

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF COOPERATIVES**5 July 2008**

Climate change brings sharply into focus the critical necessity of global cooperation. There is no doubt that climate change is occurring, and that it is primarily the result of human-caused emissions. The question is what we are willing to do about it. Every coordinated effort, no matter how small, can contribute to and form a larger, more powerful response. The theme of this year's International Day of Cooperatives – “Confronting Climate Change through Cooperative Enterprise” -- acknowledges the potential of cooperative enterprise in contributing effectively as we confront climate change together.

Cooperatives have long fostered inclusive and sustainable approaches to economic and social development at the local level. It is in keeping with this focus that cooperatives are expanding their development efforts creatively, into areas such as environmental sustainability and carbon neutrality, as communities around the world are struggling to adapt to climate change and strengthen their resilience against its impacts.

For example, cooperative enterprises that operate in agriculture and energy sectors are natural partners in efforts to provide the fundamentals of food and energy security locally, while simultaneously tackling climate change and other issues of environmental deterioration.

In agriculture, a key challenge is to enable farmers, especially smallholders, to obtain higher crop yields and to adopt sustainable farming practices as they cope with the challenges posed by climate change. Cooperatives can help by disseminating knowledge and good practices to farmers, as well as by facilitating productive investments and expanded access to technology.

In energy, the goal of making clean energy sources more accessible can be facilitated by utility consumer cooperatives that can finance and manage clean energy technology and make it more affordable to low-income groups.

I welcome the contribution of cooperative movements in addressing issues related to climate change. The recent adoption of a Strategy to Address Climate Change by the International Co-operative Alliance is an important step.

On this International Day, I strongly encourage Governments to carry out measures and regulations that will be supportive of partnerships with cooperative enterprises. Let us redouble our efforts to find new points of collaboration as we address the daunting challenge of climate change.