

**Message from**  
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**For**  
**International Cooperative Day 2013**  
**“Cooperative Enterprise Remains Strong in Times of Crisis”**

The ILO is pleased to join the international community in celebrating this International Day of Cooperatives.

The theme “Cooperative Enterprise Remains Strong in Times of Crisis” is a positive and encouraging affirmation at a time when confidence in enterprises and their respect for basic human values and ethical principles has often been badly shaken.

Framed and aggravated by the financial and economic crisis, the crisis in the world of work which ranges from unemployment especially among youth, to unfairness and inequality in the labour market and the widespread lack of social protection, along with food and fuel crises, the impact of climate change and natural disasters, all risk generating hopelessness, helplessness and a pervasive sense of injustice.

The celebration of International Cooperative Day is a welcome reminder that solidarity generates strength and the capacity to build, and that effective organizational and business models can indeed be founded on values of justice and solidarity.

Across continents, cooperative enterprises have been born out of crisis situations, responding directly to the needs of their members and are able to reach the poorest people. Today when their ideals are put into action, they continue to show their efficacy.

A recent ILO study, “*Resilience in a downturn: The power of financial cooperative*” showed that financial cooperatives out-performed traditional investor-owned banks before, during and after the global financial crisis in 2007 and 2008 and pointed to their long-term stability. Importantly, they kept credit flowing to small and medium-sized enterprises – the main source of job creation.

Worker cooperatives are growing in response to new economic realities and the survival rate of such cooperatives in several countries appears to equal or surpass that of conventional firms. Cooperatives have also stood the test of time in delivering a range of social services to their members while consumer cooperatives help with the cost of living.

Underpinning the sustainability of cooperative enterprises are the values and principles that inform business strategy, proximity between cooperatives and their members, practices that foster a service-orientation rather than self-enrichment of managers, democratic governance, and a long-term orientation centred on members' security. The same factors explain the relative longevity of cooperatives compared to conventional enterprises

The ILO's *Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation* adopted in 2002 and founded on these principles, is relevant today not only in tackling the immediate crises but also in shaping the future world of work and enterprise models that effectively combine economic efficiency and social and environmental responsibility.

As global attention focuses on the challenge of sustainable development, cooperatives can and must play a key role as creative enterprises expanding into new and innovative areas from recycling to renewable energy, providing people with know-how, inputs, finance and markets at fair prices with low-environmental impact and making a valuable contribution to a just transition to a low-carbon sustainable development path. Given their values foundation, cooperative enterprises are well-placed to be leaders in making decent work part of a just transition.

In the quest for sustainable enterprises and sustainable development, the cooperative model offers a tested route. The ILO looks forward to joining forces with the UN family and the International Cooperative Alliance on this cooperative journey.