



## Cooperatives in the Post-2015 Development Agenda

### Reaction to the Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations

The International Co-operative Alliance welcomes the UN Secretary-General's Synthesis Report: The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet

The goal of sustainable development for all will require an inspirational vision, an ambitious and practical plan with global engagement, and the means to implement and monitor that plan. The International Co-operative Alliance and the cooperative movement welcome the UN Secretary-General's synthesis report on the post-2015 agenda and are fully committed to supporting the Secretary-General and the United Nations in this work.

Democratically governed, values-based, people-focused and locally rooted, cooperative enterprises have demonstrated leadership in sustainable development, and will be particularly adept at tackling the challenges laid out by the post-2015 agenda. Their contributions can best be framed by the six essential elements presented in the synthesis report.

#### **Dignity**

Cooperatives are entrenched in the work of ending poverty – they identify economic opportunities for vulnerable groups and empower them to defend their interests using the leverage of a collective voice and decision-making process. All cooperatives are based on self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity, values crucial to the pursuit of dignity. For example, agricultural cooperatives help small farmers get fairer prices for crop inputs and access to markets through group purchasing and marketing.

#### **People**

The post-2015 agenda must be people-focused, and cooperatives are created by people for people. The inclusive nature of cooperatives is reflected in high rates of membership among women and young people, and by their willingness to put people over profits. For example, many savings and credit cooperatives improve access to education by offering low-interest loans to families to pay school fees.

#### **Shared prosperity**

Cooperative enterprises help build a strong, inclusive, and transformative economy. Cooperatives create more jobs than their corporate counterparts and invest in innovative approaches to wider societal problems, such as natural resource management and access to healthcare. As responsible businesses, cooperatives focus on long-term economic, social, and environmental objectives over short-term profits.

#### **Planet**

Environmental sustainability is integrated into the activities of cooperative enterprises, as part of their guiding principle of concern for community. Cooperatives are actively addressing

climate change through leadership in renewable energy and resource use through sustainable agriculture and production.

## **Justice**

As democratically run organizations with a “one member, one vote” system, cooperatives serve as an example for participatory and accountable governance. In crisis-stricken regions, cooperatives are instrumental to supporting survivors, rebuilding communities through peacebuilding and promoting citizen engagement in new government processes.

## **Partnership**

Though many cooperatives are based in rural and isolated regions, they are part of a global movement that ensures its members’ voices are heard in national and global policy making processes. Cooperatives unite diverse people around the world for a common goal, and this solidarity and ready mobilization are essential to achieving sustainable development.

Cooperatives have already contributed significantly to sustainable development, and are fully committed to implementing the post-2015 agenda. Their actions can be even more effective with a supportive policy framework. The International Co-operative Alliance considers that this is implied and in the spirit of the report but would like to see a more explicit reference to the role of cooperatives.

The International Co-operative Alliance therefore suggests that cooperatives be recognized as a well-suited model to deliver the post-2015 agenda objectives, and calls on Member States to take this into consideration during the intergovernmental negotiations in order to support the work done thus far and encourage cooperatives to reach their full potential as actors in sustainable development.

*The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) is an independent, non-governmental organization established in 1895 to unite, represent and serve co-operatives worldwide. It provides a global voice and forum for knowledge, expertise and coordinated action for and about co-operatives.*

*Alliance’s members are international and national co-operative organizations from all sectors of the economy, including agriculture, industry, services, banking, retail, fisheries, health, housing, and insurance. The Alliance has members from one hundred countries, representing one billion individuals worldwide. More than 250 million people draw all or part of their income from a co-operative. The largest 300 cooperatives in the world have combined annual revenues of more than USD2.2 trillion.*

*The Alliance is the guardian of the co-operative definition, values and principles enshrined in the Statement on the Cooperative Identity and included in the ILO Recommendation 193/2002 on the Promotion of Cooperatives.*