

DRAFT

CONCEPT NOTE

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF COOPERATIVES

UN Headquarters, New York

8 July 2013, 1.15-2.45pm

Conference Room 7, NLB

Panel Discussion

Cooperative enterprises remain strong in times of crisis

Background:

The year 2012 was designated as the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) by the United Nations General Assembly. During the year, the cooperatives sector received positive attention in all regions of the world. Awareness about cooperatives has been increased throughout the world. This momentum must be kept alive as the international community moves forward its agenda on cooperatives in the years ahead.

The cooperative model promotes individual and collective self-help, contributes to socio-economic development, and strengthens communities around the world. It allows for full participation of people and seeks to empower its members and their communities. Though cooperatives may assume a variety of forms, most adopt the seven principles of cooperative identity. These principles include voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; member economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information sharing; cooperation among cooperatives; and concern for community. Together, these principles guarantee the conditions under which members own, control and benefit from the business; ensure that members can contribute effectively to the viability of their cooperatives, as well as the sustainable development of their communities; and promote the broader goal of social responsibility.

The first Saturday of July each year is dedicated to the International Day of Cooperatives throughout the world. This is a good opportunity for continuing to highlight the role of cooperatives, especially in times of crisis.

Objectives:

The International Day of Cooperatives will be an opportunity to place the spotlight broadly on the role of cooperatives in the social development process. Specifically, this year, the focus of the International Day will be on the role of cooperatives in building resilient societies in times of economic, social, and environmental crisis.

Cooperatives are making a difference in times of financial, food, and environmental crisis confronting societies around the world. Financial cooperatives have demonstrated their strength in a time when many financial institutions are failing.¹ In addition, agricultural cooperatives have demonstrated their importance to achieving

¹ Boonstra, W., Mooj, J. (2010). Raiffeisen's Footprint. The Cooperative Way of Banking. VU University Press, Amsterdam.

food security.² Furthermore, cooperatives have been recognized by Rio+20 for their role in sustainable development in the context of environmental crisis.³ Cooperatives have also shown their relevance in disaster situations.⁴

While cooperatives can exist in all social strata, these core values can make cooperatives ideal for providing goods and services to the poor, excluded and marginalized sectors of society. In short, they are major resources for empowerment and participation of people in their own development and that of their society. In so doing, cooperatives help individuals, families and communities build resilience, especially in times of crisis.

Organization

Moderator:

- Daniela Bas, Director, Division for Social Policy and Development, DESA

Panellists:

1. His Excellency, Ambassador Och, Permanent Mission of Mongolia to the United Nations
2. Mr. Kevin Cassidy, Senior Communications and External Relations Manager International Labor Organization, New York
3. Mr. Javier Molina Cruz, Liaison Officer Food and Agricultural Organization
4. Ms. Betsy Dribben, Director of Policy, International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)

Discussant:

Elisabeth Phillipe, Corporate Communications Manager, United Nations Federal Credit Union (UNFCU)

Questions to be answered:

- What is the potential of cooperatives for contributing to building resilient societies in times of crisis?
- What are the actual contributions of cooperatives to empower people?
- How do cooperatives contribute to building inclusive societies in times of crisis?
- What is the importance of creating an International Plan of Action on Cooperatives?

Partners:

- The Permanent Mission of Mongolia to the United Nations
- UN DESA
- UN DPI
- FAO

² Message of the Director-General of FAO, José Graziano da Silva, World Food Day 2012

³ A/RES/66/288 - The Future We Want

⁴ <http://ica.coop/en/media/news/dame-pauline-green-tsunami-efforts-shows-co-operative-strength>

- ILO
- ICA

Invitees:

The event will be open to UN Member States, UN Secretariat Departments, Agencies, Funds and Programmes, development partners, cooperatives and civil society.

For more information please contact Maxwell Haywood (haywood@un.org) at the Division for Social Policy and development of UN-DESA, with a copy to Wenyan Yang (yang@un.org), and Astrid Hurley (hurleya@un.org)