

PRESS RELEASE – ILO/ICA Conference on Cooperatives and the Future of Work

24 June 2019

The ILO and the ICA reaffirm vows of friendship and collaboration by signing a new MoU

he International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) reaffirmed their century-long friendship by signing a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) today.

The document states that its main purpose shall be to “foster collaboration [...] in areas of promotion and strengthening of the cooperative enterprise model”. In that respect, both commit to promoting cooperatives as a “sustainable business model to advance inclusive and sustainable development”.

ICA’s President Ariel Guarco and ILO’s Director-General (DG) Guy Ryder signed the new MoU as a sign of renewed friendship. As both recalled, the first ILO’s DG Albert Thomas came from the cooperative movement and was part of ICA’s Board in the 1920’s.

The relationship between the two organizations started from the founding of the ILO and has continued uninterrupted to this day.

ILO - ICA joint conference

The memorandum was signed during a **joint conference on ‘Cooperatives and the Future of Work’**, following the 108th International Labour Conference (ILC) as the ILO is commemorating its centenary. Both moments are historic for the development of cooperatives as the ILO also adopted on 21 June the ‘ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work 2019’, in which the role of cooperatives and the social and solidary economy in the future of work, in particular towards decent and sustainable work, was recognised.

For Ariel Guarco, “this mention in the Declaration [about cooperatives] is very significant for us, since it will allow us to carry out more advocacy work and public policy proposals favourable for cooperatives and will further strengthen the partnership that we are renewing today with the signing of a new agreement of collaboration between our two organizations”.

Guy Ryder underlined that "at the ILO we are committed to working with our constituents and the cooperative movement in supporting the creation of such an

ecosystem that is conducive to the growth of cooperative enterprises. In these times of unprecedented change and of exceptional challenges in the world of work we look forward to continued partnership with the cooperative movement in this quest for sustainable development and a fairer, inclusive and more secure future of work with decent work for all."

During the ICA-ILO conference, representatives from the permanent representation of Iran, Korea and Uruguay took the floor underlining the role of cooperative for building a sustainable future of work sharing concrete cooperative examples. The International Trade Union Confederation, Deputy General Secretary Victor Baez noted how "the trade unions and cooperatives need to work together not only to save jobs but also to create jobs" and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) representative Wenyan Yang said cooperatives have a "big role to play to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)".

Book launched

The 'Cooperatives and the World of Work' book was launched as part of the ICA-ILO Joint Conference. The publication is co-edited by authors from the ICA, the ILO and the International Organisation of Industrial and Services Cooperatives (CICOPA). With the uncertainty of the world of work and with the rise of technology, the book furthers the debate on the future of work, sustainable development, and the social and solidarity economy where cooperatives are major players.

The publication was edited by Bruno Roelants (ICA), Hyungsik Eum (CICOPA - ICA), Simel Esim (ILO), Sonja Novkovic (ICA Research Committee) and Walteri Katajamäki (ILO).

The President of Cooperatives of the Americas Graciela Fernandez closed the session highlighting the importance of the ILO's centenary declaration and the memorandum of understanding as a significant recognition of the cooperative movement.

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NOTES TO THE EDITOR

About the International Cooperative Alliance

The International Cooperative Alliance is a non-profit international association established in 1895 to advance the cooperative social enterprise model. The International Cooperative Alliance is the voice for cooperatives worldwide, representing more than 310 cooperative federations and organisations across 109 countries.

12 % of the humanity are cooperators. Through its membership, the International Cooperative Alliance represents 1,2 billion people from any of the 2.94 million cooperatives worldwide. The largest 300 cooperatives in the world have combined annual revenues of 2.16 trillion USD (2015) and 280 million people around the world (10% of the employed population) secure their livelihoods in cooperatives, either through direct employment or by organizing through a cooperative.

The International Cooperative Alliance works with global and regional governments and organisations to create the legislative environments that allow cooperatives to form and grow. Towards media and public, the International Cooperative Alliance promotes the importance of people-centred cooperatives' values-based business model.

Operating from a global office in Brussels, Belgium, the International Cooperative Alliance is organised with four Regional Offices (Europe, Africa, Americas, and Asia-Pacific), and eight Sectoral Organisations (Banking, Agriculture, Fisheries, Insurance, Health, Housing, Consumer Cooperatives, and service and industry cooperatives).

About the ICA-ILO MoU

The ICA and ILO previously signed an MoU in 2004 to strengthen their partnership and promote cooperatives, in view of the global development agenda and the Millennium Development Goals. A second MoU was then signed in 2015.