholders explore how cooperatives support sustainable development and achievement of the MDGs

New York, 19 November—Governments, civil society and representatives of cooperatives, from various sectors, meet today at United Nations Headquarters to mark the closing of the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) under the theme “Promoting Cooperatives Beyond 2012.” The event, taking place from 19 to 20 November, will highlight major outcomes from the year and lessons learned from cooperatives across the world, with the overall aim of influencing policy dialogues on development.

“As a strong partner in development, the cooperative movement works with the United Nations every day to empower people, enhance human dignity and help achieve the Millennium Development Goals,” says UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. In seeing the potential for cooperatives to amplify efforts for sustainable socio-economic development, the UN declared 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives.

Yielding benefits

Cooperatives -- member-driven business enterprises in which decisions balance the pursuit of profit with the needs and interests of members and their communities -- have been found to generate significant financial turnover. The International Cooperative Alliance, in its *Global 300 Report* (2011), found that the world’s largest 300 cooperatives generated revenues of \$1.6 trillion and employ nearly 100 million people worldwide. A majority of the organizations surveyed were in the insurance and food and agriculture sectors.

In recent years, cooperatives exhibited an ability to withstand tests brought by market failures, as was the case during the economic crisis endured by Europe in 2011. Additionally, agricultural cooperatives have an increasing role to play in future action plans for global food security, according to the European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises.

Official closing of the Year

The closing of the IYC at the United Nations will commence with an interactive panel discussion on global food security and the role of cooperatives. A special event featuring a forum on ‘Cooperatives and Youth: Empowerment, Employment and Engagement’ will provide youth leaders the opportunity to develop and deliver an International Cooperative Youth Statement.

The official closing ceremony on 20 November will feature statements from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Daniela Bas, Director for the Division for Social Policy and Development at the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA); and Mr. Jose Graziano da Silva, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), along with other prominent leaders from the cooperative sector and UN Member

States. In addition to the Programme of Action on cooperatives to be presented by Mongolia, National Committee reports will also be delivered from Indonesia, Malta, Panama, and Trinidad and Tobago. At the closing ceremony, seven winners from the international IYC Short Film Festival will be announced. The public can follow developments from the closing of the IYC using #IYCbeyond2012 on Twitter.

About the International Year of Cooperatives

The UN General Assembly, in its resolution 64/136 (2010), declared 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives, in recognition of the contribution of cooperatives to socio-economic development, especially with regard to poverty reduction, employment generation and social integration.

The Year sought to: expand public awareness of the role of cooperatives, particularly in relation to the fulfilment of internationally agreed development goals; encourage the growth of cooperatives worldwide; and establish a policy and legal environment conducive to the strength and stability of the cooperative movement.

For more information, please visit <http://social.un.org/coopsyear>, or contact Mohsin Mohi Ud Din, UN Department of Public Information, at tel.: +1 212 963 1044, e-mail: mohi-ud-din@un.org; or Astrid Hurley, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, at tel.: +1 917 367 8009, e-mail: hurleya@un.org.

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