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ICA PRESS RELEASE

International Co-operative Alliance commends UN Proclamation of International Year of Co-operatives 2012

Geneva, 18 December 2009, for immediate release - The ICA's new president, Dame Pauline Green, expressed today, on behalf of the entire international co-operative community, support for the United Nations resolution on the role of co-operatives in social development, which proclaims 2012 as the International Year of Co-operatives. UN Member States approved the resolution (A/RES/64/136) on 18 December at the 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The UN resolution recognises that the co-operative business model is a major factor of economic and social development, promoting the fullest possible participation in the economic and social development of people in both the developed and developing world, and that, in particular, co-operatives contribute to the eradication of poverty. The resolution also encourages all governments to create a more supportive environment for co-operative development, particularly when it comes to securing finances for capacity-building.

"The International Year of the Co-operatives is a well timed event that represents the depth of understanding of the entire co-operative movement," said Pauline Green, ICA's first-ever woman president. "The co-operative model is a better choice and offers the basis for a more sustainable way to do business when compared to traditional capitalist models now under scrutiny. What sets this model apart from others is that all co-operatives, whether they are small farmers or large consumer-owned entities, share the values of democracy, solidarity, equality, self-help and self responsibility, creating businesses that serve the greater good as opposed to maximising profit for the very few."

Iain Macdonald, Director-General of ICA, expressed his support for the resolution in a statement at ICA's recent Board meeting, indicating that the International Year of Co-operatives is "well timed to remind the world that there is more than one way of doing business and that in a global economy we all have to work together. Whether it is in tackling the economic crisis, the threat of climate change, or food security issues co-operative enterprise offers real hope of solutions to these problems, and I have no doubt that the increased profile offered by an International Year will achieve great things."

In its 2008 Global 300 report, the ICA noted that the top 300 co-operatives alone are responsible for an aggregate turnover of 1.1 trillion USD, which represents the size of the 10th largest economy in the world (equivalent to the size of Spain alone). The International Year will provide an opportunity to further document the impact of the largest, but also of the small and medium sized co-operatives that significantly improve people's lives around the world.

With this newly approved resolution, the ICA will mobilise the global co-operative community in creating a global campaign featuring a series of events around the world and targeted messages which all co-operatives will be able to use to promote co-operative business. It will work closely with the United Nations and its agencies in addition to other co-operative stakeholder to put the co-operative model of enterprise on international and national agendas.

The International Co-operative Alliance is an independent, non-government association which unites, represents and serves co-operatives worldwide. The ICA was founded in London in 1895. Its members are national and international co-operative organisations in all sectors of activity including, agricultural, banking, fisheries, housing, health, insurance, workers' and consumer co-operatives.