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**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE TO THE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ALLIANCE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
Cartagena, 22-23 September 2005**

*Delivered by José Antonio Ocampo  
Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs*

Last week, the largest gathering of world leaders in history met at United Nations Headquarters in New York to review progress being made in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The 2005 World Summit stressed the key role that non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders have to play in that progress. The world-wide cooperative community is one of those stakeholders, and an important one.

The cooperative movement brings together more than 800 million around the world. Cooperatives are significant economic actors, providing more than 100 million jobs globally. The movement's socially responsible enterprises impact the livelihood of nearly three billion people -- roughly half the world's population. This large and influential movement is well positioned to make major contribution to the achievement of the MDGs, in particular the goal of halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

Cooperatives have traditionally emphasized the importance of ethical and socially inclusive dealings in the marketplace. Members have insisted that their enterprises have honest dealings with them, and this in turn has led to honest dealings with non-members and a unique level of openness throughout the organizations. The practice of these values at the individual and community levels safeguard human rights. At the same time, cooperative values of self-help, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity provide an essential foundation for the meaningful participation of poor people in development processes.

The United Nations has a long history of partnership with the cooperative movement. We greatly value this partnership and recognize the significant contribution it can make to improving the social and economic well-being of people around the world. I thank every one of you for your commitment to our common mission, and wish you a most productive assembly.

Kofi A. Annan