



International Co-operative Alliance



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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Co-operatives have role to play in driving global economic sustainability

The UN International Year of Co-operatives closes in New York

New York, United States. 19 November 2012; Dame Pauline Green, President of the global representative body for co-operatives, the [International Co-operative Alliance \(ICA\)](#), today declared a new era open for co-operatives.

The UN International Year of Co-operatives had provided the platform from which the global co-operative movement had re-defined its goals and strategy through a ratified plan of action, a blueprint for future growth, she said.

"[The Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade](#) is a framework which will take the global co-operative movement through to the end of the decade with a plan to see co-operatives grow as financially and environmentally sustainable businesses," said the Director-General of the ICA, Charles Gould. "We have built a global strategy which positions co-operatives as the fastest growing business model by 2020."

Co-operatives could also fill a key role in a strategy led by multilateral organisations to solve the pressing, inter-linked problems of poverty and hunger, particularly in Africa, where hunger is a growing trend according to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations' 2012 Hunger Report, said Dame Pauline.

The ICA has dedicated itself to working with the United Nations in reaching its Millennium goals by supporting the development of co-operatives in emerging markets through its work at policy and grassroots level.

One of its key initiatives during the year has been launching the [Global Development Co-operative](#), a fund designed to provide loans to co-operatives in emerging markets, particularly on the African continent, to help expand their businesses. The first drawdown from the fund is anticipated to take place in the first quarter of 2013.

Youth, suffering from a loss of jobs and diminished hope for the future, could look to the formation of co-operatives to provide a fairer economic playing field.

Dame Pauline highlighted the role co-operatives are playing in Europe where they have demonstrated their willingness to dip into surplus capital to pay workers, instead of taking the short-term solution to get rid of jobs. "Human capital is a key to any business, and co-operatives are demonstrating in an extremely tough economic environment that they believe retaining people and expertise is more important in the long-term to their business success than holding surplus financial capital," she said.

"There is no question that co-operatives have demonstrated their model of business is stable, sustainable and people-centred in what have been the most difficult global economic circumstances I have witnessed in my lifetime."



In spite of the varying levels of difficulty being experienced by national economies worldwide, the largest co-operatives - the top 300 co-operatives around the globe - now have a turnover of USD 2 trillion in 2010, according to the newly-launched measurement tool [The World Co-operative Monitor](#).

"Ban Ki-Moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, made the profound statement at the beginning of this international year of celebration that co-operatives do prove that it is possible to be both socially responsible and economically viable," said Dame Pauline.

"Fitting then that co-operatives have proven exactly that including in Japan where the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU) has an enormously powerful business with more than 25 million members, representing more than 35 per cent of Japanese households, and invests funds and time in the development of the Sanchoku concept of sustainable food production."

"Sanchoku, with its conviction in the sustainability benefits of moving food directly from producer to consumer, is even being held up as a means to quicken the pace of recovery in the region affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011."

One of the most successful co-operative development programs in Africa has been that of "mothers' associations" in Benin, supported by USAID and World Education.

"In Benin, these co-operatively organised associations of women organise themselves in groups in industries like agriculture," said Dame Pauline. "With their surplus funds, the women members have the capital to send their daughters to school. And, unlike many other development programs, these co-operative associations survive once development aid wanes."

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NOTES TO EDITOR

1. **The International Co-operative Alliance** is the global voice for the values-based business model of the co-operative, uniting co-operatives worldwide and providing a forum for knowledge and concerted action.

ICA members are international and national co-operative organisations from all sectors of the economy including agriculture, banking, consumer, fisheries, health, housing, industry, insurance and tourism. The ICA has member organisations from almost 100 countries, representing approximately 1 billion individuals worldwide. Around 100 million people work for a co-op globally. ICA was established by co-operatives in 1895. In 1946 the ICA became one of the first three non-governmental organisations to be accorded "consultative status" with the United Nations.

2. **Co-operatives** are successful values based businesses owned by their members. Whether they are customers, employees or residents, the members get an equal say in the business and a share of the profits.
3. The United Nations has declared 2012 the **International Year of Co-operatives**. With its theme of 'co-operative enterprises build a better world', the Year is an opportunity to raise public awareness of how co-operatives are successful values based businesses owned by their members.
4. Further information about the International Year of Co-operatives is available at www.2012.coop.

5. Follow the ICA on **twitter** at @icacoop. Like the ICA's **Facebook** page at www.facebook.com/internationalcooperativealliance

