



International Day of Cooperatives
President of the International Cooperative Alliance, Mrs. Monique F. Leroux

Distinguished guests,
Dear co-operators, dear partners,

It is a great honor for me to be here at the United Nations in New York as we celebrate the International Day of Cooperatives.

Today, by our presence at the United Nations, the cooperative movement is taking a pledge to contribute actively in reaching the UN's goal to ensure a sustainable future for all of us.

With our values and principles of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity, co-operatives are strong and lasting businesses that bring communities together.

Cooperatives are created from a collective need making them true builders of sustainability as they help people reaching their aspirations and offer access to goods or services without exploitation.

Cooperatives are significant economic and social actors.

Across the world, there are more than:

- 1 billion members of cooperatives.
- 2.6 million cooperatives businesses that generate more than 3 trillion USD in annual revenues and creating more than 250 million jobs.

In Canada, my home country, there is more than 18 million co-operative members and we count close to 155 000 jobs in Canada's co-operative movement. According to the Financial Post magazine, La Coop fédérée based in Quebec is the 2nd most important agri-food business in Canada with more than 18 000 employees with 7,4 billion USD in annual revenues. The Desjardins Group, also based in Quebec, is the leading financial cooperative in Canada with more than 7 million members and clients, recognized by Bloomberg as being the most solid banking institution in North America.

In Mongolia, agricultural cooperatives are a fundamental structure to ensure revenues for rural communities.

In Brazil, agricultural cooperatives are involved in 50% of all agricultural trade and export 5.3 billion USD of their products to 143 countries. Also, 35% of all Brazilians with a health plan are served by health cooperatives.

In Germany, 65% of the population is member of a cooperative, getting financial services, consumer goods and energy.

In Sweden, cooperative members represent almost half of the population and the 100 largest cooperatives have annual revenues of more than 40 billion USD with more than 70 000 employees. Cooperatives have been at the center of economic and social development for many years providing food, housing, financial services and jobs to a large part of the Swedish population.

In China, the All China Federation of Supply and Marketing to Farmers, represents and provides services to more than 85 million members and jobs to over 2 million employees.

I could go on with more examples of the cooperative contributions to the economic and social growth in different countries and all of them are builders of sustainability.

The slogan of the 2016 International Day of Cooperatives is “Cooperatives: The Power to Act for a Sustainable Future”, was chosen to emphasize the cooperative contribution to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.

As we celebrate the International Day of Co-operatives, let’s put the spotlight on the co-operative business model and explain how co-operative businesses are able to use their power to act to build a better living for all.

Here are some examples:

Cooperative economic success and democratic governance ensures that no one is left behind and therefore contributes to eradicating poverty.

Cooperatives are instrumental to achieve food security and help end hunger by allowing farmers to produce more and better quality food through the power of the collective.

Cooperatives help to empower women in the world, especially in countries where they are vulnerable. In particular, cooperatives provide women with employment opportunities, and contribute to financial inclusion and literacy efforts.

Another example in the insurance sector is the project 5-5-5 launched by the International Cooperative and Mutual Insurance Federation. This global cooperative initiative aims to reach 5 million people in 5 countries for a total of 25 million uninsured low-income households that will be covered with micro-insurance plans for risk and resilience.

And, of course, sustainability is also one of the five priorities of the Blueprint for a cooperative decade, the global strategy for cooperatives by 2020 where the movement has given itself a vision in order to reach their full potential.

On that matter, the International cooperative alliance is working with the FAO and the ILO to identify concrete targets and indicators for cooperatives to better evaluate our contribution to the SDGs. The outcome of this collaboration among many others with FAO and ILO and our work with the Blueprint will be shared with the UN.

In addition, in order to showcase our commitment, we are launching the “Coops for 2030” platform that will gather the pledges of cooperatives all over the world towards the implementation of the SDGs. We are asking all cooperatives to come together, share their targets and experiences and unite in a common framework that will show our power to act.

On the 11th of July, in collaboration with the Committee for the Promotion and advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC) we will be hosting a side event at the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and cooperative solution initiatives.

Finally, the International Summit of Cooperatives, the world's leading event for business development in the cooperative and mutual community, has a rich program based on the theme: “Cooperatives: The Power to Act”.

The 2016 Summit will allocate a full day on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals while engaging cooperative leaders, global agencies, and world-renowned experts, towards resolving these global issues.

Together, they will focus on providing concrete solutions regarding food security, employment, access to health care and social service, poverty and financial inclusion and climate change and sustainable development.

You are all invited to come and join us next October in Quebec City to experience this unique opportunity of discussion and concertation, from which we hope to draw an action plan for the coming years. More than 3 000 cooperators from 100 countries are expected to participate.

I strongly believe in a plural economy, supported by a strong and efficient public sector, growing innovative companies and dynamic cooperatives.

Cooperatives are important for the people and communities they serve but are also a crucial pillar of the economy.

I believe that the cooperative business model is not sufficiently understood by policy makers, regulators and commentators.

As president of ICA, I call for a formal recognition of the values that cooperatives and mutuals add to the global economy and society.

It is a call for action to translate this recognition into meaningful improvements to regulatory, legal and business support structures, both globally and at the level of national governance.

I am so please that we have today this opportunity for constructive dialogue.

On the International Day of Cooperatives, I encourage all cooperators in the world to share how we contribute to the Goals by making a pledge on our Coops for 2030 platform.

More than ever, the world needs cooperation.

Cooperatives are there to support people and communities.

Cooperatives are true builders of sustainable development.

I wish you a happy International Day of Cooperatives!

The International Cooperative Alliance is proud to be co-host of the International Summit of Cooperatives

