



United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Social Policy and Development

Report of the Expert Group Meeting
Cooperatives in Social Development: Beyond 2012

3-6 May 2011
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Organized by the Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the Government of Mongolia with contributions from cooperative partners and civil-society organizations.

The views expressed in this document are those of the contributing experts and do not necessarily represent the views of the United Nations

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I. Introduction

Background and purpose of the meeting

The United Nations has long recognized the importance of the cooperatives movement as an important partner in the implementation of the United Nations Development Agenda, defined by the UN global conferences and summits since the 1990s. Specifically, the UN recognized the role and contributions of cooperatives towards achieving the 1995 World Summit for Social Development goals of poverty eradication, employment creation and social integration. The UN also drew the attention of Member States to importance of adequate policy formulation in support of cooperatives, through what was eventually adopted as UN Guidelines of 2001 and the ILO Recommendation No. 193 on the promotion of cooperatives. The UN, along with ILO and FAO, was also instrumental in the formation of the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC), whose goal is to promote cooperatives through inter- agency collaboration.

As further recognition of the contribution of cooperatives to social development, General Assembly resolution 64/136, declared 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC). In light of the current global economic crisis, the IYC draws on the potential of cooperatives for job creation and income generation, local empowerment, and the linking of local populations to local and global markets. The IYC will give visibility to the contributions of cooperatives in addressing food security, social inclusion and gender empowerment. The IYC will also raise awareness of the strength and reach of cooperatives in both developed and developing countries. Such awareness is vital for promoting cooperative formation and growth which will help leverage cooperative contribution for development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The 2012 IYC is a concrete step towards promoting and strengthening cooperatives and recognizing their important contributions to socio-economic development. The IYC has three main objectives:

1. to increase public awareness about cooperatives and their contributions to socio-economic development and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs;
2. to promote the formation and growth of independent and sustainable cooperatives for socio-economic empowerment; and
3. to encourage Member States to establish policies, laws and regulations conducive to the formation, growth and stability of cooperatives.

Objectives of the meeting

The Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), in collaboration with the

Government of Mongolia organized an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on “Cooperatives in Social Development: Beyond 2012” from 3-6 May 2011, in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

The meeting was convened in the context of the declaration of the IYC, and served as part of the preparations for the IYC, scheduled to be launched on 31 October, 2011, in the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The objectives of the EGM were to:

- provide background information and substantive inputs to the Secretary-General’s report on cooperatives in social development to the 66th session of the General Assembly in 2011;
- draft an international plan of action beyond 2012 to be adopted as an outcome of the IYC.

The draft plan of action for cooperatives beyond 2012, consistent with the objectives of the IYC, is expected to include principles and guidelines for good practices, an international research agenda and policy recommendations for Member States.

To accomplish these objectives, the meeting brought together independent experts, government officials, representatives from the United Nations system, civil-society and representatives of cooperative enterprises to promote both reflective and introspective dialogue on the most effective leveraging of cooperatives social and economic contributions, in the national and international development context.

The meeting was organized around four key themes: (1) Promoting research on cooperatives; (2) Identifying and promoting good practices and addressing the internal challenges faced by cooperatives; (3) Raising public awareness on cooperatives; and (4) Policy and planning beyond 2012.

In addressing these themes, the EGM sought to address six overarching questions:

- i. What are the strengths of cooperative enterprises in promoting social development?
- ii. What factors and practices are important for the successful operation of cooperatives?
- iii. What are effective ways and means to raise awareness about cooperatives?
- iv. What is the current state of research and information in support of policy formulation for cooperative development? What are the research gaps?
- v. What are the prevailing policies and laws impacting cooperatives and what are effective strategies for creating supportive policy environments for cooperatives?
- vi. What are the priority capacity-building strategies to promote and strengthen cooperatives?

II. Summary of the Discussion

Promoting research on cooperatives

Strengthening and expanding research on cooperatives

One of the main draw backs to research on cooperatives is the need to promote interest in cooperatives as a topic of research. As such, the need to promote research on cooperatives is very much tied to raising the general awareness on cooperatives within and beyond academic circles. Cooperatives are an important part of the social and economic fabric for many national and local communities. For example, in Canada, four out of 10 people are members of cooperatives with more than 9000 cooperative enterprises in operation. However, few members of the general public or even of academia or policy-making bodies are aware of the reach and impact of cooperatives within their communities.

One way of addressing this dearth is through the effective communication of available research. This can be accomplished through effective use of technology to develop an accessible platform of information on existing research and researchers in the area of cooperatives and the contributions of cooperatives to social development. In addition, efforts must be made to make research useable and understandable by non-researchers and non-academics.

The need for greater information sharing and collaborative research efforts is exemplified in the status of research on cooperatives in the Asian region. While individual countries, such as India, Japan and Korea have created national societies for co-operative studies to coordinate research efforts at the national level, there has been little exchange among them. In addition, because of the economic weight of agriculture, research focus has tended to remain in this sphere. Even at the national level, where research efforts are set up with local concentrations, little is done to coordinate local efforts and feed the outcomes into national research initiatives.

Developing global statistics and comparable data

In order to promote effective and robust research, access to valid, reliable and comparable data is a necessity. Though there are some data on cooperatives available at the country level, there are acute complexities in both the collection and use of this data for research. The very basic measurement of the number of cooperative is problematic, as the nature of provincial and/or national level laws may mean that cooperative businesses may not be registered as cooperatives, but as some other business type. The very basis of a definition for research purposes then comes under question. Should researchers define cooperatives by operative characteristics, or by registered status?

As such there needs to be a collaborative effort by national and international actors to streamline the collection of data on cooperatives through the development of agreed indicators, an effective methodology and protocol, so that comparable data on cooperatives could be integrated into national statistics mechanisms.

Toward an effective research strategy

Once the importance of conducting research on cooperatives and their contributions is realised, there still remains the challenge of ensuring the most effective strategy for conducting research. At present, research on cooperatives usually falls into one of two broad categories, conceptual research, or applied research. Conceptual research is useful in its ability to give an in depth focus to any given phenomenon, but its theoretical focus and location within the academy often limits its accessibility and applicability to and by co-operators and government practitioners. On the other hand, applied research on cooperatives is often led by researchers within cooperative organizations and tends to focus on the specific concerns of the conducting organization.

As cooperatives are often embedded organizations tied to the communities in which they are located, and from which they draw membership, community-engaged, or community-based research provides a viable way forward as a model of research on cooperatives that effectively marries the advantages of applied and conceptual research. This model builds on a research partnership between an academic researcher(s) and a group of practitioners in similar organizations. This form of research, or a model similar to this, brings the conceptual research closer to the needs of the cooperative sector and government practitioners, addressing research questions that are driven by practitioners' needs but set in a replicable and long-term framework so as to build a body of knowledge.

Securing the means of conducting independent research is also important. This is partially tied to the need to raise awareness of cooperatives and their contributions so as to cement the importance of research on cooperatives among donor institutions at and beyond the national level. In this regard, research focused on cooperatives as social innovators is especially important, as this highlights the cooperative business model as a sustainable and effective agent of social and economic development. The cooperative sector also needs to make a financial investment in research. For example, in the Philippines there is an optional fund for cooperative development, where cooperatives are encouraged to contribute ten per cent of net income to research, and 5 per cent to training and capacity-building. In similar fashion, governments should be encouraged to work with cooperative enterprises to assign resources to research and development initiatives of cooperatives and their contributions.

The move toward a research agenda on cooperatives should focus on social, economic and environmental impact of cooperatives. Comprehensive national statistics will prove indispensable in this regard, especially in assessing the economic impact. A framework for the collection of anecdotal data will also prove necessary as much research on the social and environmental impacts will be most valuable with supportive contextual/background information.

Promoting good practices and addressing internal challenges

Effective operational strategies

For cooperatives to function effectively, they must exemplify the principles that distinguish them from other forms of private enterprise. Cooperatives thus work best when the following elements are in place:

- i. a focus on serving members effectively;
- ii. a clearly defined operational focus
- iii. sound and efficient business practices
- iv. prioritization of the cooperative philosophy over the business philosophy (members over profit)
- v. good community relations
- vi. autonomous but collaborative relationship with government
- vii. good governance and effective leadership, grounded in democratic principles

Among these the combined effect of a strong democratic mandate and effective leaders guided by this mandate is at the core of success. The managerial behaviour and business strategies employed in a cooperative context should be guided by the democratically attained collective focus of the organization. This means that the members driving business decisions must also fully understand the principles on which cooperatives are built, as well as be capable of making collective decisions for the good of the whole.

The success of CIC Insurance Group Ltd in Kenya presents a good example of how sound internal governance, combined with a clear member orientation and sound, efficient business practices help to fuel cooperative success. Even after major capital injections to the company between 1996 and 1998, there was financial instability. However, with a change in management that injected sound strategic planning, member education and member engagement, the company elevated its position to that of third largest insurer in the Kenyan market.

Attaining an autonomous but collaborative relationship with government is also a pivotal element of cooperative success. An effective balance of policy/regulatory support and independent control is necessary. Though self-reliance and autonomy are important to cooperative success, effective policies, laws and regulations need to be in place so as to stimulate cooperative development and enable a competitive and effective business approach and market strategy.

When governments are too involved in centrally planning cooperatives and providing deep subsidization, the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of cooperatives is compromised. In Africa, in the 1960s, cooperatives were created as parastatal mechanisms. Though this led to the wide spread of cooperatives across the continent, these cooperatives were not tied to the needs and culture of their host communities. Cooperatives were used as agents of political strategy, with profit used not for member needs or business development, but for funding other state-run projects. Cooperatives created under this guise quickly saw their self-reliance compromised, so that, in the early

1990s, with the introduction of structural adjustment and reduced government spending, the number of active cooperatives reduced itself quickly. A similar experience was felt in Viet Nam, where the shift from centralized government control in cooperatives is thought to have quickly reduced the number of cooperatives, and the share of the cooperatives contribution to the GDP went from 11 per cent in 1995 to 5.45 per cent in 2009.

The cooperative based growth of the local economy and the social and infrastructural development of the community in Almería, Spain, provides a good case study of the power of effective cooperatives to induce positive change. Cooperative banks, local farmers and local agricultural cooperatives have worked together in this context to transform it from the 1950s, drought-ridden province at the bottom of Spain's provincial GDP ranking, to the top third of provinces in Spain in the 2000s. The cooperatives-based economy has remained firmly embedded in the local area while participating in the international market place. The embedded nature of the system has oriented the economic actors toward social responsibility while retaining political autonomy and has encouraged an economic culture of collective entrepreneurship. Even in 2009, in the wake of the global financial and economic crisis, deposits in the cooperative banks remained near five times the level of credit required, in an economy based on relatively equitable income distribution. The case of Almería demonstrates how the nature of cooperative enterprise can work to strengthen the social fabric of communities.

Building internal capacity

In building cooperative capacity, attention must be given to the issue of scalability. Cooperation among cooperatives, coupled with the necessary internal strengths, enables cooperatives to achieve the economies of scale with regard to size and volume of trade that supports competitiveness in an increasingly globalized market. This is especially pertinent for export oriented agribusiness cooperatives and other producer cooperatives with some focus on delivering to an external market.

The Oromia Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union in Ethiopia is a good example of how, emphasis on members, effective leadership and the attainment of scale work together to promote efficiency and growth in the cooperative movement. The organization operates as a union of primary cooperatives, exemplifying cooperation among cooperatives. As of 1999 the organization has brought its producing members increasingly higher up the value chain not only by achieving competitive scale, marketing and bargaining power, but by providing farmers with technical education and improving their business management capacities, thus enabling increased quality and efficiency in production. Both membership and sales values continued to multiply throughout the last ten years up to 2010.

The effective operation of cooperative apex organizations is also important in strengthening their operational capacity. Properly instituted apex organizations, through the principle of cooperation among cooperatives, allow them to provide a wide range of support services to their member cooperatives. For apex organizations to be truly effective, their formation and operation must be bottom-up, with members determining

the mandate and programme of work. At the regional and international levels, apex organizations help to build the operational capacity of members by functioning as think-tanks for cooperative development.

Attention to member education is also key in addressing issues of capacity development. Lack of member education, with regard to business and operational skills, as well as cooperative philosophy, has been a major impediment to many cooperatives, especially in Africa and Latin America. A similar conclusion has been drawn on the cooperative movement in Viet Nam, where lack of member-understanding of the core values defining cooperatives is seen as a systemic problem weakening the effective performance of local cooperatives. ILO COOP^{AFRICA} has made some headway in this regard, through the establishment of Centres of Competence to provide cooperative education and training. The number of cooperative colleges and cooperative-focused programmes within colleges is also increasing. Around nine cooperative colleges operate in Southern and Eastern Africa alone, many of which partner with the UK Cooperative College for technical training.

Raising public awareness of cooperatives

Raising public awareness on cooperatives is inextricably linked to the need for robust and accessible research and comparable data. The ability to empirically portray the comparative advantages of cooperatives in given contexts is important in drawing attention to their complementarities to other private business enterprise. The collection of generalizable and anecdotal information can help to highlight the strengths of cooperatives in promoting sustainable development.

The International Year of Cooperatives 2012 (IYC) provides a unique opportunity to showcase successful cooperatives as well as to encourage increased capacity-building within cooperatives and improved policy environments. As such, the communication objectives are as follows:

- i. to promote the distinctive nature and viability of the cooperative business model;
- ii. to raise the profile of cooperatives as development agents and highlight their real and possible contributions to achieving the MDGs;
- iii. to promote the value of cooperatives as engines for creating jobs and achieving decent-work goals;
- iv. to encourage increased membership in, or establishment of cooperatives;
- v. to raise the profile of cooperatives as a research topic, particularly with regard to research on social development; and
- vi. to highlight good practices and lessons learned within established cooperatives.

Coordinated and consistent messages throughout the year are essential to the strength of the communication effort. As such, at the international level, the outreach, activities and programmatic planning for the year will be focused in a coordinating committee. The coordinating committee will be comprised of the Committee for the Promotion and

Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC), and advised by an Advisory Group, comprised of appointed high-level experts. However, the year cannot reach its true potential unless national and local level authorities and cooperative enterprises take ownership of the year and work within the international framework to highlight the major messages.

It is important that the messages of the year not only highlight the impact of cooperatives, but emphasize the business aspect as many people orient cooperatives with non-profit organizations and charities. The key messages should also fit into the overarching development focus of the international community, such as the focus on sustainable development, with the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. There should be emphasis on the self-help and voluntary nature of cooperatives, as well as on their environmental impact.

As properly conveying the full nature of cooperatives would require the use of a multiplicity of messages, communication for the year should be focused in thematic periods using streamlined messaging with consistent elements to ensure retention and salability.

Effective communication for the year will also be dependent on the sensitization of media to cooperatives, as well as the sensitization of cooperators to the effective use of old and new media forms. The International Press Service, a cooperative enterprise itself, seeks to develop this capacity through creating a strong pool of media and/or communicators within the cooperative community, and reaching out to the general public.

Policy and planning beyond 2012

Improving existing policy structures

In developing cooperative legislation governments must accommodate, if not emphasize, the distinctive nature of cooperatives. A clear definition of what qualifies as a cooperative enterprise must be outlined. There must also be recognition of the unique nature of cooperatives as frameworks for building democratic values, as well as their propensity as agents for local social and economic development. At the same time, it is important that these guiding laws are not so restrictive as to hamper the modernization and development of cooperatives. Cooperative legislation must focus on establishing or improving laws so that cooperatives operate on equal terms to other entrepreneurial organizations

The increased attention brought to cooperative legislation by the declaration of the IYC has encouraged review of existing laws and regulations affecting cooperatives. Spain introduced a social economy law, which entered into force in April 2011. While there are pre-existing laws addressing cooperatives and other forms of social enterprise, the law offers, for the first time, a legal definition of social economy entities and creates a specific body to review their needs and improve communication with the government. While the recognition of the importance of the social economy is welcome, it may be necessary to properly evaluate the overlaps and gaps of the overlain laws to avoid ambiguity.

Recommendations for moving policy forward

The international community has provided sound guidance on effective policy for cooperatives in the form of the ILO recommendation 193 and the United Nations Guidelines for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives. However, these are only as effective as they are adequately interpreted and infused into national policy and legislation.

Effective data monitoring and robust research provide important support to government legislation, allowing governments to be better informed of the specific economic and social contributions of cooperative enterprises. Knowing how, where, and for whom cooperatives work, will ensure more effective policies with regard to taxation, market access, and valuation of capital.

While it is important that the regulatory and legislative environment supports the effective operation and growth of cooperative enterprises, policy implementation should not undermine the very values of community embeddedness and self-help that enhance cooperative performance.

The cooperative law in the Philippines provides a good case for a comprehensive regulatory framework that clearly defines cooperatives, but allows room for development and modernization. The law ensures that cooperatives profit distribution continues to favour members while providing wiggle room for external investment. The law also requires allocation of funds for member education, a stipulation that only serve to strengthen operation capacity and effectiveness. The law also requires community contributions. At the same time, checks and balances have been put in place to avoid misuse of cooperatives by government officials. The law addresses the need for effective corporate governance, which is an essential element in moving cooperatives forward as a viable business model.

The International Year of Cooperatives presents a unique opportunity for the United Nations to pass a declaration to help orient governments toward the adoption of adequate policies that address the needs of cooperatives. To effectively leverage this opportunity, efforts during the IYC directed at effective policy-making should promote the elaboration or revision of regional framework laws on cooperatives as guidance to modernization of national level laws. All efforts to move cooperative legislation forward, however, should be grounded in robust, comparative analytical assessments of the nature and impact of cooperative enterprises.

III. Conclusions and Recommendations

In order to move cooperatives forward as an effective and sustainable business model equipped to address many of today's social and economic challenges, there must first be a greater understanding of what cooperatives are, what they do, and how they are able to function most effectively in the increasingly global socioeconomic context. As such, efforts to raise awareness on cooperatives within and beyond the International Year of Cooperatives 2012 must focus on:

1. promoting a clear and shared definition and characterization of cooperatives;
2. highlighting the strengths of cooperative enterprises in promoting sustainable development and economies;
3. informing about the viability of the cooperative business model and the presence and success of existing cooperatives and their contributions to social, economic and environmental innovation; and
4. identifying and assessing effective methods for raising awareness about cooperatives.

As such, it is important that all relevant stakeholders recognise the merit of cooperatives as a complement and/or alternative to the mainstream public and private enterprise models. There must be a clear promotional emphasis on cooperatives as autonomous, values-driven enterprises, owner and controlled by their members, and developed from and embedded in the social, cultural and economic needs of their membership. The distinct nature of cooperatives must thus be properly understood, and elaborated upon in promotional efforts, and given adequate treatment in business focused curricula in both formal and non-formal education and training situations, as a means of firmly establishing the model as a complement and/or alternative to mainstream business.

The efforts at promotion of the model are firmly rooted in promoting robust research on cooperatives, adequately supported by relevant and comparable data and accessible anecdotal information. As such, there must be greater efforts to:

1. identify and make accessible available research
2. address gaps in knowledge and data on cooperatives
3. develop a global database on comparable and harmonised information on cooperatives

Research on cooperatives should invoke a model that adequately combines conceptual and applied research methodologies so that it is grounded in the context of cooperatives and their distinctive nature, but applicable across similar contexts and useable for long-term development of cooperatives and of supportive regulatory and legislative frameworks.

As effective research needs the support of valid and reliable data, efforts must be made among relevant stakeholders to develop an agreed set of core indicators and related extensions to allow for the collection of comparable data at a global level.

In raising awareness about cooperatives and seeking to strengthen available data and research initiatives, the long-term aim is the promotion of the formation and growth of independent and sustainable cooperatives. As such, attention to good practices and capacity-building within cooperatives is essential. Emphasis should be placed on the adherence to shared objectives, within and across cooperatives, competent management from both a business and co-operator perspective, and good internal governance.

No matter the extent of cooperative capacity-building and the internal structuring of the model to follow good practices, cooperatives cannot reach their full operational and/or

contributory potential without a positive legal environment and economic context. As such, governments should work to establish policies, laws and regulations that support the formation, growth and stability of cooperatives. Governments should undertake review of the prevailing policies, laws and regulations impacting cooperatives and identify strategies for the creation of a supportive policy environment.

Governments are encouraged to work with cooperative enterprises and other relevant stakeholders to develop a plan of action or policy framework that outlines concrete action points for moving cooperatives forward in a meaningful way. The draft plan of action, annexed here, is presented as a conceptual guide to the formulation of this framework.

IV. Annexes

Draft International Plan of Action on Cooperatives for 2012 and Beyond

I. INTRODUCTION

Cooperatives, in their dual role as economic enterprises and as autonomous self-help organizations, play a meaningful role in improving the socio-economic conditions of their members and their local communities. . The cooperative business model is utilised by multinational, national and local enterprises, providing effective and competitive business solutions in a wide array of sectors. Over the years, cooperatives enterprises have successfully operated member-owned people-centred businesses while also serving as catalysts for social and technical innovation and providing social organization and cohesion. Under the umbrella of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), it is estimated that more than 800 million people are members of cooperatives. The 300 top cooperatives alone are responsible for an aggregate turnover of 1.1 trillion USD making them the size of the 10th economy of the world (ICA, 2008 figures).

Cooperatives represent a model of economic enterprise, which when effectively implemented, promotes democratic and human values as well as respect for the environment. It is compelling to consider cooperatives as another model of economic enterprise, amongst the diversity of available business forms, that promotes community self reliance and benefits society in general. Cooperatives create, improve and protect income as well as generate employment opportunities and contribute to poverty reduction. As of 2007, cooperatives were responsible for more than 100 million jobs worldwide.¹ Cooperatives also promote social and economic integration and cohesion as they are a means of empowering the poor and marginalised groups. As such, they also play an ever-increasing role in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The cooperative sector, especially in developing countries, contributes to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. In developing countries they represent an alternative to the bipolar model of market and state institutions, providing risk management, investment in new technologies, infrastructure and meet the increasing and diversifying demand for general services, all of which would not be possible for resource/capital poor communities. In both developing and developed countries, where state resources are particularly scarce due to the impact of the global financial crisis and other factors, cooperatives have the potential to meet needs and spur innovation and growth in a cost effective manner. In meeting the most basic of needs (in any society) such as food (agricultural production and distribution), water, energy and financial credit, cooperatives have a long history of success.

In recognition of the contributions of cooperatives to socio-economic development through out the world, and to further strengthen cooperatives worldwide, the United Nations declared 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives. As the IYC gets underway with its launch at the United Nations General Assembly and with on-going programmes throughout 2012, there is an acknowledgement that strengthening cooperatives for the benefit of its members, constituencies and communities worldwide requires long-term and sustained efforts.

The International Plan of Action (POA), herein laid out, seeks to build upon the momentum of the IYC and to further pursue the objectives of the IYC. It presents a call to action, on the part of national governments, the cooperative movement, civil society, international institutions and other stakeholders in order to strengthen cooperatives and further promote their role and contributions to socio-economic development in the next decade.

II. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the International Plan of Action on Cooperatives are to:

¹ ILO (2007), Fact Sheet: Cooperatives and Rural Employment, ILO Cooperative Branch: Geneva.

Encourage Governments to establish policies, laws and regulation conducive to the formation, growth and stability of cooperatives;

Increase public awareness about cooperatives and their contributions to sustainable socio-economic development and the achievement of internationally agreed upon development goals, including the Millennium Development goals (MDGs);

Promote the formation and growth of independent and sustainable cooperatives for socio-economic empowerment and the well-being of their members and the communities they serve;

Promote research on cooperatives in order to support the formulation of sound policies and regulations by governments and to encourage good practices among cooperatives.

Promote cooperation and coordination of efforts by all stakeholders in support of the above objectives.

III. ACTION LINES

A. ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE POLICIES, LAWS AND REGULATIONS

1. In order to establish policies, laws and regulations conducive to the formation, growth and stability of cooperatives, Governments should review prevailing policies, laws and regulations impacting cooperatives and identify strategies to create supportive policy environments for cooperatives. In this regard, it is important that all relevant stakeholders work together to:

Use research to determine the relationship between legislation and the effective operation and development of cooperative enterprises;

Implement effectively existing guidelines and the develop binding guidelines at the regional/national level; and

Ensure that legislation/regulations do not hinder the access of cooperatives to financial resources, prejudice their position in relation to other forms of business enterprise or discourage their operation in any given sector or economic activity

2. Governments, international institutions, cooperative enterprises, universities and research centres and all other relevant stakeholders are encouraged to collaborate to establish appropriate legal, regulatory and/or policy frameworks for the effective operation, growth and development of cooperative enterprises.
 - a. As such, cooperative enterprises are encouraged to engage government at all levels to promote a deepened understanding of the operational strengths and weaknesses of cooperative enterprises within the existing legal, regulatory and/or policy frameworks and to provide advice on possible improvements to legal, regulatory and/or policy environment.
 - b. Governments are encouraged to use empirically-based, participatory strategies for the amendment, modernization and/or establishment of laws, policies and regulations which affect the business status, operational environment and membership structure of cooperative enterprises, to ensure that they are no legal, regulatory and/or policy deterrents to the effective formation, operation and growth of cooperative enterprises, especially with regard to access to financial resources, and that account for the distinctive business culture and philosophy of cooperative enterprises.
 - c. In the establishment and/or reformulation of laws, regulations and/or policies affecting cooperative enterprises, decision-makers are invited to use as a guide established and agreed upon regional and international policy guidelines such as the United Nations Guidelines

Aimed at Creating A Supportive Environment for the Development of Cooperatives,² and the International Labour Organization Recommendation 193 on the Promotion of Cooperatives.³

B. INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS

3. In order to increase public awareness about cooperatives and their contributions to sustainable development and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, governments, international institutions, cooperative enterprises, universities and research centres and all other relevant stakeholders must work together to:
 - a. promote a clear and shared definition and characterization of cooperatives;
 - b. highlight the strengths of cooperative enterprises in promoting sustainable development and economies;
 - c. inform about the viability of the cooperative business model and the presence and success of existing cooperatives and their contributions to social, economic and environmental innovation, and
 - d. identify and assess ways and means to raise awareness about cooperatives.
4. Governments, international institutions and other economic actors and stakeholders should recognise the mutual benefits of having a sound cooperative movement as an effective alternative to public and private ownership enterprise models.
5. Governments, international institutions, cooperative enterprises and all other relevant stakeholders should work together to promote cooperatives as autonomous, voluntary associations of people united to meet common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations, through a membership-owned and democratically controlled enterprise. Greater appreciation and emphasis should also be given to the particular values-driven nature of cooperative enterprises, based on member-control, empowerment, self-development and social awareness.
6. Governments, international institutions, cooperative enterprises, universities and research centres and all other relevant stakeholders should work together to promote cooperatives as schools of democracy at the local level. Cooperative democracy can help the development of political democratic processes at the community level and thus enhance democratic practice at the national level. Cooperatives have also proven to play a stabilising role in countries experiencing political and economic turmoil, including in the transition to democratic market economies.
7. Efforts should be made to promote wider understanding and promotion of the cooperative enterprise model by ensuring integration of lessons on cooperative business models, and cooperative development into formal and non-formal educational curricula at all levels.
 - a. In order to broaden diversity of business structures there needs to be effective exposure of the cooperative business model to the “uninitiated” and *a creation of a demand for the same from the “grassroots” upwards*.
 - b. Governments, the United Nations, cooperative enterprises, universities and research centres and other international or national institutions need to collaborate for active implementation of educational programmes and training on the cooperative model and its contributions to social development, as well as for improving information availability, especially in developing countries.
 - c. The United Nations and other international institutions should support governments in identifying financial sources to strengthen cooperative education and integration.

² United Nations, 2001. Annex to Report of the Secretary General, “Cooperatives in Social Development,” A/56/73-E/2001/68, 14 May.

³ International Labour Organization, 2002, Recommendation: 193, Promotion of Cooperatives, 3 June.

8. Cooperatives, Governments cooperative enterprises, universities and research centres and international or national institutions should work to sensitize the mass media to the distinctive nature of cooperative enterprises as well as to the unique ways in which they contribute to sustainable social and economic development in both developed and developing countries in order to promote more accurate and positive portrayal of cooperative enterprises. New information technologies and related media channels should be utilized to disseminate information and to inform a broad audience which is not otherwise familiar with cooperative models

C. PROMOTING THE FORMATION AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF EFFECTIVE COOPERATIVES

9. In order to promote the formation and growth of independent and sustainable cooperatives for socio-economic empowerment, governments, international institutions, cooperative enterprises and all other relevant stakeholders must work together to:
 - a. identify factors and practices necessary for the successful operation of cooperatives; and
 - b. identify priority capacity-building strategies to promote and strengthen cooperatives.
10. Cooperative enterprises and educational entities must place greater emphasis on human resource development and other capacity building efforts in order to ensure an effective and sustainable operational structure. In this regard, the operations of cooperative enterprises should be grounded in cooperative values and principles and agreed upon in international fora, and should demonstrate alignment of commercial and social interests. Educating and training future cooperative executives, managers, bankers, accountants, consultants and lawyers who have both the technical knowledge as well as a solid foundation in cooperative thought, values and a sophisticated understanding of different models of enterprise is crucial for institutional “implantation” of cooperatives as one of many solutions to social, economic and environmental problems.
 - a. Emphasis should be placed on member engagement and member empowerment at all levels of the organization.
 - b. Cooperatives should collaborate with relevant stakeholders to ensure effective managerial strategies and leadership development. In this regard, Governments, educational and training institutions and other relevant stakeholders should work together to develop a set of tailored methodologies and tools for capacity building in cooperatives.
 - c. Governments and international institutions should work with cooperative enterprises and other relevant stakeholders to develop codes of good governance and leadership handbooks specifically tailored to general institutional structure and management needs of cooperative enterprises.
11. Cooperatives must be ever cognizant of the their own role in revitalizing and reenergising the cooperative movement, and as such, should develop visionary, enlightened and committed leadership as well as embracing good corporate governance.
12. For sustainable co-operative movement capable of contributing even more effectively to poverty alleviation, co-operatives need to respond with flexibility and innovation to changes in their political and economic environment.
13. Cooperative enterprises should work to increase the participation of women and youth in co-operative membership, as a means of improving the sustainability of co-operative organizations.
14. Cooperative enterprises should work with Governments, academia and relevant cooperative sector experts to ensure that technology is being effectively researched and utilized in ensuring cost-effectiveness, productivity and sustainability. In addition, cooperatives must make efforts to diversify and grow the reach of cooperatives into emerging and non-traditional sectors with large impacts on social and economic equality, such as, *inter alia*, energy, food supply systems, transportation, research and development and education, in addition to the traditional fields of agricultural production, credit,

housing and consumer cooperatives. Governments must ensure that such efforts in new sectors are not discouraged or prohibited by inadequate legislation or regulatory barriers.

15. The United Nations should establish a biennial forum on cooperatives to boost the development and success of cooperative enterprises (focusing on best practices, applied research, technical support, new technologies and rewards).

D. PROMOTING RESEARCH ON COOPERATIVES AND DEVELOPING AN INFORMATION DATABASE ON COOPERATIVES

16. Efforts to increase public awareness on cooperatives and to promote the formation and sustainable growth of independent and sustainable growth of effective cooperatives must be supported by descriptive and accessible research and data. Efforts should thus be made to:
 - a. Identify, and make accessible, available research;
 - b. Address gaps in knowledge and data on cooperatives; and
 - c. Develop a global database on comparable and harmonised information on cooperatives.
17. Effective communication of available research is essential for identifying available information and existing gaps; as such, the international community should work through the Committee for the Advancement of Promotion of Cooperatives to establish an accessible, searchable database of information on existing research and researchers in the area of cooperatives and the contributions of cooperatives to social development.
 - a. New information technologies should be utilized to systemize and simplify the process of accumulating the information.
18. To develop a field of cooperative studies useable at the national, regional and international level, efforts should be made to utilize a research methodology which brings together applied and conceptual research where cooperative enterprises are directly involved in the framing, execution and dissemination of research.
19. Efforts should be made to make research useable and understandable by non-researchers and non-academics. As such research needs to be presented in multiple ways and in diverse fora.
20. Governments should be encouraged to work with cooperative enterprises to assign resources to research and development initiatives on cooperatives and their contributions to social and economic development.
 - a. Tax or incentive based initiatives should be put in place so as to encourage cooperative enterprises to contribute proceeds (whether based on a percentage of income or otherwise) to a fund research and development on and for cooperatives. The utilization of these funds should be overseen by cooperative stakeholder representatives.
21. Research focused on cooperatives as social innovators should be emphasised, in order to highlight the cooperative business model as a sustainable and effective agent of social and economic development, which due to its inherent nature (i.e. not subject to short term pressure to distribute profits and its ability to distribute business risk amongst its members) encourages technical, social, economic and environmental innovation.
22. Effective research is necessarily supported by and reliant on the availability of valid and reliable data. As such, cooperative enterprises, Governments and international institutions should work together to develop an agreed set of core indicators and related extensions to allow for the collection of comparable data at a global level.

- a. In order to support this effort an ad hoc expert group should be established, under the auspices of the United Nations, comprised of representation from all relevant stakeholders.
- b. Determined indicators to be included in the United Nations Statistical handbook, in order to encourage attention to these statistics by national level Governments.
- c. Governments should work with international institutions to develop the capacity to integrate data collection on cooperatives into national statistical data frameworks.
- d. The United Nations, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, should use the determined indicators to produce core input to a periodic report on the state of cooperatives and their contributions to development.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

23. Promote collaboration among Member States, cooperative movements, cooperative enterprises, associations, federations and like entities, educational institutions and research centres, and all relevant stakeholders in mobilising resources and funds for the implementation of the Plan of Action.
24. Stakeholders need to organize and conduct progress assessments (ideally every two or three years) of progress made against this action plan. Such progress assessments should identify resource constraints and challenges that adversely impact the implementation of this Plan of action, and identify lessons learned in the process.
24. On the 10th anniversary of the 2012 IYC, stakeholders are recommended to review their contributions to the implementation of this POA and assess how their activities and programmes have supported the objectives of this POA.

Agenda

Expert Group Meeting

Cooperatives in Social Development: Beyond 2012

3-6 May 2011, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Day 1 Tuesday, 3 May 2011

09:00-09:30 Registration

Developing an Action Plan: Making the Links

09:30-10:00 Introduction and Overview

Chair: **Mr. Donald Lee**, Chief, Social Perspective on Development Branch, (UN DESA/DSPD)

Welcome Address

Mr. Miyegombo Enkhbold, Deputy Prime Minister, Chairman of the National Committee of the International Year of Cooperatives

The International Year of Cooperatives and Cooperatives in Social Development

Mr. Donald Lee, Chief, Social Perspective on Development Branch, (UN DESA/DSPD)

The International Labour Organization and Cooperatives in Social Development

Mr. Peter Poschen, Director, Job Creation and Enterprise Development Department (EMP/ENTERPRISE), (International Labour Organization (ILO))

10:00-10:45
Session 1

Beyond 2012: Developing a Plan of Action

Chair: **Mr. Donald Lee**, Chief, Social Perspective on Development Branch, (UN DESA/DSPD)

Developing an Action Plan

Ms. Felice Llamas, Focal Point on Cooperatives, Social Perspective on Development Branch, (UN DESA/DSPD)

Strategy and Policy on the Development of Cooperatives

Mr. Nyamaa Enkhbold, Vice-Chairman of the Parliament of Mongolia and President of the Mongolian National Cooperative

Questions/discussion

Rapporteur: **Ms. Astrid Hurley**

10:45-11:00
Break

MORNING BREAK

Understanding Cooperatives: Promoting Effective Research

11:00-12:30
Session 2

Understanding Cooperatives through Research

Objective: Understand the current state of research efforts on cooperatives and develop strategies to strengthen and expand research efforts.

Chair: **Mr. Hagen Henry**, Research Director, University of Helsinki

Understanding Cooperatives Through Research

Ms. Lou Hammond Ketilson, Chair, Committee on Cooperative Research, International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)

Current State of Cooperative Research in Asia and Future Strategies

Mr. Akira Kurimoto, Director & Chief Researcher of the Consumer Co-operative Institute of Japan

Roundtable Discussion

Guiding questions:

- What are the gaps in knowledge and understanding of how cooperatives grow thrive and contribute to development?
- What specific steps can be taken to promote research and knowledge sharing?
- How will research be funded?
- How can research be relevant to policy making?
- What collaborative/institutional arrangements will strengthen research efforts?

Rapporteur: **Ms. Astrid Hurley**

12:30-13:30
Break

LUNCH BREAK

13:30-15:00
Session 3

Understanding Cooperatives: Developing Global Statistics and Comparable Data

Objective: Identify relevant statistics and data to compile, as well as strategies to gather and collate them at the global level.

Chair: **Ms. Lou Hammond Ketilson**, Chair, Committee on Cooperative Research (ICA)

Ms. Ann Hoyt, Director, University of Wisconsin Urban Cooperative Initiative (University of Wisconsin – Madison)

Peter Poschen, Director, EMP/ENTERPRISE (ILO)

Guiding questions:

- What are the relevant statistics and data to collect; who are the end-users?
- How will the data be collected, compiled and disseminated? Who collects data?
- How will data collection and processing be funded?
- What are the challenges to obtaining reliable information on cooperatives?

Rapporteur: **Ms. Astrid Hurley**

15:00-15:15
Break

AFTERNOON BREAK

15:15-16:30
Session 4
(Closed, drafting session)

Understanding Cooperatives: Toward a Research Strategy

Objective: Outline a draft research strategy based on Sessions 6 and 7 as input to the international plan of action.

Chair/facilitator: **Ms. Felice Llamas**, Focal Point on Cooperatives, Social Perspective on Development Branch, (UN DESA/DSPD)

Break out groups 1 and 2 (simultaneous deliberations)

Facilitators/rapporteurs: **(TBD)**

Plenary: Roundtable discussion and synthesis of inputs

Rapporteur: **Ms. Astrid Hurley**

END OF DAY 1

18:30
Group Dinner

DINNER

Hosted by Mr. Khadbaatar Zoljargal the Vice-Minister of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry of Mongolia

Day 2 Wednesday, 4 May 2011

Cooperatives: Promoting Good Practices and Addressing Internal Challenges

09:00-11:30
Session 5

Discovering What Works: Operational Strategies

Objective: Identify good practices by cooperatives, across various sectors, which are conducive to cooperative growth and socio-economic development; identify common and unique practices within and across sectors.

Chair: **Mr. Donald Lee**, Chief, Social Perspective on Development Branch, (UN DESA/DSPD)

Status of Oromia Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union (OCFCU)

Mr. Tadesse Meskela, General Manager, Oromia Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union (presented by **Jürgen Schwettman**, ILO Deputy Regional Director for Africa)

The Role of Cooperatives in the Financial and Real Sector

Mr. Christian Albrecht, Director DGRV Program Vietnam, Audit Expert DGRV Program South East Asia, German Cooperatives and Raiffeisen Confederation (Reg. Assoc.) / Deutscher Genossenschafts- und Raiffeisenverband (DGRV)

Proactive Cooperative Banks in Local Development: Socio-Economic Problem Solving, Growth and Community Building

Ms. Cynthia Giagnovaco, Research Fellow, University of Almería

The Experience of Cooperative Insurance in Kenya, in particular, and Africa in General

Mr. Nelson Kuria, Group Managing Director/CEO, The Co-op Insurance Company Group (CIC Kenya)

Cooperatives and Disaster Relief, The Case of Japan

Mr Akira Kurimoto, Director & Chief Researcher of the Consumer Co-operative Institute of Japan

Roundtable Discussion

Guiding questions:

- What are the challenges/obstacles faced by these cooperatives?
- What are the drivers of cooperative success or failures in these experiences? What elements promoted or hindered cooperative growth?
- How did these cooperatives contribute to socio-economic development?
- What elements enhanced or detracted from their contributions to socio-economic development?
- What principles/guidelines are specific for certain types of cooperatives?
- What principles/guidelines apply to most cooperatives?

Rapporteur: **Ms. Astrid Hurley**

11:30-11:45
Break

MORNING BREAK

11:45-13:15
Session 6

Addressing Internal Challenges: Capacity Building

Objective: Identify priority capacity-building areas that will promote and strengthen cooperatives, e.g., advocacy skills, promotional skills, consultancy skills, administrative skills and governance issues.

Chair: **Mr. Vincent Martin**, Acting FAO Representative, China

Leadership, Capacity Building and Governability in Cooperatives

Mr. Armando Costa Pinto, Swedish Cooperative Centre, Regional Director for Europe and Asia

Cooperative Development in Viet Nam: Success and Challenges

Mr. Nguyen Minh Tu, Director General, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Department of Cooperative Sector Development, Viet Nam

Capacity Building for Africa's Cooperatives and Social Economy Organizations

Mr. Jürgen Schwettman, ILO Deputy Regional Director for Africa

Roundtable Discussion

Guiding questions:

- What capacity building initiatives should be given priority?
- What is the role of apex organizations/governments/cooperatives in building capacity?
- How can ICT be utilized to build capacity?
- What principles/initiatives are specific for certain types of cooperatives?
- What principles/initiatives apply to most cooperatives?

Rapporteur: **Ms. Astrid Hurley**

13:15-14:15

Break

LUNCH BREAK

Promoting Cooperative Development: Raising Public Awareness

14:15-15:45

Session 7

Promoting Cooperative Development: Strategic Approaches to Public Awareness

Objective: Identify and assess ways and means to raise public awareness about cooperatives

Chair/facilitator: **Ms. Felice Llamas**, Focal Point on Cooperatives, Social Perspective on Development Branch, (UN DESA/DSPD)

Promoting Cooperative Development: Strategic Approaches to Public Awareness

Mr. Khadbaatar Zoljargal, Vice-Minister of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry, Mongolia

Raising Public Awareness: A Media Perspective

Ms. Johanna Son – Regional Director for IPS Asia Pacific

Leveraging the International Year of Cooperatives

Mr. Donald Lee & Ms. Astrid Hurley, Social Perspective on Development Branch, (UN DESA/DSPD)

Roundtable Discussion

Guiding questions:

- What are effective strategies to promote cooperatives? What are the constraints to promoting cooperatives?
- What is the current perception of cooperatives by the general public? Are they seen as viable and profitable business enterprises?
- What is the role of education in promoting the development of successful cooperatives?
- What is the role of ICT in promoting cooperatives?
- What is the role of the media in promoting cooperatives?

Rapporteur: **Ms. Astrid Hurley**

15:45-16:00

Break

AFTERNOON BREAK

16:00-17:30

Session 8

(Closed, drafting session)

Leveraging Cooperative Experiences

Objective: Summarise principles/guidelines for good practices, as well as capacity-building strategies for overcoming internal challenges; outline a promotion strategy; draft input to the international plan of action.

Chair/facilitator: **Ms. Felice Llamas**, Focal Point on Cooperatives, Social Perspective on Development Branch, (UN DESA/DSPD)

Break out group 1 [Promoting Good Practices and Addressing Internal Challenges] and 2 [Strategic Approaches to Raising Public Awareness] (simultaneous deliberations)

Facilitators/rapporteurs: **(TBD)**

Plenary: Roundtable discussion and synthesis of inputs

Rapporteur: **Ms. Astrid Hurley**

END OF DAY 2

Day 3 Thursday, 5 May 2011

Promoting Cooperative Development: Raising Public Awareness

- 09:00** Depart to the Tsonjin Boldog (Chinggis Khan statue Complex), 60km from Ulaanbaatar
- 10:00-11:00** **Site Visit to Tsonjin Boldog**
- 11:00** Depart to Ulaanbaatar
- 12:00-14:00** **LUNCH** (Hosted by the Mongolian National Cooperative)
- 14:00-16:00** **Mongolian Exhibit on Cooperatives** (Opening Ceremony and Viewing)
- 16:00-17:00** **Site Visit to cooperative based in Ulaanbaatar**
- 17:00-18:30** **Traditional Concert**
- END OF DAY 3**

Day 4, Friday, 6 May 2011

Beyond 2012: Policy and Planning

- 09:00-10:45** **Creating Effective Policy and Legal Space: Improving Existing Policy Structures**
Session 9
Objective: Review government laws and regulations for cooperatives and identify effective strategies for, and existing obstacles to, maximising available policy and legal space for leveraging cooperative operational capacity and socio-economic contributions, e.g. legislations and programmes on taxation and incentives.

Chair/facilitator: **Mr. Donald Lee**

International Guidelines for Cooperative Legislation

Mr. Hagen Henry – University of Helsinki

Cooperative Policy in the Philippines

Ms. Lecira Juarez – Consultant, Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on Cooperatives, Philippines

Legal and Fiscal Policy for Healthy Cooperative Development

Mr. Dante Cracogna
(presented by **Mr. Hagen Henry**)

An Introduction to Spain's Social Economy Law

Ms. Cynthia Giagnovaco – Research Fellow, University of Almería

Roundtable Discussion

Guiding questions:

- What policies and legislations are effective for cooperative growth?
- What policies have allowed communities and Governments to most effectively leverage the potential contributions of cooperative enterprises to development?
- Do programmes on taxation and incentives help cooperatives?
- What can be improved about existing policy and legal frameworks to further promote cooperative formation and growth?
- What are the obstacles to implementing effective policy and legal frameworks, and how can these be addressed?

Rapporteur: **Ms. Astrid Hurley**

- 10:45-11:00** **MORNING BREAK**
Break

11:00-12:00
Session 10
(Closed,
drafting
session)

Creating Effective Policy and Legal Space: Outlining Recommendations

Objective: Outline policy recommendations based on discussion in Session 9; draft input to the international plan of action.

Chair/facilitator: **Felice Llamas**, Focal Point on Cooperatives, Social Perspective on Development Branch, (UN DESA/DSPD)

Break out groups 1 and 2 (simultaneous deliberations)

Facilitators/rapporteurs: **(TBD)**

Plenary: Roundtable discussion and synthesis of inputs

Rapporteur: **Ms. Astrid Hurley**

12:00-13:00
Break

LUNCH BREAK

13:00-14:15
Session 11
(Closed,
drafting
session)

Beyond 2012: Finalizing an International Plan of Action on Cooperatives

Objective: Participants will finalize a first draft of a plan of action for cooperatives in development for 2012 and beyond.

Chair/facilitator: **Ms. Felice Llamas**, Focal Point on Cooperatives, Social Perspective on Development Branch, (UN DESA/DSPD)

Plenary: Roundtable discussion and synthesis of inputs

Rapporteur: **Ms. Astrid Hurley**

14:15-14:30
Break

AFTERNOON BREAK

14:30-15:30
Session 12

Conclusions and Closing Remarks

Donald Lee, Chief Social Perspective and Development Branch (UN DESA/DSPD)

END OF DAY 4

List of Participants

Contributing Experts:

<p>Christian Albrecht German Cooperative and Raiffeisen Confederation (DGRV)</p> <p>Director, DGRV Programme Vietnam, Audit Expert DGRV Program South East Asia DGRV Christian Albrecht@web.de</p>	<p>Armando Costa Pinto Swedish Cooperative Centre</p> <p>Regional Director for Europe and Asia acp@scceuroasia.org</p>
<p>Dante Cracogna</p>	<p>Cynthia Giagnocavo University of Almería</p> <p>Research Fellow cgiagnocavo@ual.es</p>
<p>Lou Hammond Ketilson International Cooperative Alliance</p> <p>Professor and Chair, Committee on Cooperative Research hammondk@edwards.usask.ca</p>	<p>Hagen Henry University of Helsinki</p> <p>Research Director hagen.henry@helsinki.fi</p>
<p>Ann Hoyt University of Wisconsin – Madison</p> <p>Director, Urban Cooperative Initiative aahoyt@wisc.edu</p>	<p>Lecira Juarez Committee on Cooperatives, House of Representatives (Philippines)</p> <p>Consultant bingjuarez@yahoo.com</p>
<p>Nelson Kuria The Co-op Insurance Company Group (CIC Kenya)</p> <p>Group Managing Director / CEO kuria@cic.co.ke</p>	<p>Akira Kurimoto Consumer Cooperative Institute of Japan</p> <p>Director akira.kurimoto@jccu.coop</p>
<p>Donald Lee United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development</p> <p>Chief, Social Perspective on Development Branch lee27@un.org</p>	<p>Felice Llamas United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development</p> <p>Focal Point on Cooperatives llamas@un.org</p>

<p>Vincent Martin United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)</p> <p>Acting Representative, China vincent.martin@fao.org</p>	<p>Tadesse Meskela Oromia Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union</p> <p>General Manager tadessemeskela@gmail.com</p>
<p>Peter Poschen International Labour Organization</p> <p>Director, Job Creation and Enterprise Department (EMP / ENTERPRISE) poschen@ilo.org</p>	<p>Jürgen Schwettmann International Labour Organization</p> <p>Deputy Regional Director for Africa schwettmann@ilo.org</p>
<p>Johanna Son Inter Press Service (IPS) Asia-Pacific</p> <p>Regional Director jpsadirector@gmail.com</p>	<p>Nguyen Minh Tu Ministry of Planning and Investment (Viet Nam)</p> <p>Director General ngmtu@mpi.gov.vn</p>
<p>Khadbaatar Zoljargal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry (Mongolia)</p> <p>Vice-Minister</p>	

Participant Observers:

<p>J. Binderya Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry (Mongolia) International Cooperation Division</p> <p>Officer ja_bindi@yahoo.com</p>	<p>N. Galtsog Small and Medium Enterprise Agency Investment and Projects Division</p> <p>Head ngalstog@yahoo.com</p>
<p>D. Chuluunbat National Association of Mongolian Agricultural Cooperators</p> <p>Vice President chukaa@namac.mn</p>	<p>T. Oyunchimeg Mongolian National Cooperatives</p> <p>Executive Director oyunchimeg@mongolia.coop</p>
<p>G. Suvdaa Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry (Mongolia) Department of Strategic Planning and Policy</p> <p>Officer gun_suvd@yahoo.com</p>	<p>S. Suvdaa Small and Medium Enterprise Agency Information and Training Development Division</p> <p>Officer s_sengejav@yahoo.com</p>

Organizational Support:

Guillerma Dumalag Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Mongolia)	Felice Llamas United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development Focal Point on Cooperatives llamas@un.org
Astrid Hurley United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development Social Affairs Officer hurleya@un.org	

Contributing Organizations

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The Cooperative Insurance Company
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COEXPHAL (Association of Fruit &
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Almería, Spain



International Cooperative Alliance



International Labour Organization



Inter Press Service



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