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A historic moment as the UN General Assembly adopts the first resolution on the social and solidarity economy

Following the events organised in [July](#) and [December](#) 2022 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, the United Nations has adopted the first [Resolution on promoting the social and solidarity economy for sustainable development](#) during the General Assembly held on 18th April 2023. As an observer of the UN Task Force on the Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSSE), the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) has been part of the discussion over the last few years, and welcomes this important step in mainstreaming and enhancing the international dimension and profile of the SSE.

The resolution includes a definition of the SSE as “enterprises, organisations and other entities engaged in economic, social and environmental activities which serve the collective and/or general interest, based on the principles of voluntary cooperation and mutual aid, democratic and/or participatory governance, autonomy and independence and the primacy of people and social purpose over capital in the distribution and use of surpluses and/or profits”. Recognising cooperatives as part of the SSE (together with associations, mutual societies, foundations, social enterprises, self-help groups and “other entities operating in accordance with the values and principles of the social and solidarity economy”), the resolution will coexist with existing UN resolutions on cooperatives in social development, adopted since the 1950s.

“This is a historic moment for the SSE family. The cooperative movement has been one of the main institutional pillars constituting the SSE ever since its origins in the 1830s, and has been actively engaged in the modern revival of the SSE concept. We believe the resolution will be a key instrument in increasing the visibility of the SSE and providing the opportunity for a focused exchange of knowledge and learning by member states, guiding UN agencies on SSE priority areas of work and documenting our contributions to sustainable development”, said Ariel Guarco, President of the ICA.

The document recognises how the social and solidarity economy can contribute “to the achievement and localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in terms of employment and decent work, the provision of social services, the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, access to affordable finance, and local economic development (...), as well as inclusive and sustainable growth”, among others.

The resolution encourages the UN Member States to promote and implement national, local and regional strategies, policies and programmes for supporting and enhancing the SSE through dedicated legal frameworks, national statistics, fiscal and public procurement incentives, education curricula and capacity-building and research initiatives and reinforcing entrepreneurship and business support. The text also calls multilateral, international and regional financial institutions and development banks to support the social and solidarity economy, including through existing and new financial instruments and mechanisms adapted to all stages of development.

The document also requests the Secretary-General to prepare a report in collaboration with the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy, on the implementation of the present resolution, taking into consideration the contribution of the social and solidarity economy to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and an inclusive, job-rich, resilient and

sustainable recovery, and decides to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-ninth session, under the item entitled “Sustainable development”, a sub-item entitled “Promoting the social and solidarity economy for sustainable development”.

In 2020, the ICA published its position paper "[Cooperatives as a key constituent of the social and solidarity economy](#)", supporting the UN resolution on the SSE. Additionally, in line with the [ICA 2020-2030 Strategic Plan](#), the paper reaffirms ICA's commitment to establishing strong partnerships with other global bodies in the social and solidarity economy and promoting the SSE at an international level.

The [Resolution Promoting the Social and Solidarity Economy for Sustainable Development \(A/77/L.60\)](#) is available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

UN resolutions on cooperatives in social development

The United Nations General Assembly has been adopting resolutions concerning cooperatives in social development since the 1950s. We acknowledge the support of the Mongolian government to the cooperative movement, as it has been spearheading the systematic tabling of the resolution on cooperatives to the UN General Assembly every two years since 1992.

The UN resolution on cooperatives in social development recognises that cooperatives, in their various forms, promote the fullest possible participation in the economic and social development of local communities and all people including women, young people, older people, people with disabilities and indigenous peoples, whose inclusion strengthens economic and social development, contributing to the eradication of poverty and hunger. The resolution also states that, as cooperative enterprises often serve the socially excluded and vulnerable sectors of the population that traditional profit-driven businesses may not be best placed to tackle, they therefore play an important role in supporting socially inclusive policies that drive inclusive development, particularly in developing countries.

As a follow-up to these resolutions, the UN Secretary General writes a report to examine their implementation. In his recent 2021 [report on cooperatives in social development](#), the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres recognised the importance of cooperatives as key economic and social actors in the global recovery strategy. The report examined the implementation of Resolution [74/119](#) of December 2019 at both national and international levels, as well as the contributions cooperatives can make, in the context of building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic in particular.