



INTERNATIONAL  
CO-OPERATIVE  
ALLIANCE

Route des Morillons 15  
1218 Grand-Saconnex  
Geneva  
Switzerland

Tel: (41 22) 929 88 88  
Fax: (41 22) 798 41 22  
E-mail: [ica@ica.coop](mailto:ica@ica.coop)  
Website: [www.ica.coop](http://www.ica.coop)

**International Labour Conference (97<sup>th</sup> Session)**  
**Statement of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA)**  
**Iain Macdonald, ICA Director-General**

Honourable Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address you today on behalf of co-operative organisations from 88 countries which are members of the International Co-operative Alliance or ICA. These organisations represent nearly 800 million individuals.

As the representative organisation of co-operatives worldwide, ICA knows that co-operatives can and do make a difference in promoting the Global Employment Agenda and indeed decent work in general. They address the four pillars of decent work - rights, employment, social protection and social dialogue in as much as co-operatives are a form of enterprise that put people first; they are member-owned; they are controlled under democratic principles; and they are competitive enterprises which are at least as efficient and often more effective in their business operations and use of capital as others in the marketplace. Indeed a recent survey showed that the top 300 co-operative and mutual enterprises in the world have a combined turnover greater than the GDP of Canada! Yet, they are not driven by profit, but rather by needs and they care for members and their communities. Co-operatives help people meet their common economic, social, environmental and cultural needs.

The flexibility and proven sustainability of our model of enterprise makes it appropriate not only for addressing the challenges of today's volatile economies and changing conditions, but also those of tomorrow and so the challenges set out for the decent work agenda are ones that the ICA and its members are prepared to work jointly with the ILO to address.

Today co-operatives already provide approximately 100 million jobs worldwide – 20% more than all the multi-national corporations put together - and their potential for contributing to closing the employment gap is widely recognised. They are active in urban and rural areas and have a special role in the promotion of rural employment as recognised in the recent discussions on rural employment for poverty reduction. Active in all sectors of the economy, they are sustainable both in terms of economic viability and environmental actions. They are addressing climate change with policies to reduce carbon emissions, to promote sustainable consumption patterns, to educate their members and the communities in which they operate and find innovative ways to address the issue. In many countries they are the preferred form of enterprise that is used for renewable energy solutions, especially when community control and ownership are important, and so they are producers of green jobs in this and a multitude of other sectors in which co-operatives are found. In fact on 5 July, the international community will celebrate International Day of Cooperatives on the theme, “Confronting Climate Change through co-operative enterprise” to highlight their contributions.

And we should not forget too, especially today, that as socially responsible enterprises, co-operatives are also making headway in addressing Child Labour with joint activities already underway to take stock of existing good practice and sensitise co-operatives at the local levels. ICA is committed to work with ILO's International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour to make further progress.

However, if co-operatives are to have maximum impact on the economic and social well-being of members and the communities in which they operate, they must have appropriate legal and administrative environments in place. ICA commends the continuing work of the ILO in assisting its constituencies in implementing ILO's Recommendation 193 on the Promotion of Co-operatives and hopes, that as part of a stronger ILO, it will strengthen its activity in all its departments in ensuring that policy environments exist which enable co-operatives to grow and prosper alongside other forms of enterprise.

ICA is committed to working with the ILO within its Strategic Policy Framework, in strengthening the potential of co-operatives to contribute to advance people's real development goals and achieve a fair globalisation