



QUEBEC 2014 INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT OF COOPERATIVES

2014 DECLARATION

More than 3,000 decisionmakers and influencers from the international cooperative community gathered in Quebec City for the 2nd International Summit of Cooperatives. Together they worked to break new ground and grow the global family of cooperatives to play a part in building a better world with more inclusive growth for men and women everywhere.

With the Summit now over, we urge the world's leaders to consider how cooperatives are beneficial to the global economy and contribute to building the better world we all desire.

Cooperatives have protected the livelihoods of millions of people in times of great financial crisis. All over the world they empower people to take charge of their lives, in fields as broad and varied as food, health, banking, education, insurance, housing, and energy. They have proven locally, nationally, and globally how good they are at delivering solutions.

We ask our leaders to consider the urgent need we have for diversity in the way a business can be run. The world needs cooperatives to be recognized as a valued part of the global economy. We do not seek special treatment but that world leaders objectively consider all that we can bring to the men and women living on our shared planet Earth and that they acknowledge our role.

Cooperative enterprises help build a better world.

Local strength, global power

In proclaiming 2012 the *International Year of Cooperatives*, the United Nations encouraged the world to look at cooperatives and mutuals in a new light. That same year the first International Summit of Cooperatives was held in Quebec City, and the International Co-operative Alliance's *Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade* was implemented. The final declaration of this unprecedented meeting asserted the global importance of the cooperative and mutual movement.

In 2014 things are different. The cooperative world has a bigger voice and enjoys greater recognition from international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank. For the first time ever, cooperatives were invited to take part in B20 talks this year.

As cooperatives and mutuals garner greater attention, their economic importance is growing. The studies presented at the 2014 International Summit of Cooperatives testify to their growth. The movement currently represents:

- 1 billion members
- 250 million jobs
- 12% of total jobs in the G20
- US\$2.2 trillion in annual revenues for the 300 biggest cooperatives

In 2014, the cooperative and mutual movement entered a new phase, shifting from recognition to affirmation. It is seeking to innovate more. In light of the discussions held during the 2014 International Summit of Cooperatives, the participants declare the following: We need more, stronger, and innovative cooperatives that commit to ensuring food security, continue their role as creators of wealth and jobs, and step up their efforts to improve access to health care and services.

Further to this declaration, the participants at the 2014 Summit undertake to act on the following seven commitments.

Commitment no. 1: Cooperatives and mutuals undertake to further exert their influence on the B20, the G20 and major international organizations to gain recognition for their leadership

Whereas the *International Year of Co-operatives* did much to bring the global cooperative movement together and help it promote its importance in international organizations;

Whereas the United Nations' Rio+20 Treaty on Sustainable Development recognized the cooperative and mutual business model as a key tool to support its sustainable development initiatives;

Whereas the cooperative business model was included in the work of the B20 and its recommendations to the G20 leaders;

Whereas many world leaders in political, economic and academic circles now recognize how much cooperative and mutual enterprises contribute to a better-balanced and fairer global economy with regard to the human condition.

Cooperative and mutual enterprises therefore undertake to:

- Ensure that the cooperative movement consolidates its position in the B20
- Give voice to the cooperative movement in the *Sustainable Development Goals* set by the UN for 2015
- Leverage the UN's Action Plan for Women, which highlights the place women occupy in cooperative business ownership, management and leadership
- Contribute to economic recovery to the fullest extent possible

Commitment no. 2: Cooperatives and mutuals undertake to innovate, grow stronger, and increase their numbers to better meet the needs of individuals and society

Whereas cooperatives and mutuals have a significant impact on the world economy;

Whereas the International Co-operative Alliance has pursued initiatives under the *Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade – the “2020 Vision”*;

Whereas it is critical that cooperatives and mutuals continue working to gain the recognition needed to influence G20 decision makers;

Whereas cooperatives must be stronger and more numerous in order to resolve economic challenges;

Whereas cooperatives are drivers of growth in their communities.

Cooperatives and mutuals therefore undertake to:

- Achieve the objectives of the *Blueprint* in order to increase recognition of cooperatives as drivers of social, economic and sustainable development
- Support implementation of national legislation that eliminates obstacles to the creation and development of cooperatives and mutuals
- Promote full and complete recognition of the cooperative and mutual business model and its democratic principles
- Actively support initiatives to compile complete economic and social data from cooperatives in order to raise public and policymaker awareness of their impact in all economic areas
- Assess the impact of their business activities on the environment in order to reduce their ecological footprint
- Promote the rollout of cooperative training programs
- Document and leverage best practices from cooperatives and mutuals around the world

Commitment no. 3: Cooperatives and mutuals undertake to make a significant contribution to food security

Whereas we will need to feed 9 billion people by 2050, and hundreds of millions lack food security, despite the progress made;

Whereas in 2012 FAO recognized the irrefutable contribution of agricultural cooperatives to global food security and to nutrition;

Whereas numerous phenomena such as urbanization, climate change, conflicts, speculation and natural disasters can compromise food security or aggravate problems;

Whereas one out of every two people around the world depends on a cooperative for his or her livelihood.

Cooperatives therefore affirm that they are key players in the global fight against hunger, are committed to increasing food security and undertake to:

- Actively support international efforts, including those of the FAO, to achieve food security, reduce poverty and eradicate hunger worldwide
- Support projects aimed at promoting the production of non-animal sources of protein
- Help put an end to discrimination in the access to resources, especially for women in the farming sector, with respect to their right to land ownership and financial services
- Pursue efforts to improve the access of rural populations to affordable energy for food processing and preservation
- Promote better management of agrifood systems to reduce speculation and price fluctuations by strengthening the market power of producers throughout the supply chain locally, regionally and internationally

- Be present throughout the supply chain locally, regionally and internationally
- Facilitate access to farmland and help preserve local ownership by promoting and implementing voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of each nation's food security
- Put in place mechanisms to ensure generational transfer in the farming sector, especially which help young farmers through access to training, financing, and innovation, to ensure a smoother transition between generations and thereby build a sustainable farming sector rooted in regional realities

Commitment no. 4: Cooperatives and mutuals undertake to continue to act as the creators of good quality jobs

Whereas there is a worldwide trend of declining job quality;

Whereas economic recovery, when it does occur, creates few jobs and keeps a significant portion of the population – especially young people – in a vulnerable situation;

Whereas cooperatives and mutuals, as job creators, are powerful drivers of local and regional development;

Whereas cooperatives clearly contribute to maintaining and creating jobs;

Whereas cooperatives have the ability to ensure business succession.

Cooperatives intend to assert their role as creators of jobs and builders of a more caring economy for people and communities and to this end undertake to:

- Work systematically to promote conditions that lead to decent work – job creation, labour rights, social protection, social dialogue – in order to improve and better assess cooperatives' contribution to the means of production
- Continue promoting the cooperative model as a creator of quality jobs and collective wealth at the local, national and international levels
- Promote and support programs for the active engagement of women and young people in cooperative startups
- Promote the inclusion of the cooperative and mutual business model in programs at educational institutions
- Support research on cooperatives and the introduction of a harmonized methodology for collecting and analyzing local, national and international data to document and demonstrate the economic and social impacts of cooperatives, including with respect to food security, and to develop appropriate policies
- Work to rectify policies that can leave people in developing countries more vulnerable or lead to financing and operational rules that impede cooperative development
- Develop initiatives to support the startup, consolidation and growth of cooperative enterprises, including support services and related funding
- Promote the cooperative business model as a means of ensuring business succession

Commitment no. 5: Cooperatives and mutuals undertake to step up their efforts to foster access to health care and services

Whereas population growth and aging make access to health care and services more problematic;

Whereas more than 80 million people in 43 countries already have access to cooperative healthcare institutions and that model has proven its worth, particularly in developing countries;

Whereas many countries, particularly developing countries, are struggling to control the rising costs of their healthcare systems and seeking alternatives in order to provide care and services adapted to people's needs;

Whereas meeting community needs is part of the fundamental mission of cooperatives;

Whereas cooperatives may play a dual role in funding health care and offering services;

Whereas cooperatives and mutuals, whose very purpose is to mutualize risk, can provide coverage tailored to people's social and economic circumstances;

Whereas large cooperative and mutuals play an important part in supporting the startup of smaller cooperatives;

Whereas health cooperatives may be an innovative alternative for rebuilding primary healthcare systems, especially in the southern countries.

Cooperatives and mutuals are convinced they can make a major contribution to promoting access to health care and services worldwide and to this end undertake to:

- Promote their presence as a complement to government services, particularly in the provision of hospital care-related services
- Develop innovative solutions to help communities manage health care and services themselves by making citizens central to solutions, with a clear focus on prevention and the promotion of healthy lifestyle habits
- Present and promote insurance products that are based on mutualizing risk and that are mindful of people's ability to pay
- Offer the full range of health care and health services as set out by the WHO, from disease and accident prevention to diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitative care

Commitment no. 6: Financial cooperatives and mutuals will continue their efforts to achieve universal access to financial services

Whereas 2.5 billion people around the world still do not have access to safe and affordable financial services and are therefore limited in the options they have to manage their resources;

Whereas the World Bank Group has put forward the goal of universal financial access as an important contributor to eradicating poverty and achieving shared prosperity, and over 50 countries have made national commitments or set targets for expanding financial inclusion;

Whereas financial cooperatives and mutuals are major forces for financial inclusion, and in some countries reach many more people than other types of financial institutions;

Whereas financial cooperatives and mutuals have a strong presence in rural and remote areas, which are barely served, if at all, by other financial institutions, and they are well positioned to provide sound and affordable financial services on a large scale;

Whereas financial cooperatives stress member education and the pooling of member savings, two especially important points for the poor.

In order to maximize their contribution to financial inclusion around the world, financial cooperatives, credit unions and mutuals undertake to step up their efforts to:

- Widen and strengthen cooperation between national associations of financial cooperatives, credit unions and mutuals and with bilateral and multilateral institutions around the world
- Support the introduction of appropriate legislation and a system of oversight to ensure the stability of financial cooperatives and mutuals and their inclusion in the national financial systems of the countries in which they operate
- Support effective and efficient networking of financial cooperatives, credit unions and mutuals
- Leverage new technology to achieve economies of scale and diversify services

Commitment no. 7: Cooperatives must contribute to the formation of a scientific community serving the long-term interests of sustainable development

Whereas knowledge and values with regard to sustainable development are nurtured largely by the education system, which in turn draws on scientific theory in determining both how it teaches and what it teaches;

Whereas the current unsustainable economic model is based on views and theories currently dominant in the education system;

Whereas technological progress by itself cannot solve all problems, but can only serve to supplement social and personal development.

Cooperatives and mutuals therefore consider it necessary to undertake the following:

- Contribute to the formation of a scientific community composed of all institutions currently studying cooperatives and charged with analyzing how well current social and economic theories fit with the concept of sustainable development
- Actively support initiatives to implement and consciously leverage holistic social and economic scales and indicators of sustainable development
- Coordinate the sharing of experience between scientific institutes, schools and members of the cooperative movement on the subject of creativity, social innovation and new forms of organization
- Develop new organizational structures that facilitate involvement by members in governance and the decision-making process, thereby enhancing their abilities and knowledge in the field

A movement that is here to stay thanks to intercooperation

The greatest strength of the cooperative business model is its ability to intercooperate in any sector of activity, locally or internationally.

This strength is based on the sharing of individual and collective resources, knowledge, effort, results, and profits behind the cooperative movement, locally and internationally.

Spurred by these observations and the *Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade* and in recognition of these seven major commitments and related action items, the participants at the 2014 International Summit of Cooperatives have reaffirmed the strength of the cooperative model and, with a single voice, have called for the growth and sustainability of cooperative businesses.

They have reaffirmed that as builders of local economies and drivers of a more stable, inclusive and human global economy, they are making an indisputable contribution to lasting prosperity while protecting people and the environment.

HOSTS



International
Co-operative
Alliance

Dame Pauline Green

President, International Co-operative Alliance
and Co-host of the International Summit of Cooperatives



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Chair of the Board, President and CEO, Desjardins Group
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