



Concept note

Observance of the International Day of Cooperatives July 2015

Background

To impress the importance of achieving equality and to seize the opportunity of this year as a turning point, the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC) has selected equality as the theme for the 2015 International Day of Cooperatives and “Choose cooperatives, choose equality” as the accompanying slogan.

Equality counts among the six guiding values for cooperative enterprises, and open and voluntary membership is one of the principles to which cooperatives subscribe. Cooperative enterprises also have a “one member, one vote” system, which ensures that decision making powers are equally shared amongst their members¹. Being people-centred enterprises, cooperatives focus on the needs of their members and of the communities in which they operate, rather than on financial returns alone.

Given that equality is clearly at the core of every cooperative, the 2015 International Day of Cooperatives presents a key high-level and global opportunity to showcase the contributions of cooperatives on this issue.

2015 represents an important year for equality. In terms of gender equality and women’s empowerment, 2015 marks 20 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action² for gender equality and women’s empowerment. This year will also see the adoption of a post-2015 development agenda by UN Member States, in order to take up the work begun by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)³. The proposed agenda currently contains seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁴, including specific goals to achieve gender equality and reduce inequality within and among countries.

The MDGs made considerable progress, but inequalities persist. While a small portion of the population enjoys prosperity, many continue to endure poverty, unequal access to education and employment opportunities, disease, conflict and harsh living conditions.

The International Day of Cooperatives is celebrated annually on the first Saturday of July, as detailed in the 1992 resolution 47/90⁵ of the United Nations. The goals of the International Day include increasing awareness about cooperatives, highlighting the complementary goals and objectives of the United Nations and the international cooperative movement, underscoring the contribution of cooperatives to the resolution of the major problems addressed by the United Nations and strengthening and extending partnerships between the international cooperative

¹ http://ica.coop/sites/default/files/media_items/ICA%20Blueprint%20-%20Final%20-%20Feb%2013%20EN.pdf

² <http://beijing20.unwomen.org/~media/Field%20Office%20Beijing%20Plus/Attachments/BeijingDeclarationAndPlatformForAction-en.pdf>

³ <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1579SDGs%20Proposal.pdf>

⁵ http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/47/90

movement and other actors, including governments, at local, national and international levels.

Objective

To highlight the contributions of cooperative enterprises to achieving equality, through the lens of the post-2015 development agenda negotiations.

Description of activities

To achieve the above objective, COPAC will host an event at UN headquarters in New York on 8 July 2015, during the ministerial segment of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

The event will frame cooperative achievements in equality in the context of the post-2015 development agenda negotiations, with a particular focus on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. The event will also be the opportunity for COPAC to present its one-page policy brief for its research work on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Invited guests will include UN Member State representatives, UN Secretariat Departments, Agencies, Funds and Programmes, development partners, civil society and cooperatives.
