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### INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE ALLIANCE LAUNCHES 2012 UN INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF CO-OPERATIVES

*The largest ever gathering of the co-operative movement comes together in Mexico to launch 2012 as the United Nations International Year of Co-operatives*

**CANCUN, MEXICO** – Wednesday 16 November 2011 - At a time when national economies are faced with high unemployment and financial instability, the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) is launching the UN international year focused on a unique way of doing business—co-operative enterprise.

Today's official launch of the 2012 International Year of Co-operatives by the International Co-operative Alliance aims to promote a self-help and development model that is also a serious business model. To commemorate the event, more than 2000 delegates from over 80 countries are gathering in Cancun for the official ICA launch and to consider how to create the conditions that ignite the growth of co-operative enterprises throughout the decade. Delegates come from all sectors of the economy, including banking, credit, insurance, housing, health, retail and agriculture.

*"Since the United Nations declared 2012 as the [International Year of Co-operatives](#), our global movement has been given a 'once-in-a-generation' opportunity to take a massive step forward, and lead the growth of the co-operative movement in all parts of the globe,"* says ICA President Dame Pauline Green who will officially launch the International Year at the opening ceremony of the General Assembly this afternoon.



*“To do this, we need to massively increase the knowledge and visibility of the size and sustainability of our business model, and of its reach into virtually every community across the world. Our General Assembly in Cancun affords us the opportunity to raise our global profile by using IYC 2012 to create common global messages and a common global presence, to influence key decision makers worldwide to support our movement that is producing solutions to the economic and sustainability problems of today’s world.”*

The International Year designation provides an opportunity for co-operatives globally to come together and to raise awareness of their way of doing business. The theme for both the conference and for the International Year is — Co-operative Enterprises Build a Better World. Co-operatives are successful values-based businesses that are owned and democratically controlled by their members—the people who use the co-op’s services or buy its goods.

*“Consumers have lost trust in the traditional banking system and are joining co-operative banks and credit unions, a type of co-operative, because they trust them.”* said International Co-operative Alliance Director-General Charles Gould. *“The demand for this type of banking indicates that consumers want businesses that put their needs first.”*

The biennial General Assembly gathering takes place from 14 – 18 November in Cancun Mexico. Highlights of the five-day gathering include keynote speeches by Obama’s blogger-in-chief Sam Graham-Felson and environmentalist Philippe Cousteau. There will also be dozens of workshops and sessions focusing on critical global issues including housing, consumption, production, associated work, health, credit unions, insurance and sustainability, and perhaps most importantly, raising public awareness of co-operatives and the positive impact they have on the world’s economy.

## **INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES**

Interviews can be arranged with some of the world’s leading authorities on co-operatives including:

- **Dame Pauline Green, President, ICA**
- **Charles Gould, Director-General, ICA**

**To arrange interviews, please contact the ICA’s Communications Team:  
Nicola Kelly +44 7906 853956 | +44 203 286 8212 | [kelly@ica.coop](mailto:kelly@ica.coop)**



**Alex Baker** +44 7776 152847 | +44 208 144 8456 | baker@ica.coop

## Notes to editor:

1. The International Co-operative Alliance is the global voice for the values-based business model of the cooperative, uniting co-operatives worldwide and providing a forum for knowledge and concerted action. ICA was established by co-operatives in 1895. It has members in almost 100 countries representing one billion people worldwide.

2. Co-operatives are successful, values-based businesses owned by their members. Whether they are customers, employees or residents, the members get an equal say in the business and a share of the profits. Co-operative values & principles were first established in 1844 by the Rochdale Pioneers.

Employing 100 million people, co-operatives are significant economic actors in many different sectors: agriculture/forestry, banking/credit unions, consumer, health, insurance, workers, fisheries, housing, transport and tourism

3. The United Nations has declared 2012 the International Year of Co-operatives. With its theme of 'co-operative enterprises build a better world', the Year is an opportunity to raise awareness of how co-operatives are successful values based businesses owned by their members.

4. Further information available at [www.2012.coop](http://www.2012.coop).



## **ABOUT ICA**

ICA is an independent, non-governmental association that unites, represents and serves co-operatives worldwide. Founded in 1895, ICA has 258 member organizations from 96 countries active in all sectors of the economy. Together these co-operatives represent nearly one billion individuals worldwide. For more information on ICA visit: [www.2012.coop](http://www.2012.coop)

## **ABOUT NCBA**

Founded in 1916, the National Cooperative Business Association is the national voice for cooperative enterprise in the United States and has a mission to develop, advance and protect cooperative business. NCBA provides a strong, unified voice on Capitol Hill and diligently works with lawmakers to enact legislation that supports the development and growth of cooperatives. NCBA's comprehensive programs help co-ops strengthen their businesses so they can better serve their members and transform the global economy. NCBA also creates connections across all sectors of the nation's more than 29,000 cooperative businesses, including agriculture, food distribution and retailing, childcare, credit unions, purchasing, worker-owned, housing, healthcare, energy and telecommunications cooperatives. NCBA's CLUSA International Program has helped develop cooperatives and other sustainable businesses in over 100 countries since 1953. CLUSA currently implements 23 projects in 10 countries. In 2012, cooperatives around the world will celebrate the International Year of Cooperatives. Cooperative enterprises build a better world. To learn more about NCBA, please visit [www.ncba.coop](http://www.ncba.coop).

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