

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF COOPERATIVES

3 July 2004

The theme of this year's International Day of Cooperatives -- "Cooperatives for fair globalization: creating opportunities for all" -- underscores the important role that cooperatives, together with other stakeholders, play in promoting globalization that benefits all the world's people, not just a privileged few. Striving for fair globalization means working for a process and outcomes that are fundamentally inclusive, sustainable and people-centred. Together with improved governance, fair globalization can thus promote and facilitate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Traditionally, cooperatives have focused on the local concerns of their members and communities. Today, they need to adapt to the new realities of the wider marketplace. Many are already doing so through product diversity, offering high quality goods and services at competitive prices, and making use of information technology. But more can be done. The development of international linkages among local cooperatives is important for sharing business and financial information, and to broaden marketing opportunities. Where meaningful, the mergers of cooperatives within sectors can help reduce costs, raise efficiencies and increase bargaining power. Newer forms of capitalization need to be explored as well.

Governments and international organizations should ensure that cooperatives and smaller business entities enjoy a level playing field in the economic and political environments. Policies and laws that are conducive and supportive to the growth and adaptation of cooperatives are therefore vital. For its part, the United Nations family continues to play an active role as a member in the work of the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives.

By promoting the growth and success of cooperatives world-wide, Governments, international organizations and the United Nations can help them play to the full their role in making fair globalization a reality. On this International Day of Cooperatives, let us join forces in that mission.