

PRESS RELEASE

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Rio declaration acknowledges co-operatives

Rio+20 document affirms that co-operatives are key for sustainable development

Friday, 22 June 2012

Today the co-operative movement made history with nations' signing the Rio+20 document which included a strong affirmation that co-operatives are important for agricultural development, jobs and for social development and poverty reduction.

Rio+20 is the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), following 20 years after the original 1992 'Earth Summit' in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Rio+20 was attended by 190 countries in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from June 20-22, 2012. The focus of the conference was to advance a "green economy" and also focus attention on creating a framework for moving forward on sustainable development.

Commenting on this important milestone, Dame Pauline Green, President of the International Co-operative Alliance (the international organization that represents co-operatives in 100 countries around the world) said: "Members and supporters of co-operatives have long known - co-ops help lift people out of poverty, advance gender equality, give back to the community and address head on the critical issues of sustainable development. What nations did in Rio today was to state that case in writing."

Betsy Dribben is the ICA Director of Policy. Having participated in the UN Rio negotiations since January 2012, Dribben noted time and again ministers and ambassadors told her that in their countries - rich or poor - cooperatives were important. She added that while negotiations were often slow and sometimes punctuated by frustration on every side, at the end of the day they could all agree 'that co-operatives build a better world'. "Just as we've been saying over and over again in this UN International Year of Co-operatives - this values based business model can really make good things happen. Now country leaders at the Rio signing have made it clear 'they finally get it.'"

She also noted that from the start of negotiations the Brazilian government was committed to making sure that co-operatives were a focus as a key element in advancing sustainable development. "We're grateful that even when the going got tough Brazil stood tall on pressing colleague countries to keep co-operatives wording in the text." She added that the Brazilian co-operative movement underscores just how much co-operatives can do to improve the quality of life.

Dribben also paid tribute to the Canadian delegation which began the negotiations in January at the UN in New York City by asking that support for “agricultural cooperatives” be included in the text and followed through on that commitment all the way to Rio. “They did the right thing on our wording with patience and resolve” she added.

Reporters: the key text elements follow

Co-operatives appear 3 times in the document.

1. We acknowledge the role of cooperatives and microenterprises in contributing to social inclusion and poverty reduction in particular in developing countries.
2. We resolve by [2020 / 2030] to sustainably increase agricultural production and productivity, including through improving the function of markets and international support mechanisms, particularly for the developing countries, with a view to increasing public and private investment in agriculture and rural development. Key areas for investment and support include: sustainable agricultural practices; rural infrastructure, storage capacities and related technologies to significantly reduce post-harvest and other food losses and waste throughout the food cycle; research and development on sustainable agricultural technologies; developing strong agricultural cooperatives and value chains; and strengthening urban-rural linkages.
3. We are encouraged by government initiatives to create jobs, for poor people in restoring and managing natural resources and ecosystems, and we encourage the private sector to contribute to decent work and green job creation for both women and men, and particularly for the youth, including through partnerships with small and medium enterprises as well as cooperatives.

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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 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. Membership is growing and the ICA currently has over 270 members in 100 countries active in all sectors of the economy: agriculture/ forestry, banking/credit unions, consumer, health, insurance, workers, fisheries, housing, transport and tourism. ICA members represent around one billion people worldwide, and employ 100 million people.

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