

## **Talking points for Mr. Houngho**

### **COPAC Event on the Occasion of the International Day of Cooperatives, New York, 11 July 2016**

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- ILO is proud to join the celebrations for the 2016 International Day of Cooperatives.
- ILO has worked closely with the international cooperative movement since its foundation in 1919. Its first Director Albert Thomas was a Executive Committee member of the International Cooperative Alliance.
- Albert Thomas established a cooperative service in 1920 as one of ILO's 14 technical services. Cooperatives were also mentioned in Article 12 of the ILO's Constitution.
- ILO is also one of the founding members of the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives since 1966.
- ILO supports cooperative development for instance through Recommendation No. 193 on the promotion of cooperatives, which provides a modern framework for cooperative policies and legislation.
- Since its adoption in 2002 the recommendation has been used by close to 100 countries to revise and develop their cooperative policies and laws since its adoption in 2002.
- Today, as a specialized UN agency working on social justice and decent work for all, ILO is committed to promoting the achievement of sustainable development.
- ILO sees decent work for all women and men as a driver for sustainable development, not only for the achievement of the SDG8, but throughout the 17 goals and their respective targets.
- As the ILO Director-General Guy Ryder emphasised in his statement for the occasion of the international day of cooperatives last week, cooperatives might be an old idea but they are more relevant than ever in today's world.
- With the need to create over 600 million new jobs globally by 2030 to keep pace with the growth of the working population, we must diversify our means for creating jobs, not only for the numbers but also jobs that are of good quality.
- Within this context integrating decent work agenda as a priority for cooperative enterprises is important to us. We also recognize the need to better integrate cooperatives as means to deliver on the ILO's decent work agenda for sustainable development.

- At the ILO we think as much as decent work is a driver for the 2030 Development Agenda, cooperatives are key means of implementation to contribute to the achievement of several targets and goals as spelled out in the agenda.
- Cooperatives in today's world provide employment opportunities, incomes, and livelihoods for millions of people around the world, supporting the entrepreneurial and self-help attitudes of women and men, as well as the values of solidarity, equality, and democracy, among others, which are key values required for the achievement of sustainable development. As such, cooperatives have a role to play in the 2030 Agenda.
- Cooperatives are present in all the sectors of the economy and all over the world, and as such their role for the implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda needs to be well acknowledged and better defined.
- Cooperative movement and other stakeholders, will now need to step up and come up with a clear plan on how cooperatives can be used for ensuring more equal, just, and people-centred development process.
- ILO is ready to participate in and support this process through our country and regional field offices as well as technical departments in our headquarters in Geneva.
- Cooperatives already are delivering on a number of the targets in the real world on the ground and they have the potential to do so toward a number of others. I would like to take a few minutes to reflect on a select number of targets under SDGs 1, 2 and 8 on account of their relevance for cooperative:
  - *1.1. End poverty* – the original target of cooperatives, which still strive to end poverty through self-help mechanisms that create opportunities, extend protection and empower. In the work of the ILO under the field operations portfolio that I am responsible for, and in the context of Africa, we have seen the effectiveness of cooperatives as a poverty alleviation mechanism time and time again.
  - *2.1. End hunger* – producer cooperatives ensure and increase food supply while consumer cooperatives enable the purchase food at lower prices (demand). When working together across both sides of the global supply chains they can ensure fairness and efficiency for workers, producers and consumers.
  - *2.3. Agricultural productivity* – Cooperatives provide a space for rural organization and enhance production through generating economies of scale and scope through different phases of agricultural production. Strengthening their capacities toward improved productivity and better terms and conditions of work free of worst forms of child labour and forced labour, in conditions of freedom and equality is important to us. Research shows that the dual goals of productivity and decent work are not only compatible but can also reinforce each other.

- 8.2. & 8.3. *on economic productivity, employment and job creation* – Cooperatives provide employment and create bridges between the informal and formal economy. We have seen time and time again how informal transport workers, waste pickers, street vendors, domestic workers and home based workers opt for the cooperative way of organizing their livelihoods for collective voice, negotiation power and economies of scale. Sonia Dias on the panel will talk about the experience of waste picker cooperatives in Brazil and how they negotiated with local governments for integrating their members into the waste management chain & advance their rights.
- 8.10. *Access to financial services* – Saving and credit cooperatives and credit unions have been a refuge for those who would otherwise not have access to financial services. They have served their members –workers, producers and enterprises - in rural and urban areas and across all sectors.
- As values-driven, principle-based enterprises, cooperatives have always been and will continue to be natural and important partners for the ILO: in creating good-quality employment, in providing social protection for their member-owners and communities, and in giving voice and representation to those who have often found themselves excluded from democratic decision-making.
- At the ILO we stand ready to support the cooperative movement's efforts toward achieving decent opportunities, livelihoods and employment for your members, your affiliates and your communities and contributing to sustainable development for all.
- I wish you a successful continuation of the meeting. Thank you very much.