



**ICA GLOBAL
COOPERATIVE
CONFERENCE**
COOPERATIVES BUILD
PROSPERITY FOR ALL
25 - 30 November, 2024
Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, India



**International Year
of Cooperatives**
Cooperatives Build
a Better World



International Cooperative Alliance
Alliance Coopérative Internationale
Alianza Cooperativa Internacional



ICA GLOBAL COOPERATIVE CONFERENCE

POST-EVENT REPORT



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Messages

Introduction

Dr US Awasthi

Cooperative Greetings from IFFCO!

It gives me great pleasure to thank each one of you for being a part of the ICA Global Cooperative Conference and the launch of the International Year of Cooperatives. Your presence, thoughtful contributions, and enthusiastic participation made the event truly meaningful and memorable.

IFFCO was proud to host such a diverse and committed group of cooperative leaders, experts, Youth leaders and supporters from around the world. The energy, dedication, and spirit of cooperation that you brought to every session were truly inspiring. Your contributions helped create a strong platform for learning from each other and working together for a better future.

We are deeply honoured and grateful to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, for inaugurating the conference, and to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan, H.E. Tshering Tobgay, the Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister of Fiji, H.E. Manoa Kamikamica, the Hon'ble Minister of Home and Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah, UN Resident Coordinator in India, Shri Shombi Sharp, and ICA President, Shri Ariel Guarco, for gracing the occasion with their esteemed presence and support. We extend our special thanks to the Ministry of Cooperation, Ministry of External Affairs,

Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India for their valuable support and the Department of Posts for helping us release the commemorative stamp to mark the launch of the International Year of Cooperatives 2025.

I would also like to thank the United Nations, other international organisations, ICA team, distinguished speakers, resource persons, participants and all those who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make this conference a huge success. Your support and teamwork made it all possible. I am also deeply grateful to the ICA Board and the esteemed jury for bestowing upon me the prestigious Rochdale Pioneer Award—an honour I humbly accept on behalf of the entire IFFCO family and the Indian cooperative movement.

As we look ahead, I believe the connections we made and the ideas we shared during the conference will help us grow stronger together. Let's continue to work hand in hand to build a fairer, more sustainable world through the power of cooperatives.

Thank you once again for being a part of this important journey.

Dr US Awasthi
Managing Director, Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative

“I believe the connections we made and the ideas we shared during the conference will help us grow stronger together. Let's continue to work hand in hand to build a fairer, more sustainable world through the power of cooperatives”

Messages

Dr. Ariel Guarco

Dear friends of the ICA,

It is a pleasure to present this report of the extraordinary Global Conference we held in November 2024 in New Delhi, India.

Those of us who had the opportunity to share those days still remember the meetings, conversations and debates that we shared.

For those who were unable to attend, we also count on the contributions of all the sectors, committees, and regions of our organization, our partner organizations, and all the cooperators who work daily to expand and strengthen our model on a global scale.

With this input, we landed in New Delhi and, I humbly believe, we left with twice as many tools to continue building a cooperative future from each of our countries.

Many of these tools are contained in an Action Agenda that encourages us to reaffirm our cooperative identity, enable supportive policies, strengthen leadership, and build a sustainable future.

Not only our member cooperatives, but also all organizations that are part of the international solidarity

ecosystem, from the private and public sectors, are called upon to implement this agenda together.

Finally, we know that in Delhi we have experienced a milestone. More than 3,000 cooperators from around the world, accompanied by none other than Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, launched the 2025 International Year of Cooperatives.

There, we raised the flag of this IYC2025 and hope that the cooperative force emanating from India is share across the planet.

Dear friends, in this Conference we have truly realized the leading role our movement plays in the world. A world full of challenges—social, economic, and environmental—that can be overcome only through cooperative doctrine and practice.

Many thanks to all who were present, to all who accompanied us from a distance, and to all those who continue to build a more just, sustainable and peaceful world.

Dr. Ariel Guarco
ICA President
President of the Cooperative Confederation of the
Argentine Republic (COOPERAR)

“More than 3,000 cooperators from around the world, accompanied by none other than Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, launched the 2025 International Year of Cooperatives”

Messages

Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav

Hosting this global gathering in India for the first time in ICA's history was not only a moment of immense pride for the Indian cooperative movement, but also a testament to the growing strength and relevance of cooperatives in the Asia-Pacific region.

I am honoured to extend my sincere gratitude to the honourable Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi for his gracious and inspiring presence. My heartfelt thanks to Shri Amit Shah, Minister of Home and Cooperation, Government of India, the Prime Minister of Bhutan, Deputy Prime Minister of Fiji, other ministers and law makers present at the event, global cooperative fraternity, experts, speakers, international organisations, government officials, and partners who made the ICA Global Cooperative Conference in New Delhi a historic event.

The conference took on added significance as it marked the official launch of the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) 2025 by the Prime Minister of India who reaffirmed India's commitment to the cooperative model as a means to achieve "Sahkar Se Samridhi" – Prosperity through Cooperation. This vision is deeply aligned with the IYC 2025 theme: "Cooperatives Build a Better Future for All."

The New Delhi Action Agenda on a Cooperative Future advances cooperatives through four pillars: reaffirming cooperative identity, enabling supportive ecosystems, nurturing inclusive leadership, and building a sustainable future. Cooperatives in Asia-Pacific will actively work on these pillars and engage with stakeholders to drive forward the agenda, strengthening the cooperative movement and its impact on inclusive, sustainable development.

Across our region, cooperatives are embracing IYC2025 with great enthusiasm. The celebrations kicked off in Japan in February, setting the tone for the year ahead. The event will culminate at Regional Assembly in Sri Lanka this November. The governments in the region are giving renewed attention to the cooperative sector, recognizing its critical role in fostering inclusive growth and sustainable livelihoods

As we move forward, together, we can strengthen the cooperative movement as a force for a more just, equitable, and sustainable future.

With Cooperative Greetings,
Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav
President, ICA Asia and Pacific

"Cooperatives in Asia-Pacific will actively work on these pillars and engage with stakeholders to drive forward the agenda, strengthening the cooperative movement and its impact on inclusive, sustainable development"

Messages

Ana Aguirre

In a fast changing, polarized and unstable environment, where security feels like a tale and the leadership figures in both the public and private environments seem to be showcasing what a world for the good of the few looks like, our movement stands as a strong pillar for social justice, democracy, and shared wealth. And the IYC2025 is proof.

As youth representative I hardly remember the first international year of cooperatives as I was still in university and not so involved in the movement just yet. So this year feels like the first time for me and I am sure, many of us.

While I could share how pivotal, necessary, underestimated and underrepresented the youth is within our system, I also want to highlight how every investment that the cooperatives, the structures and the projects make in youth is multiplied in impact, results and value. The youth within the movement is active, willing, inspiring and ready to co-lead a movement that remains as significant, exciting and inspiring as ever.

As I shared in an article for the agricultural federation in Spain, I will share a bit of my wishes for this IYC2025, beyond just the youth:

Unity and alignment: for this year to become an excuse for the movement to unite at all levels (sectorial, regional, national and global). I hope we can all work together embracing each others actions, proposals and initiatives in order to gain influence and generate a common frame for impact. This year is a great opportunity to showcase how solidarity and cooperation comes naturally in our movement.

Influence: to use this year as an excuse to knock on and open doors (among ourselves, with the institutions, at all levels and with the citizenship) that may have remained locked other ways. See this year as an acceleration ramp for initiatives, projects, policy making and influencing that has remained awaiting.

Perspective: for us to be able to look close and far at the same time. To show how the cooperative movement, while is large and global, it also is close to the territory and to everyday working people. There is a long road ahead of us that will imply reaching out within, go out of our confort zones, remain transgenerational and excellent at social and business alike.

Transcendence: sure, this year is a landmark. But it is not a deadline or a starting line, is a stepping stone toward a strong, shared and meaningful future that implies solidarity, commitment, work, engagement and mutual support. May this year foster and strengthen the social awareness of what we do in the cooperative movement. I've shared this sentence many times the last months but I think it really embodies the spirit of what I mean "Izan zirelako gara eta garelako izango dira" (we are because they were and they will be because we are).

And with that, as Arizmendiarieta use to say: "the only good thought and word is the one that becomes action", so let's do together!

Ana Aguirre
President, ICA Youth Committee

Messages

Jeroen Douglas

Dear Participants of the ICA Global Cooperative Conference,

On behalf of the organizing committee, I extend our deepest gratitude to each of you for your invaluable contributions to the resounding success of the conference held in New Delhi last November. Your presence, insights, and engagement made this event a truly remarkable gathering, bringing together over 3000 participants from 106 countries.

The conference, inaugurated by Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, marked a pivotal moment as we collectively launched the UN International Year of Cooperatives 2025. We engaged in crucial dialogues across four key themes: fostering an enabling business environment, reaffirming our cooperative identity, cultivating purposeful leadership and intergenerational solidarity, and embracing the future through digital and financial innovation, including AI and decentralized P6.

The exchange of experiences and insights during these sessions has laid a strong foundation for the work ahead. As we finalize the comprehensive report, we are reminded

of the power of collaboration and the shared commitment to strengthening the cooperative movement globally. We encourage you to review the full programme of the conference, which provides a detailed overview of the rich discussions and outcomes, available on the official [IYC website](#) ².

Looking forward, we invite you to continue this momentum and actively participate in the upcoming activities related to the 2025 International Year of Cooperatives. Together, we can build a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future for cooperative enterprises worldwide. Your continued engagement is essential as we strive to realize the full potential of the cooperative model.

I extend my gratitude to the President of NCUI and IFFCO, the Managing Director of IFFCO, and the President of the ICA Asia and Pacific to have co-organized with us a successful ICA Global Cooperative Conference. Thank you once again for your dedication and support. We eagerly anticipate working with you in the years to come.

Jeroen Douglas
ICA Director General

Xiomara Nuñez de Cespedes

The Gender Equality Committee of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) has delivered important messages concerning the advancement of gender equity. For instance, in its statement for International Women's Day 2025, it highlighted the UN's theme: *"For women and girls in all their diversity: Rights, equality, and empowerment."* This message underscores the importance of recognizing and celebrating the contributions of women to the development of cooperatives and to the promotion of the social economy as a tool to improve quality of life.

Moreover, the Committee emphasizes the need to eradicate gender-based violence, close the wage gap, and ensure the full participation of women in all areas of life. Cooperatives, founded on values such as equality and

solidarity, are seen as key catalysts for achieving these goals.

We are currently seeking new opportunities to sign agreements with like-minded institutions to advance the establishment of gender equity objectives.

The empowerment of women in cooperatives is a key factor for sustainable development. Cooperatives provide an environment where women can access resources, training, and opportunities that enable them to overcome barriers and build a sustainable future.

Xiomara Nuñez de Cespedes
Chair, ICA Gender Equality Committee

Overview and Feedback

Statistics

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) represents cooperatives in 104 countries around the world. During the conference, 74 of these countries were represented, meaning that just over 71% of ICA member countries participated. All global regions were present.

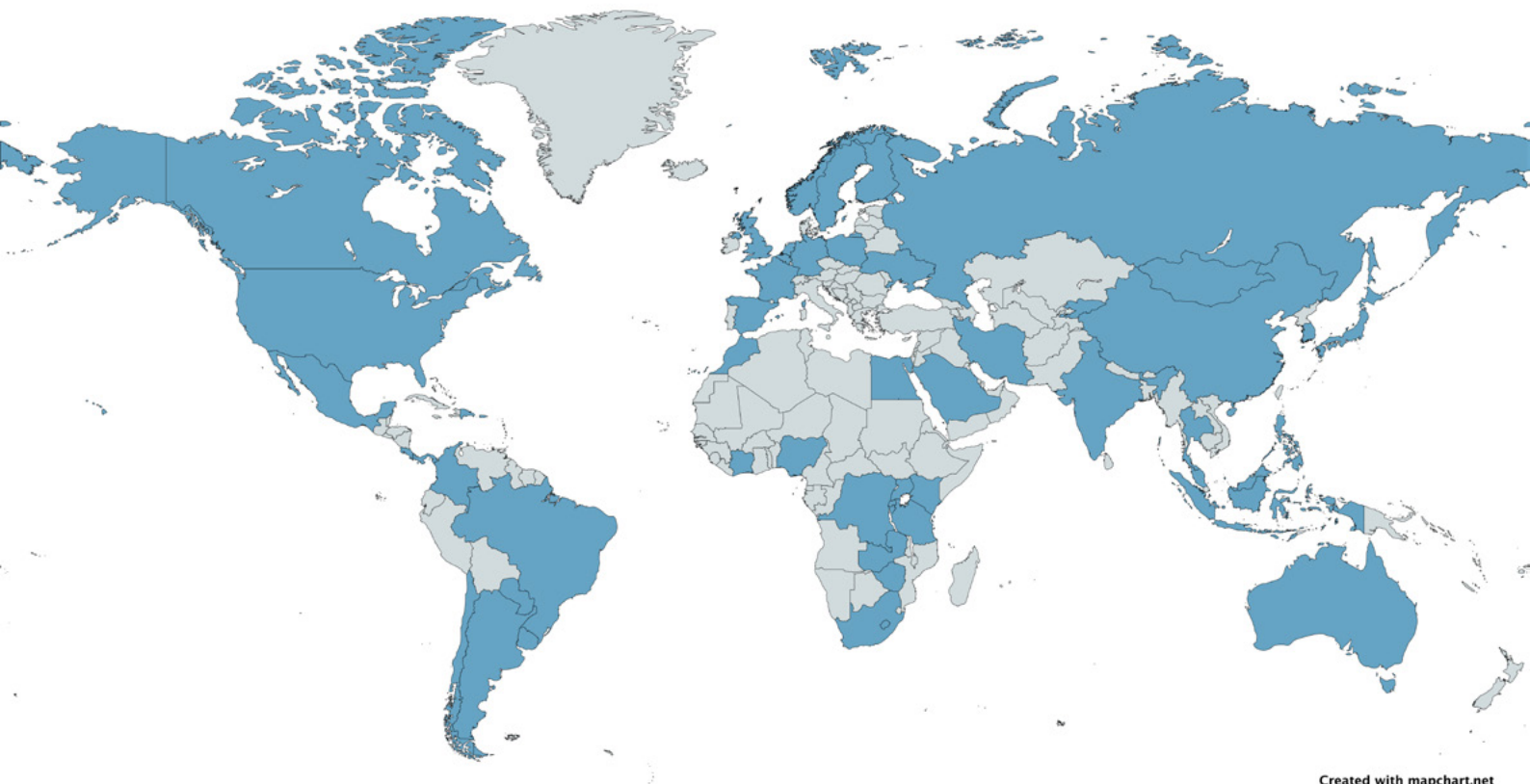
Aside from India, the host country and the main source of participants, the most represented countries by region were Tanzania (Africa), the Philippines (Asia-Pacific), Brazil (Americas), and Spain (Europe). Other countries that had a notable presence overall included Japan, Malaysia, Kenya, and South Korea.

The conference featured 177 speakers, including 100 men and 70 women, making up 56.5% male and 39.55% female representation. It is clear that in the future, greater female representation among speakers is needed.

As for youth participation, the event dedicated to them, the Coopathon, saw significant engagement. Up to 66 young people took part in at least one day of the Coopathon, with 37 participants attending consistently. Among these 37, 59.46% were women and 40.54% were men.

The conference included 8 plenary sessions and 16 parallel sessions, for a total of 24 sessions. In addition, 25 side events were organized, most of which took place on 28 November.

Other highlights of the programme included the Coopathon youth event; a photo exhibition showcasing cooperatives that have created prosperity in their communities and regions; a cultural performance that showcased India's diverse classical and folk dance traditions; and three film screenings, including *The Rochdale Pioneers*, the documentary *(R)évolution - le travail est humain*, and *Manthan (The Churning)* - the first ever crowdfunded Indian film, originally presented at the Cannes Film Festival in 1976 and screened at the 2024 edition in its restored version.



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Overview and Feedback

Feedback

Mr. Bahman Abdollahi

ICA Board Member (Iran)

What did you learn from the speakers and discussions at the conference?

The ICA Global Conference in New Delhi offered deep insights into the growing significance of cooperatives in tackling global challenges. Speakers stressed the role of innovation, digitalization, and sustainability in strengthening the cooperative movement. Engaging discussions showcased successful models that promote economic stability and social equity. The exchange of perspectives highlighted the necessity of global cooperation to address emerging economic and environmental issues. Overall, the conference reaffirmed the vital impact of cooperatives in shaping a more inclusive and sustainable future.

What actions are you / will you be undertaking as a result of your conference experience?

Following the ICA Global Conference, we are focused on expanding international cooperation and advancing innovative cooperative practices in Iran. Our efforts will include promoting digital transformation, increasing youth participation, and advocating for policies that foster sustainable growth. We also plan to strengthen collaboration with global cooperative networks to share best practices and enhance economic resilience. The conference underscored the need for continuous learning and adaptation, and we are committed to applying these insights to further develop and empower the cooperative sector in our country.

Please could you summarise your conference experience in one powerful statement?

The ICA Global Conference in New Delhi was a remarkable opportunity to exchange ideas, explore innovative strategies, and strengthen global cooperation within the cooperative movement. It highlighted the crucial role of collaboration, adaptability, and sustainability in addressing today's challenges. The insights gained will serve as a foundation for advancing cooperative enterprises, fostering economic resilience, and driving meaningful social impact worldwide.

Francesca Ottolenghi

Chairperson, ICA Cooperative Development Platform

What did you learn from the speakers and discussions at the conference?

The ICA Global Conference in New Delhi was an enlightening experience that showcased the transformative power of cooperatives. I learned from various speakers about innovative models that are driving sustainable development and social equity. The discussions highlighted the importance of collaboration and shared values among cooperatives globally. I was particularly inspired by case studies that demonstrated how cooperative principles can address pressing social issues, and I gained valuable insights into best practices that can be implemented in my own work.

What actions are you / will you be undertaking as a result of your conference experience?

Building on my experience at the conference, I am dedicated to promoting collaboration among local cooperatives in my region while also establishing international connections within the ICA community. I plan to organize workshops to share the knowledge I gained, focusing on effective governance and sustainable practices. Additionally, I will initiate discussions with stakeholders to explore partnerships that can enhance our cooperative networks. I believe that by applying the lessons learned at the conference, we can strengthen our impact and contribute to the broader cooperative movement.

Please could you summarise your conference experience in one powerful statement?

The ICA Global Conference in New Delhi was a powerful catalyst for change, uniting diverse voices and ideas within the cooperative movement. It reinforced my belief that cooperation is not just a model of business but a pathway to social justice and community empowerment. The connections I made and the knowledge I gained have energized my commitment to advancing cooperative principles and fostering a more equitable world. Together, we can leverage our collective strength to create lasting positive change.

Overview and Feedback

“Cooperation, rooted in a deep respect for our cooperative identity, is a powerful catalyst for transformation—igniting shared value and forging a resilient, equitable, inclusive, and just society.”

Ana Aguirre

President, ICA Youth Committee & Network

What did you learn from the speakers and discussions at the conference?

I was not able to attend most of the program due to participation in the COOPATHON which was quite intense and in parallel to the program. I was able to attend two or three sessions and there were two things:

- on the one hand the fashion and sustainability workshop was very interesting and featured very “different” speakers largely focused on women and was very empty. I really enjoyed
- other panels were a little repetitive in my opinion featuring “the same people” and largely talking about “the same things”
- I was also quite concerned about the amount of panels featuring “men only” which really leaned me into not choosing to attend

What actions are you / will you be undertaking as a result of your conference experience?

Main “action oriented” session for me were:

- The COOPATHON, which is leading to rethink on how to keep on working with the resulting games and see if we can do more and work together.
- Also the COODING was a great session and worked very well for dialogue based session and questions and bridge building

I think that having youth was a major success and that the goals of bridge building and networking beyond the game creating was accomplished, but based on the conference format i will push harder on youth being featured in every panel for further international events

Please could you summarise your conference experience in one powerful statement?

The Delhi Conference was a great gathering space and a very needed sector lead kick start for 2025 IYC. I was amazing to be part of a “From Cooperatives for Cooperatives” agenda.

Yet, there is a long road ahead both this year and for the ones to come. The “always inspiring” is not enough if we want to build a really multigenerational, attractive and relevant movement. We need to not only “speak to” but “co-create with”, “feature” and “share space with” the next (current really) generation. We need to build inclusive and diverse spaces, display new initiatives (not young only but new) and give new voices and faces space in the main stages.

The cooperative movement is much more than a historically transformational movement, it is a solution for the future, and we have to show the world as much, starting this year. But IYC2025 is just the beginning.

Tone Cecilie Faugli

CEO • Fairtrade Norge

What did you learn from the speakers and discussions at the conference?

First and foremost, it became even clearer to me that cooperatives are the building blocks of the democratic development of local communities. Cooperatives serve as a central “platform” for directing initiatives, with a focus on stakeholder dialogue, knowledge sharing, and joint training in laws and regulations, as well as in environmental issues, human rights, and sustainable agricultural production. The wide range of topics covered where co-operatives play a crucial role was also striking ; everything from gender equality to AI, and also topics like how to measure financial contributions of co-operatives to context based sustainability analysis was very enlightening.

What actions are you / will you be undertaking as a result of your conference experience?

Cooperatives and Fairtrade together play a central role in strengthening local communities, promoting human rights, and driving environmentally friendly agriculture and

Overview and Feedback

responsible trade. Many cooperatives are far from the end consumers, and this is where Fairtrade plays a crucial role in connecting customers with cooperatives, facilitating stakeholder dialogue, risk management, and targeted initiatives.

As part of our global partnership agreement launched at the conference, Fairtrade will work with ICA by contributing to evidence gathering and awareness raising on cooperatives' roles and impact during the International Year of Cooperatives. We will also work with ICA on advocating for laws and policies (ie. national cooperative law) that define and recognise the social economic value of cooperatives in driving private sector's role in advancing sustainable change.

Please could you summarise your conference experience in one powerful statement?

These present times, with the demise of international cooperation in support of national/corporate interests, we must join forces to safeguard and expand the enormous contribution of cooperatives world wide, to local democracies, sustainable livelihoods, gender equality and human rights. At Fairtrade, we are committed to working with ICA to advance the role of cooperatives in strengthening social cohesion, human solidarity and environmental guardianship.

Rosa Lavin

President of KONFEKOOP Confederación de Cooperativas de Euskadi

What did you learn from the speakers and discussions at the conference?

It was very stimulating to hear so many insights that, from the specificity of each experience, contribute to the development of cooperativism in other territories. The Conference made it possible to generate new connections, as well as strengthen existing ones. Collaboration networks were established to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and strategies, thus contributing to the resolution of common challenges and the promotion of joint initiatives with a shared vision of the future.

What actions are you / will you be undertaking as a result of your conference experience?

We have established strategic ties with leaders in the co-operative world and representatives of high-level international organisations. These connections give us access to specialised knowledge and a global perspective that enriches our vision. In addition, the contrast of ideas with experts in different areas allows us to innovate and improve continuously. Thanks to these contacts, we strengthen our projection and consolidate our position in an increasingly competitive and dynamic environment, boosting our growth and development.

Please could you summarise your conference experience in one powerful statement?

The Conference has been a global showcase for Basque cooperativism, highlighting its uniqueness and leadership. It was also the international presentation of ASETT -HUB de Vanguardia de la Economía Social located in Donostia-San Sebastián-, which seeks to consolidate itself as a benchmark for knowledge and action, integrating institutions, companies and academia. In this way, we continue to expand the impact and prestige of cooperativism and the Social Economy, reaffirming our commitment at KONFEKOOP to ensure that cooperatives in the Basque Country drive change. Leading is our responsibility to transform your world.

Hiroshi Inamura

Managing Director of the Japanese mutual aid insurer, Kokumin Kyosai co-op (KKC)

What did you learn from the speakers and discussions at the conference?

(1) By participating in the conference, I was able to learn about the activities being undertaken by cooperative organisations around the world, and reaffirm the role that cooperatives are expected to play.

(2) I also learned that by strengthening cooperation and harnessing the power of cooperative organisations, we can create a better world.

Overview and Feedback

What actions are you / will you be undertaking as a result of your conference experience?

(1) I want to continue to encourage my colleagues and subordinates to be proud of working for a cooperative organisation by communicating the benefits and strengths of being a cooperative organisation.

(2) We are only able to operate in Japan due to restrictions in domestic law, but I want to communicate that there are like-minded people in the world.

(3) I want to promote cooperatives as economic entities around the world.

Please could you summarise your conference experience in one powerful statement?

(1) Participating in the GCC made me realise that I have many friends around the world, and I felt very reassured.

(2) The theme of the IYC2025 is 'Cooperatives Build a Better World', and I am convinced that this is absolutely true.

(3) I have become even more strongly convinced that we, as members of cooperative organisations, must fulfil our role and work together to build a better world.

(4) Based on my own experience, which has given me a powerful stimulus, I would like to encourage as many people as possible to participate in the GCC.

Dr. Carlos Zarco

President, International Health Cooperative Organization

What did you learn from the speakers and discussions at the conference?

My point is that it was a great conference, where we could put in place the power of our movement and our values. But I believe that we need to improve in one field, push the boundaries, adding value outside our cooperative movement reaching more visibility and putting our cooperative way and values into the mainstream in this uncertain world.

What actions are you / will you be undertaking as a result of your conference experience?

The main purpose will be trying to use this international year of cooperatives to reach much more visibility of our movement, because we are always talking about our identity, but for the ones that are inside the movement. I think we must tell the world that we are a different type of enterprises based in our cooperative principles, talking about our advantages in different aspects of our way of doing things.

Please could you summarise your conference experience in one powerful statement?

The ICA conference in New Delhi focused on fostering global collaboration among cooperatives to address pressing economic, social, and environmental challenges. Key themes included sustainable development, digital transformation, and inclusive growth. Participants emphasized the role of cooperatives in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in areas like poverty alleviation, gender equality, and climate action.

The conference also highlighted the importance of innovation, youth engagement, and strengthening cooperative networks to enhance resilience and competitiveness in a rapidly changing world. Collaborative strategies and policy frameworks were discussed to empower cooperatives as key drivers of equitable and sustainable development.

Overview and Feedback

Ms. Christine M Merkel

International Expert; Member, UNESCO's Expert Facility on cultural policy and governance, Germany

Cooperatives - the treasure within!

New Delhi was the first ever Global Cooperative Conference I experienced. A steep and enriching learning curve.

Cooperatives are such powerful and wide-spread change makers. Beyond agriculture, finance, retail, energy and housing, they provide health services in many countries. Innovative cooperatives deliver digital services and creative economy products.

The New Delhi conference highlighted strong and mature voices of the next generation of cooperative leaders in an inspiring way. This is a beacon of hope in disruptive times.

How come that such a dynamic force as cooperatives, active around the globe for more than a century, has not yet been featured in a Netflix series, for example? I expect the 2025 International Year of Cooperatives to address this visibility challenge and make the next billion understand the power of the cooperative idea and practice.

Mr. Bhima Subrahmanyam

President, International Cooperative Banking Association

What did you learn from the speakers and discussions at the conference?

The Global Coopérative Conférence (GCC) which was organised on the eve of the IYC 2025 presented a unique Opportunity to enhance global recognition, collaboration, and impact of the coopérative movement. The GCC has drawn the greater présence of éminent cooperators and intellectuals from all over the globe. The speakers impressed upon the need for addressing the following 4 pillars of Action:

- 1 Reaffirming the Cooperative Identity
2. Enabling Policy and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems
3. Nurturing Purposeful Leadership
4. Building a Sustainable and Cooperative Future

What actions are you / will you be undertaking as a result of your conference experience?

International Coopérative Banking Association (ICBA) and NAFSCOB shall aim to achieve its key objectives to Raise Awareness about Bank's Rôle by organizing regional and national workshops, seminars, and campaigns to highlight the contribution of coopérative banks to rural développement, financial inclusion, and agriculture, develop & Publish case studies, reports, and newsletters showing success stories and innovations in the coopérative banking sector. This process is aimed to ensure increased visibility of cooperative banks' role in driving economic growth and supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2. Empowerment: ICBA and NAFSCOB as a part of promoting financial inclusion, shall launch initiatives to expand financial literacy among all segments of population in collaboration with all member Banking & Cooperative Financial Institutions (CFIs). This helps towards economic empowerment

3. Digitalization: ICBA and NAFSCOB will take steps to enhance digital banking services and promote the adoption of cooperative banking technology and thus address digitalisation process.

4. Best Practices: ICBA and NAFSCOB will as a part of Capacity Building for Coopérative Leadership. They also collaborate with the ICA and National level organizations to share best practices in cooperative governance and leadership and encourage replication.

5. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ICBA and NAFSCOB will encourage cooperative Banks and CFIs to play a significant role to address SDGs.

Please could you summarise your conference experience in one powerful statement?

As per the New Delhi Action Agenda, the cooperatives represented at the ICA Global Cooperative Conference 2024 resolve to unite and act in pursuit of social justice, sustained peace, and prosperity for all. Guided by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), the following stakeholders are called upon to foster concrete actions for a just society and safer planet: 1. Individual Cooperatives. 2. Communities 3. Civil Society Organisations 4. Diverse Private Sector 5. Opinion Shapers 6. Governments and Policymakers 7. Multilateral Institutions: etc

Overview and Feedback

Mr. Thiago Schmidt

President of Sicredi Pioneira, Brazil

What did you learn from the speakers and discussions at the conference?

For the first time I had the opportunity to participate in a global event with cooperatives from all sectors, and I was delighted listening to the speakers and discussions, reflecting that despite all our cultural differences, the stories and transformations in the lives of many people are very similar, and that we need to know and share these stories more and more.

What actions are you / will you be undertaking as a result of your conference experience?

Certainly, we should promote more intensive events focused on cooperative education, with people of all ages, because it is clear that when we combine love and knowledge, cooperatives are capable of producing significant impacts on society. We should also increasingly encourage intercooperation actions between cooperatives of all sectors, and actions in the communities in which they are located.

Please could you summarise your conference experience in one powerful statement?

The conference made me believe that much more than a movement of people working together and generating positive economic and social impact, cooperatives have the potential to transform the future of the planet, leaving a legacy, because by working we can leave a better world for our children, but by investing in the principle of education, we can leave better children for the world.

25 November

United Nations commitment to advance the Cooperative Agenda

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2025 as the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC 2025), adopting the theme “Cooperatives Build a Better World.” This decision emphasizes the critical role cooperatives play in addressing global challenges and contributing towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This session took place ahead of the conference launch to reaffirm the United Nations’ continued support for the cooperative movement.

Mr. Jeroen Douglas, Director General of the ICA, highlighted the importance of the United Nations General Assembly’s declaration and calling it a historic moment for the cooperative movement. He emphasized cooperatives’ role in addressing poverty, climate change, employment, and social inclusion, aligning cooperative values closely with the SDGs. Mr. Douglas outlined ICA’s strategic vision for IYC 2025, including global campaigns, capacity-building, and advocacy efforts, urging governments to integrate cooperatives into their national development strategies.

Ms. Wenyan Yang of UNDESA and COPAC described ongoing UN programs supporting cooperatives, highlighting the 2023 UN Secretary-General’s report on cooperatives’ entrepreneurial ecosystems. She outlined upcoming high-level events where the International Year can be further magnified and emphasized the critical role of collaboration between the UN and cooperative movements.

Dr. Srinivas Tata, heading ESCAP’s Social Development Division, took part in discussions centered on collaborative initiatives at the regional level. His contribution enriched the dialogue regarding the potential role of cooperatives and other entities within the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) in advancing sustainable growth across Asia and the Pacific. ESCAP’s engagement in these discussions reaffirmed its dedication to utilizing Social and Solidarity Economy frameworks to effectively tackle significant regional issues such as inequality, climate change, and the need for stronger economic resilience.



25 November

Communication 4 Cooperation: 2025 an Opportunity Year

During the conference, a special session titled “Communication 4 Cooperation: 2025 an Opportunity Year” was held, emphasizing the crucial role of communication in strengthening and promoting the cooperative movement. This session served as a call to action, urging cooperators to seize the opportunity presented by the International Year of Cooperatives 2025 to enhance the visibility of cooperatives worldwide.

Discussions centered on the importance of showcasing the numerous initiatives already developed within the cooperative movement, encouraging cooperators to take pride in these achievements and actively spread the word. The session highlighted the need for greater interconnection,

collective action, and knowledge-sharing to amplify the impact of cooperatives.

This session was led by:

- Mr. Iñigo Albizuri Landazbal, Global Public Relations Head, Mondragon Corporation
- Ms. Leire Luengo, ICA Director of Communications
- Mr. Howard Brodsky, President, CCA Global
- Ms. Rinky Kumari, Social Entrepreneur, Football Coach from Jharkhand, India



25 November

Official Launch of the IYC 2025

The opening ceremony of the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) 2025, held on November 25, 2024, in New Delhi, welcomed an audience of over 3,000 international participants. We had the privilege of hosting prominent international political figures and leaders from global cooperative institutions.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres addressed the ceremony via video message, emphasizing the global importance of cooperatives in sustainable development:

“Co-operatives like the ones you represent demonstrate the importance of standing together to forge solutions to global challenges. Hailing from more than 100 countries, you are driving development across communities, large and small, fighting poverty and social exclusion, strengthening food security, helping local entrepreneurs access national and international markets and so much more. Your united efforts are essential as our world confronts complex challenges and strives to advance the Sustainable Development Goals. You can be sure that we will continue to call on governments to recognise your critical work through national budgets and development plans, and to arrive at next year’s World Summit for Social Development with solutions that can spur progress for all people. As your theme reminds us, co-operatives build a better world. The United Nations is proud to stand with you in this essential work.”

Gilbert Hounbo, Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), also participated through a video message, urging governments to strengthen support for cooperative frameworks:

“Let us ensure that 2025 marks a new era for co-operatives.”

India’s Prime Minister, H.E. Shri Narendra Modi, highlighted in his inaugural address the deep integration of cooperatives within Indian culture, describing them as “not just a business model, but a way of life.” Modi emphasized the importance of collaboration between the government and cooperatives for sustainable, people-centered development, asserting that « the cooperative spirit will be the life of the country » and reaffirming his commitment to further strengthen the sector through reforms and digitalization.

Bhutan’s Prime Minister, H.E. Tshering Tobgay, underscored the crucial role cooperatives play in addressing contemporary global challenges, including climate change and promoting an equitable and inclusive economy. He further emphasized the importance of involving youth and women in cooperative leadership to ensure a sustainable and resilient future.

H.E. Manoa Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister of Fiji, expressed appreciation for the role of cooperatives in enhancing community resilience, particularly in small island economies. He highlighted the cooperative model as a practical and inclusive solution for addressing economic and environmental vulnerabilities.

continued



25 November

Shri Amit Shah, Hon'ble Union Minister for Home & Cooperation of India, emphasized the Indian government's strong commitment to enhancing the cooperative sector nationwide. Highlighting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision, he explained that cooperatives represent a critical avenue for fostering employment, particularly benefiting agriculture and rural communities..

Mr. Ariel Guarco, President of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), urged all cooperatives to seize this opportunity to showcase the strength of the cooperative movement in building a better world. He encouraged celebrating successes, actively engaging with communities, and advocating for policies conducive to cooperative development globally.

Finally, Mr. Shombi Sharp, UN Resident Coordinator in India, recognized the unique value of cooperatives in pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighting them as an ideal model for promoting social justice, economic inclusion, and environmental sustainability. Sharp expressed full support from the United Nations for the cooperative movement, urging governments to formally recognize and support cooperatives within national development plans.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi officially launched the International Year of Cooperatives by presenting the [flag hoisting video](#) , recorded with members of the Board at Bharat Mandapam and featuring contributions from ICA members around the world.

continued



25 November

Prosperous Regions, Forward-Looking Initiatives, and the 180th Anniversary of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers

During the Global Cooperative Conference, various regions of the world that have achieved prosperity through the presence and development of cooperatives were presented. The presentations highlighted how cooperatives have contributed to building strong and inclusive economies. The speakers illustrated the journey required for these cooperatives to succeed, emphasizing that such achievements did not happen overnight but demanded persistent effort, constant innovation, and participatory crisis management. As the history of the cooperative movement shows, successes came only after overcoming numerous challenges, always staying true to cooperative values and principles.

In addition to showcasing established cooperative success stories, this session also featured cooperatives that are bringing a fresh perspective, focusing on the future of the movement and driving innovation. These forward-thinking initiatives demonstrated how cooperatives continue to evolve, adapt, and remain at the forefront of economic and social transformation in an ever-changing global landscape.

A special section of this session was dedicated to celebrating the 180th anniversary of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers. This segment recognized the first society that introduced patronage dividends to its members, thereby ushering in a new era of cooperation in 1844. It underscored the enduring legacy and pioneering contributions of the Rochdale Society to the global cooperative movement.

continued



25 November

The names and organisations of the individuals who delivered these presentations can be found in the table below:

Emilia Romagna, Italy	Mr. Simone Gamberini, co-President, Italian Cooperative Alliance and Legacoop President
Basque Country, Spain	Mr. Jokin Diaz Ms. Rosa Lavin
South Korea	Mr. Ho Dong Kang, Chairperson, NACF
Financial cooperatives, Germany	Mr. Thomas Mende, DZ Bank Mr. Andreas Kappes, International Raiffeisen Union (IRU)
Cooperative culture of Brazil	Mr. José Alves, President, Cooperatives of the Americas
Hokkaido, Japan	Mr. Toru Yamano, President, JCA and JA-Zenchu
Yazd and Shiraz , Islamic Republic of Iran	Mr. Bahman Abdollahi, President, Iran Chamber of Cooperatives
Cooperative movement in Kenya	Dr. Esther Gicheru, Deputy Vice-Chancellor in charge of Finance, Planning, and Administration at the Cooperative University of Kenya; Rochdale Pioneer Awardee (2007)
Anand, Gujarat, India	Dr. Jayen Mehta, Managing Director, Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF) AMUL
Uralungal, Kerala, India Celebrating 100 years of the Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative Society Ltd.	Mr. Ramesan Paleri, Chairman, Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative Society (ULCCS), Kerala Dr. Saji Gopinath, Kerala University of Digital Sciences, Kerala
Kalol, Gujarat, India	Mr. Yogendra Kumar, Marketing Director, IFFCO
Dot Coop World Map	Ms. Violetta Nafpaktiti, CEO
Coop Exchange, Malta; UK	Mr. Aaron Stewart, Deputy CEO
Arizmendiarieta Social Economy Think Tank	Ms. Amaparo Merino Segovia, Spanish Social Economy Secretary of State, Spain Ms. Leire Mugerza, Vice President, CEPES
ICA Cooperative Entrepreneurship Think Tank	Mr. Jeroen Douglas, ICA Director-General
School Cooperatives of Malaysia	Datuk Seri Dr. Abdul Fattah Abdullah, President, Angkasa Malaysia
Innovations in Development Finance in India	Mr. Shaji KV, Chairman, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, India
Statement on Equality	Ms. Xiomara Núñez de Céspedes, Chairperson, ICA Gender Equality Committee
Words to inspire the leaders of today for a just future for all	Mr. Alexandre Gatti Lages, Superintendente of Sistema Ocemg, Brazil
180 Years of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers - UK Cooperative Landscape and Our Ambitions - Owned by You Right by You Campaign - Our Cooperative Heritage	Ms. Rose Marley, CEO, Cooperatives UK, United Kingdom Ms. Denise Scott-McDonald, President, The Co-operative Group National Members' Council, United Kingdom Ms. Liz McIvor, Manager, The Co-operative Heritage Trust, United Kingdom

New Delhi Action Agenda on a Cooperative Future: Creating Prosperity for All

New Delhi Action Agenda for a Cooperative Future: Creating Prosperity for All -

A. Preamble

We, the representatives of cooperatives worldwide, of diverse ages, ethnicities, religions, gender identities, countries, and cultures, were joined by Heads of State, government leaders, and policymakers at the **ICA Global Cooperative Conference 2024** in New Delhi, India;

Reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the **ICA Statement on the Cooperative Identity**, constituted by the definition, values, and principles, and to strengthening the cooperative movement worldwide.

Assert our shared goal: to expand cooperatives' contribution to the global economy without compromising our cooperative ideals, principles and values that define and drive us;

Commit to supporting the **2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development**, leveraging the cooperative movement's partnership with the United Nations, and celebrating the proclamation of the UN General Assembly to mark **2025 as the International Year of Cooperatives (UN-IYC2025)** under the theme "*Cooperatives Build a Better World*" (Resolution [A/RES/78/289](#));

Recognise the pressing need to address global challenges, including rising inequalities, the climate crisis, economic instability, conflicts and wars, and the shrinking civic space. These challenges demand collective action toward peace, security, sustainability, and democracy, rooted in the cooperative model;

Acknowledge our responsibility to protect and differentiate cooperatives from other forms of enterprises which can erode cooperatives' potential for local wealth generation, perpetuate inequalities, and exacerbate environmental degradation. **Resilience, innovation, and inclusive leadership—especially from women, youth, minorities, and emerging talents—are critical to fulfilling our mission.**

B. The Launch of UN International Year of Cooperatives 2025

The launch of the **UN IYC2025** has marked a historic moment, celebrating the transformative power of cooperatives and their pivotal role in advancing sustainable development. Leaders from around the globe recognised cooperatives as essential in addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges, both locally and globally.

The opening ceremony of the International Year, held in New Delhi, India, on Monday 25 November 2024, featured distinguished figures, including the Honourable **Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi**, who underscored the unique role of cooperatives in fostering collaboration and shared ownership. For India, he noted, cooperatives are not merely a business model but a way of life rooted in cultural and human-centric values. Expressing gratitude to the United Nations for declaring 2025 the International Year of Cooperatives, Prime Minister Modi envisioned this as an opportunity to strengthen and expand the cooperative spirit for shared prosperity and sustainable growth.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres, in his address, highlighted the critical contributions of cooperatives to achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. He commended their efforts in fighting poverty, ensuring food security, and addressing social exclusion while empowering communities to navigate complex global challenges. The Secretary-General called for unity and collaboration, particularly as the world approaches the

New Delhi Action Agenda on a Cooperative Future: Creating Prosperity for All

Second World Summit on Social Development, urging stakeholders to position cooperatives at the forefront of sustainable transformation.

Prominent voices, including **Honourable Prime Minister of Bhutan Dasho Tshering Tobgay**, and **President of the International Cooperative Alliance Dr. Ariel Guarco**, echoed these sentiments, emphasising the importance of innovation, inclusivity, and intergenerational engagement. Honouring leaders such as **Dr. Udai Shanker Awasthi, Managing Director, Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative** for their enduring contributions, the event showcased how cooperatives exemplify the spirit of collective action to “serve the unserved and reach the unreached”.

As we embark on this significant year, the global community reaffirms its commitment to supporting cooperatives as vital drivers of equitable and sustainable development. Together, through the power of cooperation, we can build resilient communities, bridge divides, and create a prosperous future for all.

Our Commitment to the World

We commit to advancing this vision through the following **four pillars of action**:

1. Reaffirming the Cooperative Identity

- **Living Our Principles**: Promote, protect, and communicate the cooperative identity.
- **Cooperative Education**: Inspire and expand access to cooperative education for all.
- **Heritage and Creativity**: Establish a global cooperative program to safeguard cultural heritage and foster creative expression.
- **Showcasing Impact**: Highlight cooperatives’ tangible contributions to inclusive growth and sustainable development.

2. Enabling Policy and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

- **Supportive Frameworks**: Develop legal and regulatory systems that recognise the cooperative model and its governance.
- **Access to Finance**: Strengthen cooperative financial tools, including cooperative banks and credit unions.
- **Educational Partnerships**: Promote cooperative entrepreneurship in business schools and research institutions.
- **Market Access**: Enhance cooperatives’ access to markets and infrastructure to support entrepreneurial growth.

3. Nurturing Purposeful Leadership

- **Inclusive Leadership**: Empower women, youth, and marginalised groups to lead change within cooperatives.
- **Strategic Leadership Development**: Prioritise executive leadership programs tailored to cooperatives.
- **Cooperative Uniqueness**: Position cooperatives as a key player in the global economy, leveraging their distinct identity.

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- **Knowledge Sharing:** Foster local and international learning opportunities to drive innovation and collaboration.

4. Building a Sustainable and Cooperative Future

- **Sustainability Solutions:** Implement cooperative-driven climate action and sustainable development initiatives.
- **Technology Integration:** Leverage cooperative technology, AI, and digital tools to empower growth and branding.
- **Resilient Networks:** Strengthen cooperative value chains, circular economies, and platform cooperatives.
- **Impactful Partnerships:** Collaborate on research, education, and benchmarks for sustainability within planetary boundaries.

By championing these pillars, we reaffirm that the **cooperative enterprise model is a people-centred and sustainable model that puts people and the planet before profit** embedded in social and ecological systems. Through cooperation, we can address complex global challenges and shape a resilient, equitable future for all.

C. Call to Action:

As the **UN-IYC 2025** starts, the cooperatives represented at the ICA Global Cooperative Conference 2024 resolve to unite and act in pursuit of social justice, sustained peace, and prosperity for all. Guided by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), the following stakeholders are called upon to foster concrete actions for a just society and safer planet:

Individual Cooperatives:

- **Empower members:** Prioritise education, gender equality, and youth leadership development.
- **Innovate for resilience:** Embrace technologies and new business models to remain competitive.
- **Strengthen unity:** Collaborate with other cooperatives for shared branding, advocacy, and partnerships.
- **Build networks:** Pool resources for scale, finance, and advocacy while contributing to cooperative research and education.

Communities:

- **Support local cooperatives:** Join, patronise, and advocate for cooperative enterprises.
- **Recognise the value of cooperatives:** Promote the benefits of democratic ownership and decision-making.
- **Partner for change with cooperatives:** Collaborate with cooperatives to tackle poverty, inequality, housing, and climate challenges.
- **Foster education:** Advocate for cooperative studies in curricula to equalise with corporate business models.

Civil Society Organisations:

- **Advocate for cooperative policies:** Lobby governments and institutions to support cooperative-friendly initiatives and development programs.

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- **Raise awareness of cooperatives:** Highlight cooperatives' role in sustainable development.
- **Collaborate for impact:** Partner with cooperatives on social and environmental initiatives.
- **Create Cooperatives:** Leverage collective, democratic enterprises to achieve organisational goals.

Diverse Private Sector:

- **Invest in cooperatives:** Provide patient capital, loans, and technical assistance to cooperatives.
- **Collaborate ethically:** Engage in joint ventures and sustainable supply chains with cooperatives.
- **Promote values:** Encourage principles of equity, fairness, and sustainability.
- **Empower workers:** Support the creation of worker cooperatives within industries.

Opinion Shapers:

- **Share success stories on the positive impact of cooperatives:** Highlight cooperative achievements in innovation and development.
- **Counter misconceptions:** Challenge stereotypes surrounding cooperatives.
- **Advocate for cooperative policies:** Leverage influence to shape public and policy perspectives.
- **Inspire action:** Use platforms to amplify the cooperative movement's impact globally.

Governments and Policymakers

- **Create a favourable policy environment and legal frameworks to support entrepreneurial ecosystems for cooperatives:** Support cooperative development through a comprehensive approach that comprises financial, legal, and educational initiatives and take into account adequate tax incentives, regulatory reforms and access to finance.
- **Recognise cooperatives as key partners:** Involve cooperatives in the development and implementation of national policies and legislation.
- **Mainstream cooperative education:** Invest in programs that teach people about cooperative principles and practices.
- **Invest in cooperative research:** Support studies demonstrating cooperatives' socio-environmental and economic impact

Multilateral Institutions:

- **Support cooperative development by adopting a comprehensive ecosystem approach to cooperatives' development:** Provide funding and technical assistance to cooperative organisations.
- Strengthen cooperatives' unions and national, and regional federations as key knowledge hubs and leverage for developing primary cooperatives.
- **Recognise the role of cooperatives in sustainable development:** Integrate cooperatives into development strategies and programs and endorse the Global Movement joined via the ICA.

New Delhi Action Agenda on a Cooperative Future: Creating Prosperity for All

- **Promote international cooperation:** Facilitate cross-border cooperation among cooperatives.

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) acknowledges its fundamental function as the custodian of the Statement on the Cooperative Identity. With its values, principles and harmonised definition of a cooperative, the ICA drives the vision and mission, as well as the strategy and program, that is co-constructed and co-owned by cooperatives worldwide through their representative organisations who form the General Assembly of the ICA. Through its immense diversity, it aims to be *one movement with one unified and overarching strategy and one brand experience*, and resolves to:

1. **Drive Unified Action:** Implement a cohesive global strategy for cooperatives to contribute to the SDGs and the post-SDG agenda.
2. **Leverage UN-IYC2025:** Use this milestone year to advance cooperative visibility, engagement, and leadership globally.
3. **Equip and Strengthen the Movement:** Build capacity within ICA Regions, Sectors, and Thematic Committees to support cooperatives in achieving tangible outcomes.
4. **Monitor and Report Progress:** Provide periodic progress updates and present an evaluation of achievements at the 2026 Global Cooperative Congress.

D. Closing Resolution

We, the cooperators and the participants of the **ICA Global Cooperative Conference 2024**, express our gratitude to the cooperative movement of India and the Asia-Pacific region for hosting this historic event.

We resolve to:

- Act decisively on the commitments outlined in this Declaration.
- Leverage UN-IYC2025 as a transformative opportunity for the cooperative movement.
- Hold ourselves accountable through regular assessments, culminating in a progress report at the next ICA Global Cooperative Conference, in 2026.

New Delhi, 27 November 2024

Coopathon Report

Coopathon Report 2024

Leveraging the visibility and momentum surrounding the official launch of the United Nations International Year of Cooperatives (IYC), and in line with the organizational aspiration to engage youth in the cooperative movement, the ICA-EU Partnership planned and organized a global capacity-building event titled the Coopathon. Co-organized by the ICA Youth Committee and Tazebaez S. Coop, the event took place from November 25-28, 2024, and served as a platform to explore cooperative principles through innovative game design. The IYC Coopathon was designed with a twofold purpose: to inform and educate youth about the scope and diverse perspectives of cooperative enterprise models, and to have them work collaboratively over four days to develop prototypes of board games, puzzles, and gaming exercises.

These prototypes are intended to be further developed in years two and three and eventually published as educational and recreational tools that encourage families and friends to play together while learning about cooperation. The event resulted in five first-level prototypes with strong potential for development into full products. The Coopathon brought together a diverse group of over 65 young people, 37 of whom participated for the full 4-day duration. Participants came from all four ICA regions and over 20 different countries, selected through an inclusive global call by the ICA Youth Committee. They were categorized into three groups: - Explorers: Newcomers to cooperativism, offering fresh perspectives. - Builders: Experienced youth tasked with leading game design and thematic direction. - Facilitators: Seasoned youth representatives from ICA regions who provided mentoring, logistics, and continuity throughout the event.

This diversity in geography, cooperative sectors, and participants' roles fostered rich cross-cultural and intergenerational learning. The Coopathon incorporated digital pre-work via a Notion platform, participatory workshops,

mentorship, and iterative prototyping. Key activities included: - Workshops and Coop Talks: Training sessions on game design and cooperative principles. - World Café: Discussions around five cooperative themes - management, communication, education, networking, and project development. - Game Creation: Teams collaboratively designed board games addressing cooperative challenges. - Game Showcase: On day three, six completed games were presented and tested by a wider audience of conference attendees. The six fully functional board game prototypes developed align with cooperative principles and are targeted at youth education. Designed as replicable tools for schools, youth groups, and cooperatives, the games promote teamwork, empathy, communication, and cooperative literacy. Cross-regional networking also fostered global understanding and leadership development. Each prototype reflects a sophisticated blend of play and pedagogy, emphasizing participation, equality, education, and solidarity. They are suitable for educational settings, workshops, and training programs, offering scalable and adaptable learning resources. The game prototypes include: - Coop Climbs - Tech and cooperative capacity building - Building Bridges - Reputation and trust within networks - aMAZEing Coop Journey - Leadership and communication - Panchatantra - Role-playing for conflict resolution - From Misunderstanding to Mrs. Understanding - An empathy game for conflict resolution - Coop Cathan - Resource sharing for community development The IYC Coopathon 2024 demonstrated that young people are vital drivers of the cooperative future - innovative, participatory, and impactful. The creativity, diversity, and energy shown throughout the event set a strong precedent for youth-led cooperative education and innovation worldwide. It also laid the groundwork to explore the feasibility of publishing some of the game prototypes.

[View the full report here](#) 

26 November

Pillar I Enabling Policy and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

Plenary address by Dr Ashish Kumar Bhutani and Dr U.S. Awasthi

Dr Ashish Kumar Bhutani, Secretary at the Ministry of Cooperation, Government of India, emphasized the critical role cooperatives play across various sectors, including dairy, agriculture, banking, and technology, reinforcing their central position within India's economic and social fabric. Dr Bhutani highlighted how the conference theme "Prosperity for All" aligns closely with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "Sahkar Se Samridhi," or Prosperity through Cooperation. He emphasized the necessity for unity and clear direction to shape the future of the cooperative movement effectively.

Following this, Dr U.S. Awasthi, Managing Director of the Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative (IFFCO), underlined the historic and ongoing significance of cooperatives in India's socio-economic development. He stressed that the establishment of the Ministry of Cooperation was a clear indication of the government's commitment to embedding cooperatives deeper into society, aiming to reach every corner of the country. Dr Awasthi affirmed a shared objective among the Indian government, ICA, and global cooperatives to "serve the unserved, reach the unreached, and deliver the last mile." He expressed IFFCO's readiness to assist

cooperatives in expanding their businesses internationally. Additionally, Dr Awasthi highlighted cooperatives' proactive stance on global challenges, emphasizing their alignment with Sustainable Development Goals, environmental protection, and social welfare initiatives over the past decade. Concluding optimistically, he emphasized, "Together we have the potential to make a difference."

CONTEXT

A strong entrepreneurial ecosystem (EE) is essential for cooperatives to thrive, as it provides the necessary framework for understanding challenges and designing effective policies. Key pillars such as finance, education, governance, and legal frameworks play a vital role in shaping cooperative development.

Public policies and laws are particularly significant, as they not only regulate cooperatives but also ensure that actors consider common goals. The UN Secretary-General's 2021 and 2023 Report on « Cooperatives in Social Development » highlights the need for strong legal frameworks, policy alignment, and implementation support to ensure cooperatives can operate effectively.

Despite progress, challenges remain in law enforcement, in the recognition of cooperatives as peace-builders and educating actors and in protecting the cooperative business model.



26 November

Plenary I.A: Conducive Environments for Cooperative Development

Moderator: Dr. Nazik Beishenaly, Marie Curie Sklodowska Actions Postdoctoral Researcher, Hertie School

PANELLISTS

- **Mr. Giuseppe Guerini**, President of the European Confederation of Industrial and Service Cooperatives and Representative of CICOPA on the ICA Board
- **Mr. Ali Aghamohammadi**, Member of The Expediency Discernment Council, Islamic Republic of Iran
- **Ms. Amparo Merino Segovia**, Spanish Social Economy Secretary of State, Spain
- **Mr. Wycliffe A. Oparanya**, EG, Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Cooperatives and MSMEs, Kenya
- **Ms. Lieve Jacobs**, Cooperative Entrepreneurship Advisor, CERA Cooperative, Belgium

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

The panel discussion explored the role of cooperatives across different countries, focusing on how supportive policies, governance systems, and innovative practices empower cooperatives to drive economic and social progress. The

objective was to share best practices, identify challenges, and recommend improvements to strengthen cooperatives worldwide.

Mr. Ali Aghamohammadi highlighted the expansion of cooperatives in Iran, which increased their GDP contribution from 2% to 8% with a goal of 25%. He emphasized the collaboration between cooperatives, chambers of commerce, and industry as a model for success. Focus areas of Iranian cooperatives include women and youth empowerment and environmental stewardship.

Ms. Amparo Merino Segovia stressed that, in Spain, policies for the social economy prioritize youth inclusion in cooperatives and that forward-looking frameworks are needed to foster participation and innovation.

Mr. Wycliffe A. Oparanya discussed Kenya's long and rich history with cooperatives. The ministry of cooperatives was established in 1974, and it is currently working on a cooperative bill. This proposal aims to refine governance by delineating roles between national, federal, and local governments. The bill seeks to address governance challenges, particularly in agriculture, to strengthen cooperatives' impact.

Ms. Lieve Jacobs emphasized the importance of financial institutions and cooperative policies focusing on strengthening entrepreneurial ecosystems, reducing carbon footprints, and promoting socio-economic development.

continued



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KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Promoting cooperative principles and achievements is essential.
- Education for stakeholders, both within and outside the cooperative movement, fosters understanding and engagement.
- Collaboration and partnerships, even at the local level, play a pivotal role in strengthening cooperatives and their visibility.
- Cooperatives serve as tools for socioeconomic mobility, enabling low-income groups to transition to middle-income status.
- Youth-led startups, modern technologies, and innovative educational opportunities, including AI, should be nurtured.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- Policy Improvements:** Ensure fair market access for cooperatives and governance reforms (Governments, Cooperative Alliances). Strengthening legal frameworks and governance systems is critical to cooperative resilience and effectiveness. Advocacy for inclusive policies and subsidies is fundamental to support cooperative growth and market access.
- Innovation:** Leverage digital technologies and AI to enhance cooperative operations and scalability.
- Capacity Building:** Introduce cooperative education for members, stakeholders, and the public (Educational Institutions, Cooperatives). Promoting cooperative education to build capacity among members and stakeholders ensures long-term success.
- Global Collaboration:** Develop frameworks for knowledge exchange and support emerging cooperative movements through best-practices (ICA, Regional Bodies).
- Financial Support:** Enhance subsidies and funding for innovative cooperative projects (Governments, Financial Institutions).

- Empowerment Strategies: Focus on women and marginalized communities in cooperative initiatives (NGOs, Cooperative Leaders).

Plenary I.B: Institutional Support for Cooperative Development

Moderator: Prof. Hagen Henry, Chairperson, ICA Cooperative Law Committee

PANELLISTS:

- Ms. Wenyan Yang**, Chairperson, UN Committee on the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives
- Dr. Ashish Shah**, Director of the Division of Country Programmes, International Trade Centre
- Dr. Simel Esim**, Manager, ILO Cooperative, Social and Solidarity Economy Unit
- Ms. Cécile Berranger**, Rural Institutions and Services Specialist, FAO
- Mr. Manish Gupta**, Director of Strategy and Joint Ventures, IFFCO

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Mr. Manish Gupta: Addressed the challenge of aligning member development goals with legal frameworks in large cooperatives. He emphasized the need for greater capital flexibility while ensuring the protection of cooperative principles. Additionally, he called for guidelines to safeguard cooperative assets and economic benefits in the event of failure.

Ms. Wenyan Yang presented findings from a recent UN report (2023) highlighting cooperative entrepreneurial systems and policies. The report emphasized key factors such as regulations, services, access to finance, and business network. Four recommendations were made. There is the need to create an inclusive and supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem for cooperatives, the necessity to conduct research on cooperatives based on geographical, national, and size criteria, and gather data on their contribution to GDP and SDGs using existing methodologies. Moreover, cooperatives need to be integrated into national development plans and

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sustainable development reporting processes like Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), and lastly, evidence-based analysis must be conducted and best practices need to be shared for stronger policy advocacy.

Dr. Ashish Shah stressed that cooperatives are not merely a third option but the most viable pathway toward equitable economic systems. He cited global crises—COVID-19, climate change, and rising inequality—as key reasons why cooperative models should be further strengthened as vehicles of shared prosperity.

Dr. Simel Esim spoke on ILO's Recommendation No. 193, which has been adopted by over 120 countries to promote cooperative development. She emphasized that strong legal frameworks must be backed by implementation support, including education programs and incubation centers for cooperatives.

Ms. Cécile Berranger highlighted the growing rural-urban divide exacerbated by climate change. She stressed the role of agricultural cooperatives in building resilience, promoting sustainability, and securing access to finance and education. FAO is involved in supporting reforms and collaborating with the ICA. For instance, they are currently developing a cooperative business school in Lebanon, providing farmer field schools in Europe, and offering training for farmers. They are also conducting data mapping of cooperative agricultural systems worldwide.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Cooperative Legal Frameworks:** Strengthening cooperative laws to ensure inclusivity and innovation.
- **Sustainability and Economic Resilience:** Enabling cooperatives to navigate crises and remain financially viable.
- **Government and Policy Advocacy:** Incorporating cooperatives into national development policies and SDG frameworks.
- **Collaboration Among Cooperatives:** Enhancing inter-cooperative alliances to bolster collective economic strength.
- **Access to Finance and Education:** Ensuring cooperatives receive necessary financial support and training.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- **Advocate for Cooperative-Specific Policies:** Work with governments to create legal frameworks supporting cooperative business models.
- **Strengthen Data Collection and Research:** Establish global methodologies for assessing cooperatives' contributions to economic growth.
- **Expand Capacity-Building Initiatives:** Support national cooperative training centers and incubation programs.
- **Enhance Public Awareness Campaigns:** Promote the cooperative advantage among policymakers and the public.
- **Strengthen Inter-Cooperative Collaboration:** Develop cross-sector alliances to improve cooperative resilience.



25 - 30 November, 2024, Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi



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I.1 Positioning Cooperatives in Global Policy

CONTEXT

Cooperatives play a vital role in the global economy, with the top 300 cooperatives generating USD 2.4 trillion annually and contributing significantly to GDPs across countries. In Europe, cooperatives hold notable market shares in agriculture, banking, retail, healthcare, and forestry. Globally, they account for at least 10% of total employment, with approximately 280 million jobs, highlighting their economic and social importance. Given their impact, cooperatives are actively engaged in global policy discussions, including the G20, G7, COP, and the United Nations' High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), where they advocate for inclusive economic and sustainable development policies.

Through ICA's working groups, cooperatives contribute to G20 platforms like the B20 (Business 20) and C20 (Civil 20), advancing policy recommendations that support cooperative resilience, employment, and equitable growth. This advocacy has led to the inclusion of cooperative- focused recommendations in G20 policy papers. Their participation in COP events underscores the role of cooperatives in climate action, from promoting sustainable resource management to supporting farmers in climate adaptation and resilience initiatives.

At UN forums, cooperatives are recognised as essential to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, helping to advance social inclusion, reduce inequality, and drive economic growth. The UN Secretary-General's reports and UNGA resolutions highlight cooperatives' contributions across social, economic, and environmental dimensions, positioning them as key players in achieving the SDGs.

Expanding cooperative engagement in additional forums, such as the World Social Summit and the Financing for Development Forum, would strengthen their influence on global policies and support an enabling environment for their continued growth and development.

Moderator: Drs. Robby Tulus, ICA Focal Point during the G20 Presidency of Indonesia in 2022

PANELLISTS:

- **Ms. Savitri Singh**, Deputy Chief Executive, National Cooperative Union of India
- **Mr. Attilio Dadda**, Board Member, ICA and Italian Cooperative Alliance
- **Mr. Osamu Nakano**, Secretary General, Japan Workers Cooperative Union
- **Ms. Fabíola Nader Motta**, General-Manager, Organização das Cooperativas Brasileiras (OCB), Brazil
- **Hon. Ms. Jane Sithole**, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Small Business Development, Republic of South Africa

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Hon. Jane Sithole emphasized the role of cooperatives in tackling poverty, promoting inclusive growth, and creating jobs across Africa. She reaffirmed the South African government's commitment to supporting cooperatives and highlighted the importance of international platforms like the G20 and the upcoming International Year of Cooperatives (2025). She called for sustained engagement in global forums such as the B20 and urged alignment with the African Continental Free Trade Area and AU Agenda 2063. She also promoted the Africa Cooperative Center (ACC) as a key mechanism for training and resilience building.

Ms. Savitri Singh provided an overview of India's engagement with the G20 in 2023 and detailed the inclusion of cooperatives in multiple working group outcomes. She highlighted how cooperatives were referenced in B20 policy papers, particularly in themes related to financial inclusion, gender equality, food security, cultural preservation, and support for MSMEs. She stressed the importance of recognizing primary cooperatives and self-help groups as part of the formal economic system and encouraged continued advocacy to mainstream cooperatives in international economic policy.

Due to technical issues beyond the organizers' control the interventions made by Mr. Attilio Dadda, Mr. Osamu Nakano and Ms. Fabiola Nader Motta were not captured. We regret this and apologise for the situation.

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KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Global Advocacy for Cooperatives:** Cooperatives must be included in global fora like the G20 and B20 to influence economic policy and gain visibility
- **Policy Ecosystems:** National and continental frameworks (e.g. AU, ACFFTA, model cooperative laws) must be leveraged to strengthen cooperative contributions at the global level.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- **Institutionalize Cooperative Representation in the G20 :** Advocate for a permanent cooperative presence within G20 engagement groups such as B20, C20, and W20.
- **Maximize IYC 2025 for Visibility and Impact:** Use the International Year of Cooperatives as a strategic opportunity to showcase achievements, promote data collection, and elevate the cooperative model on the global stage.



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I.2 Cross-regional cooperation to building prosperity for all

CONTEXT

The ICA and the FAO planned a session with the regional directors and the Director General of the ICA. This session focused on discussing the latest trends, challenges and opportunities in both the regional and global cooperative movements in agrifood systems. The discussion explored how cooperatives can play a critical role in addressing global issues, particularly in achieving the SDGs highlighting the role of cooperatives both in production and consumption, as well as their role in access to rural finance and insurance. Directors shared their experiences, highlighting key achievements, challenges, and the lessons learned from their regions in supporting cooperative solutions that drive sustainable rural transformation. One of the central topics was identifying gaps in cooperative policy and practice, with a particular emphasis on how these gaps can be filled through collaboration, innovation, and partnerships. Directors also examined the opportunities that arise from these challenges, such as enhancing cooperative governance, expanding access to financial resources, and fostering education and capacity development across cooperative networks.

The session aims to foster dialogue on how the cooperative movement can continue to grow and strengthen its role in global and regional development, setting the tone for the activities and goals of the IYC 2025.

SESSION

Moderator: Ms. Cecile Berranger, Rural Institutions and Services Specialist, Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN (FAO)

PANELLISTS [ICA REGIONAL DIRECTORS]

- Dr. Sifa Chiyoge, Regional Director, ICA Africa
- Mr. Danilo Salerno, Regional Director, Cooperatives of the Americas
- Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director, ICA Asia and Pacific
- Ms. Agnes Mathis, Regional Director, Cooperatives Europe

Video messages

- Nomathemba Mhlanga, FAO
- Viktorya Ayvazyan, FAO
- Luiz Beduschi, FAO

Special Discussants

- Dr. Sara Vicari, International Expert on rural institutions and policy of cooperative for Near East and North Africa
- Jeroen Douglas, ICA Director General

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Dr. Sifa Chiyoge emphasized that while cooperatives have significantly contributed to livelihoods, agri-food systems in many regions remain underperforming. She pointed out critical gaps in adopting agricultural technologies, soil management practices, and infrastructure development, urging a shift towards socially responsible agriculture.

Dr. Nomathemba Mhlanga, in his video message, stressed the importance of inclusion, representation, and governance within cooperative frameworks, alongside a strong focus on sustainability.

Dr. Sara Vicari highlighted specific challenges in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region, such as fragmentation, climate change, and resource scarcity. She outlined FAO's role in improving legal frameworks, capacity-building initiatives, and creating enabling environments for cooperative success, though managerial capacity and governance remain significant barriers.

Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer provided an overview of the Asia-Pacific region's dominance in agri-food production and employment generation. He underscored the success of cooperatives in achieving economies of scale and improving market access, while also noting the pressing challenges of protecting domestic interests, climate change, water scarcity, and smallholder vulnerabilities.

Ms. Agnes Mathis detailed the two primary models of cross-border cooperation: international cooperatives, which integrate foreign actors into their supply chains, and transnational cooperatives, which maintain membership in multiple countries. She identified barriers to cross-border cooperation, such as the local nature of cooperatives, legal

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heterogeneity, lack of data, and difficulties in identifying cooperative partners across borders.

Ms. Viktoria Ayvazyan discussed the diverse challenges facing cooperatives in the 17 countries covered by her FAO office. Common issues include policy gaps, legal misinterpretations, and administrative takeovers of cooperatives. She stressed the need to foster grassroots engagement while also addressing broader regional and structural challenges in food systems.

Mr. Danilo Salerno addressed the high levels of inequality in the Americas, the cost of a decent diet, and the informal nature of the agri-food economy. Despite these obstacles, he cited successful cooperative initiatives in Argentina and Panama aimed at improving job quality and women's economic inclusion. He also referenced efforts to promote a model law for cooperatives.

Dr. Luiz Beduschi, in his video message, highlighted FAO's engagement with Parlatino to promote the adoption of a model law for food cooperatives across Latin America.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Strengthening Cooperative Governance:** Creating legal frameworks that enhance the legitimacy and autonomy of cooperatives while ensuring their sustainability.
- **Sustainable Agricultural Practices:** Addressing climate change, water management, and soil conservation to improve food systems.

- **Enhancing Cross-Border Cooperation:** Overcoming legal and logistical barriers to facilitate transnational cooperative networks and trade.
- **Empowering Smallholder Farmers:** Supporting small cooperatives with financial resources, technology access, and policy advocacy.
- **Bridging Policy Gaps:** Encouraging government recognition of cooperatives as key actors in economic and social development.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- **Develop a Legal and Policy Framework:** Advocate for national and regional laws that protect cooperative integrity and facilitate cross-border operations.
- **Promote Education and Capacity Building:** Strengthen managerial skills and governance within cooperatives through targeted training programs.
- **Encourage Data Collection and Research:** Support empirical studies on cooperative contributions to food systems and economic growth.
- **Expand International Partnerships:** Foster collaborations between cooperatives, academic institutions, and policymakers to share best practices and innovations.
- **Leverage Digital Technologies:** Utilize digital platforms, e-learning tools, and cooperative management systems to improve efficiency and transparency.



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I.3: Transition from Informal to Formal Economy

CONTEXT

Workers in the informal economy often face a lack of legal recognition, unstable incomes, and limited access to social security. Without formal status, they remain invisible in policy discussions and struggle to secure basic rights and protections.

Cooperatives enable the transformation of what are often marginal survival activities into legally protected work, fully integrated into the mainstream economy. Formalisation into cooperatives brings the needs and voices of workers to the forefront. Issues such as unpaid care work, need for child care and social security, and the importance of education and exposure become visible. A crucial component of this transition is member education. Informal economy workers, especially from economically weaker backgrounds, lack the knowledge and exposure required to run and manage a formal organisation. There is a need for greater investments in research/knowledge & education, leadership, accessible digital technologies, etc.

The journey into formalisation empowers the cooperative members as they learn to negotiate the formal world of their respective trades or enterprises. The empowerment is even more remarkable in the case of cooperatives of women workers, who remain invisible despite their high contribution in several sectors including agriculture, dairy and home-based manufacturing. By fostering inclusion and democratic participation at the local level, such cooperatives become models of working collectively for the common good in the local communities and wider society. There is a need for worker-friendly policies to facilitate this transition. It is necessary to enable more women's cooperatives by partnerships between governments, private sector, civil societies, and other cooperatives.

Moderator: Dr. Simel Esim, Manager, ILO Cooperative, Social and Solidarity Economy Unit

PANELLISTS:

- **Mr. Olugbenga Ebenezer Komolafe**, Founder, Federation of Informal Workers' Organizations of Nigeria (FIWON), Nigeria

- **Ms. Poonsap Tulaphan**, Senior Leader, HomeNet, Thailand
- **Ms. Martha Elena Iglesias Escobar**, Colombia
- **Ms. Sangeeta Gamit**, Megha Indigenous Women Farmers Cooperative, India
- **Mr. Federico Parra**, Specialist, Social and Solidarity Economy, WIEGO, Colombia
- **Ms. Natalia Zarza**, UTEP, Argentina

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Ms. Poonsap Tulaphan spoke about the difficulties faced by home-based workers, including lack of legal protections, market instability, and poor working conditions. She emphasized the importance of cooperatives in providing stable incomes, market access, and sustainable livelihoods. She also highlighted their advocacy work in order to have social security measures where the government covers 30% of contributions. In order to make advocacy actions valuable, we need to emphasise the role of social dialogue.

Ms. Martha Elena Iglesias Escobar, representing 17,000 families and part of a broader global alliance covering 4 million waste-pickers, emphasized the role of waste-pickers as key environmental stakeholders in the circular economy. She recounted how her cooperative secured legal recognition, improving working conditions and elevating waste-picking as a profession of environmental importance. She also stressed the role of solidarity initiatives, such as educational spaces and thrift stores, in fostering worker dignity.

Ms. Sangeeta Gamit spoke about the challenges faced by women farmers, including financial constraints, lack of storage facilities, and digital illiteracy. With support from SEWA Federation, their cooperative has gained access to fair pricing and improved sustainability. She expressed the need for further digital training and fair market policies to strengthen women's cooperatives.

Ms. Natalia Zarza highlighted the fight for rights within the popular economy, with UTEP advocating for the "3 T's" – land, work, and housing. She shared how cooperatives in Argentina have built support systems, including child-care services for waste-pickers' families and co-managed social security funds. She called for policies ensuring proportional representation in policymaking.

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Mr. Federico Parra summarized the key themes raised by other speakers, emphasizing the need to strengthen cooperative networks, advocate for protective legislation, and encourage social dialogue to enhance the visibility and rights of informal economy workers.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Legal recognition:** How cooperatives facilitate the transition from informal to formal employment.
- **Economic stability:** Ensuring cooperative members have access to social security and fair wages.
- **Government incentives:** The role of tax incentives and simplified legal frameworks in encouraging cooperative formation.
- **Empowerment of marginalized workers:** Strategies to include women, migrant workers, and indigenous communities in cooperative structures.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- **Strengthen Legal Protections:** Advocate for simplified cooperative registration processes.
- **Capacity Building:** Develop training programs tailored to informal workers on cooperative business models.
- **Access to Finance:** Facilitate micro-financing solutions and cooperative-friendly banking options.
- **Policy Dialogue:** Encourage collaboration between cooperatives and policymakers to ensure supportive regulations.



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I.4: Essential Role of the State in Cooperative Development

CONTEXT

Cooperatives are private entities, even though in most countries they contribute to the fulfilment of missions of general interest, that fall within the remit of the State. As such, they need recognition from the State in order to act legally. This recognition is obtained at the time of registration. In addition to this role of the State, downstream and at micro level, there is a more important mission upstream and at macro level. This involves developing an appropriate legal and regulatory framework. Cooperative law is not limited to cooperative Act and regulation. It is necessary to consider the overall legal environment, as cooperatives engage in activities in various sectors (economic law), are subject to specific taxation (tax law), employ people (labour law), and so on. More generally, it is up to the State to take political and legal measures to ensure that cooperatives are not placed at a disadvantage compared to other legal forms of enterprise, without granting them any favours. More specifically, it is a question of taking account of their specific characteristics in order to apply fair and equitable rules to them.

Moderator: Ms. Wenyan Yang, Chief, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

PANELLISTS:

- **Mr. Abdelfattah Alshalabi**, Director General, Jordan Cooperative Corporation
- **Mr. Iosefo Koroidimuri** - Director for Integrated Human Resource Development Programme, Ministry of Trade, Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises, Government of Fiji
- **Ms. Aicha Belassir**, Director General of the Social Economy and the Corporate Social Responsibility, Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, Kingdom of Spain
- **Mr. Patrick Kilemi**, Principal Secretary, State Department of Cooperatives, Ministry of Cooperatives and MSMEs, Kenya
- **Mr. Ammar Anwar Sajwani**, Acting Director of Cooperatives & Strategic Stocks Department Entrepreneurship & Economic Regulatory Affairs Sector, United Arab Emirates

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Mr. Abdelfattah Alshalabi spoke on Jordan's historical commitment to cooperatives since 1952. The government has provided financial support, capacity-building training, and institutional backing to ensure cooperatives thrive. Various ministries, including the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Water, support agricultural and women-led cooperatives.

Mr. Iosefo Koroidimuri highlighted Fiji's cooperative sector, which operates in 15 sectors with 33,000 members. He stressed that political will is essential for cooperative success. Fiji has introduced tax incentives, training programs, and market linkages to strengthen cooperative development, and is working on a new cooperative law to replace the outdated 1996 Cooperative Act.

Ms. Aicha Belassir explained Spain's transition from a labor-focused ministry to a dedicated Ministry of Social Economy. Spain's cooperative laws, established in 2011 and updated in 2014, prioritize social economy enterprises. She emphasized how Spain integrates cooperatives into national and international economic frameworks, ensuring financial support and policy coherence.

Mr. Patrick Kilemi emphasized Kenya's strong cooperative infrastructure, including cooperative banks, universities, and insurance services. He called for policies that promote youth and women participation in cooperatives and the expansion of markets for cooperative products. Kenya's constitutional and legal framework supports cooperative-led economic development.

Mr. Ammar Anwar Sajwani discussed the UAE's cooperative law, established in 1976, which has led to a cooperative sector generating over \$2 billion annually. He outlined government initiatives to remove barriers for cooperative growth, expand cooperatives into new sectors such as digitalization, education, and health, and open cooperative membership to all nationalities.

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KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- **The Role of Government:** States must act as facilitators rather than controllers, providing legal frameworks, tax incentives, and financial backing.
- **Policy Development:** Cooperative laws should evolve to include modern economic trends, digitalization, and sustainable practices.
- **Financial Access:** Governments should ensure cooperatives have access to credit, grants, and training for long-term viability.
- **Collaboration Between Cooperatives and Public Institutions:** Building alliances with governments, NGOs, and private sectors to enhance cooperative sustainability.
- **Grassroots Engagement:** Raising awareness at the community level to encourage cooperative participation and sustainability.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- **Develop and Reform Legal Frameworks:** Update cooperative laws to reflect modern challenges and market needs.
- **Strengthen Cooperative-Government Partnerships:** Establish collaborative initiatives to boost cooperative development.
- **Expand Training and Capacity Building:** Provide cooperative education programs and leadership training at national levels.
- **Enhance Financial Support Mechanisms:** Increase access to credit, grants, and tax incentives for cooperative enterprises.
- **Promote Cooperative Awareness:** Implement awareness campaigns to inform the public about cooperative benefits.



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Pillar II Nurturing Purposeful Leadership

PLENARY ADDRESS

Mr Revant Himatsingka, a prominent Certified Health Coach and Ethical Influencer, delivered an inspiring plenary address at the ICA Global Cooperative Conference, emphasizing the critical importance of health literacy through his campaign, “Label Padhega India”. The initiative seeks to educate the public on the significance of reading food labels to enable informed consumer choices and encourage companies to improve food quality and marketing transparency. Mr Himatsingka highlighted the linguistic barrier posed by English-language food labels, comprehensible to only 15% of India’s population, stressing the urgent need for accessible health literacy. Despite facing legal challenges from corporations, his resolute commitment and determination to publicly highlight unethical practices remains unwavering.

Plenary II.A: Building Leaders for the Cooperative Movement

CONTEXT

Within the cooperative movement, leadership is rooted in empowerment, participation, and shared responsibility, shaping both our professional roles and worldviews.

This session focuses on three interconnected concepts:

- **Leadership:** What defines cooperative leadership and distinguishes it from other models? Who leads, and from where?
- **Purpose:** How is cooperative purpose defined, articulated, and acted upon? What drives our commitment?
- **Nurturing:** Where and how do we cultivate cooperative leaders, and what structures support their growth?

Building upon reflections since the 2021 Congress, this panel shifts the focus forward, bridging current realities with future aspirations. We address how today’s cooperative leaders strengthen resilient enterprises, while preparing for future innovations and emerging sectors.

Intergenerational collaboration and the integration of social responsibility with business excellence are central to advancing cooperatives’ global impact.

Ultimately, today’s efforts shape tomorrow’s cooperative landscape and legacy. This panel aims to align visions and commitments to ensure the ongoing vitality of our movement.

Moderator - Ms. Ana Aguirre, Chairperson, ICA Youth Committee

PANELLISTS

- Mr. Esteban Kelly, Executive Director, U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives, USA
- Ms. Rinky Kumari, Social entrepreneur from Hutup village in Ranchi, India
- Ms. Dulce Bustamante, Executive Director, Union of Legitimate Service Contracting; Chairperson of the ICA-AP Youth Committee, The Philippines
- Mr. Roland Monasch, CEO, Aflatoun International, The Netherlands
- Ms. Gretchen Hacquard, ICA Director Membership; ICA Youth Committee

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Mr. Monasch discussed how Aflatoun provides social and financial skills to young people through cooperative models. He emphasized the importance of involving youth to maintain relevance and dynamism in cooperatives, highlighting potential for more global collaborations.

Ms. Kumari shared her experience overcoming childhood challenges by coaching girls in football to save for her education. She described how receiving a scholarship at Mondragon University allowed her to work with international students on joint projects, emphasizing the supportive role of her cooperative team.

Mr. Kelly founded Aorta cooperative to support grassroots social justice groups and is currently with NCBA-CLUSA, focusing on opportunities for marginalized groups and

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mentoring young leaders. He stressed the necessity of clear and authentic leadership, openness to innovation, and the role of cooperatives in fostering peace during global conflicts.

Ms. Bustamante emphasized the importance of raising awareness about cooperatives among youth and highlighted the success of saving and credit school cooperatives in the Philippines. She stressed that youth should feel their opinions matter, be trusted, included, and considered for leadership roles as long-term investments.

Ms. Hacquard explained that cooperatives sometimes hesitate to invest in youth due to fears of replacement. She advocated for practical leadership experiences as essential for developing young cooperative leaders.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Importance of youth engagement in cooperative education and governance.
- Need for authentic and clear leadership in cooperatives.
- Empowering youth through cooperative education models.
- Overcoming barriers to youth involvement, such as fear of leadership replacement
- Enhancing visibility and trust to attract young members.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- Integrate cooperative education more systematically in school curricula.
- Foster youth involvement in cooperative leadership and governance
- Utilize technology and social media for youth outreach.
- Create enabling policy environments supporting youth-focused cooperative models.
- Strengthen global cooperative networks through international exchanges and knowledge sharing.

continued



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Plenary II.B: Cooperatives Leading the Way to Shared and Sustainable Prosperity

CONTEXT

The cooperative enterprise model is based on “an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.” While some corporate business models have integrated value-driven or “triple bottom line” strategies, cooperatives embed these values as part of their core identity, making them a well-established business model to address current and future economic, social, and environmental opportunities and challenges.

Unlike traditional businesses driven primarily by profit or shareholder returns, cooperatives focus on the sustainable prosperity of both their members and the broader community. By leveraging economies of scale and pooling members’ economic power, cooperatives can provide essential goods and services that might otherwise be inaccessible or unsustainable—such as housing, market access, and electricity. Moreover, cooperatives generate social value by fostering strong networks, collaboration, and community connections, positioning themselves as naturally networked enterprises.

The cooperative model also plays a key role in rebalancing economic power and ensuring a more equitable distribution of wealth. Surplus revenues generated by cooperatives remain within their communities, fostering cycles of local economic growth and development.

Globally, there are 3 million cooperatives with 1.2 billion members, providing jobs or economic opportunities to 280 million people—representing 10% of the world’s employed population. Cooperatives operate across all economic sectors: primary (agriculture, fishing, forestry), secondary (utilities, textiles, food and goods processing), tertiary (healthcare, transportation, retail, banking), and, more recently, the quaternary sector, which involves leveraging information and technology to innovate and improve processes and services (platform cooperatives, consulting, education, data cooperatives).

In the context of this session’s discussions, panelists explored how the cooperative model can respond to contemporary economic and social challenges, reinforcing

cooperative identity while promoting a sustainable and inclusive approach to enterprise.

Moderator: Prof. Cynthia Giagnocavo, Chairperson, ICA Committee on Cooperative Research

PANELLISTS:

- Dr. Nelson Kuria, Chairperson, CIC Group, Kenya
- Mr. Pete Westall, Chief Values Officer, The Midcounties Cooperative, UK
- Ms. Mirai Chatterjee, Chairperson, SEWA Cooperative Federation, India
- Mr. Ameya Prabhu, President, Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC)
- Ms. Xiomara Nuñez de Cespedes, Chairperson, ICA Gender Equality Committee

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Dr. Nelson Kuria addressed the importance of economic resilience in cooperative development, emphasizing education as a fundamental tool in shaping cooperative values from an early age. He highlighted the need for cooperatives to drive societal change and discussed CIC’s growth into Kenya’s third-largest insurance group, pioneering micro-insurance and exporting its model to other African countries in collaboration with local cooperatives and SEWA in India.

Ms. Xiomara Nuñez de Cespedes spoke about her cooperative’s initiative to allocate 10% of surpluses to cooperative education, with new members receiving training in cooperative values, principles, and financial management. She noted that 97% of her cooperative’s members work in healthcare and faced severe impacts during the pandemic, highlighting how cooperatives significantly improve the lives of their members and families.

Ms. Mirai Chatterjee emphasized empowering women in cooperatives, highlighting SEWA’s longstanding work organizing informal female workers into cooperatives for full employment and self-reliance. She mentioned SEWA’s collaboration with UK cooperatives during the pandemic

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and the support provided to cooperatives like Abudana Craft Cooperative, which successfully adapted to industry changes and produced conference bags for delegates. Chatterjee also discussed a 2020 workshop where 200 female cooperative leaders articulated their policy priorities.

Mr. Ameya Prabhu discussed innovative cooperative leadership approaches in India, highlighting waste-to-fashion transformations and advocating for leadership that empowers teams over individuals, ensuring sustainable long-term success rather than immediate gains.

Mr. Pete Westall stressed the importance of maintaining democratic participation while scaling cooperative operations. He cited examples of UK cooperatives navigating economic crises through collective decision-making. Westall mentioned Midcounties' childcare initiatives and collaborative advocacy with Cooperative Members of Parliament and Co-operatives UK to influence childcare policy. He explained how children at Midcounties nurseries learn democracy through stories inspired by Ela Bhatt, SEWA's founder. He also underscored Midcounties' values—democracy, openness, social responsibility, and equality—mentioning the Our Doing Good Together Fund, and stressed the importance of effective communication, referencing successful campaigns from other UK cooperatives.



KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Cooperative Leadership Development: Investing in education and mentorship programs for future cooperative leaders.
- Democratic Governance: Ensuring continued member engagement in cooperative decision-making.
- Sustainability and Digital Transformation: Using modern technology to enhance cooperative operations.
- Gender and Youth Inclusion: Creating leadership opportunities for women and young professionals.
- Scaling Up While Maintaining Values: Balancing expansion and adherence to cooperative principles.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- Expand Leadership Training: Establish cooperative leadership academies and mentorship programs.
- Promote Gender Equality: Implement policies encouraging women's participation in cooperative leadership.
- Leverage Digital Tools: Utilize technology for efficiency and broader outreach
- Strengthen Cooperative Networks: Foster cross-sector collaboration for enhanced resilience.
- Develop Policy Advocacy Strategies: Engage policymakers to secure cooperative-friendly policies.

continued



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II.1: Building Cooperative Value Chains

CONTEXT

Cooperatives have traditionally been formed to increase bargaining power, achieve economies of scale, provide higher profits or returns for members, lower costs on inputs, obtain, improve or supply access to products and services, reduce risk, and contribute to development and the building of social capital.

These objectives are still valid, but increasingly globalised markets, digitalisation, the concentration of power in supply chains, and climate change, amongst other structural, technical, and market developments, have presented complex challenges for cooperatives. Cooperatives are also influenced by the position in the supply chain; internal governance; and their institutional environment.

The following trends can be seen in cooperative supply chains worldwide:

- Accelerated internationalisation has led to small-scale cooperative members increasingly forming associative and/or collaborative strategies that are continually being restructured due to changes in other areas of the system;
- Large investor-owned firms (IOF) have modified relationships in the supply chain, thus affecting integration and collaboration;
- Cooperatives, depending on the particular sector, are very present in international or global supply chains, but they are often seen to represent a weak link in the overall supply chains or systems; and
- Cooperatives either concentrate or cooperate horizontally but they must also engage in vertical collaboration (raising questions on the heterogeneity of member interests/values/incentives).

Moderator: Ms. Cécile Berranger, Rural Institutions and Services Specialist, FAO

PANELLISTS:

- **Mr. Erwin Novianto**, CEO, Fairtrade NAPP
- **Mr. Bahman Abdollahi**, President, Iranian Chamber of Cooperatives
- **Ms. Altantuya Tseden-Ish**, Vice-Chairperson, National Association of Mongolian Agricultural Cooperatives
- **Prof. Cynthia Giagnocavo**, Chairperson, ICA Committee on Cooperative Research

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Mr. Erwin Novianto emphasized the importance of making cooperative value chains inclusive and sustainable by ensuring fair pricing, access to resources, and resilience to climate shocks. Drawing from Fairtrade NAPP's extensive regional experience, he explained how supporting producer organizations, integrating environmental sustainability, and guaranteeing long-term buyer relationships are essential in building strong value chains. He called for an improvement in policy frameworks.

Due to technical issues beyond the organizers' control the interventions made by Mr. Bahman Abdollahi were not captured. We regret this and apologise for the situation.

Ms. Altantuya Tseden-Ish shared the experience of a secondary cooperative in Mongolia uniting nine primary cooperatives and over 2,200 pastoralist households, with the aim of transforming the cashmere value chain. Traditionally dominated by middlemen, this chain often excluded herders from fair income and recognition—final products were labelled “Made in China” despite being sourced in Mongolia. Through the cooperative, herders have begun producing sustainable, locally certified organic cashmere by investing in animal welfare, breed quality, and environmental stewardship. The cooperative has developed a traceable and certified production model, exporting dehaired cashmere to Europe and distributing patronage dividends to its members. It also promotes women's economic empowerment through handmade cashmere products, contributing to household income and cooperative resilience.

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Prof. Cynthia Giagnocavo emphasized the complexities cooperatives face when engaging in global supply chains while remaining aligned with their identity. Drawing from examples in Iran, Mongolia, and Fair Trade systems, she noted how varying levels of cooperative integration among actors can create tensions. She stressed the urgent need for robust cooperative research. Rather than condemning the challenges cooperatives face in maintaining coherence with their values, she called for empirical, comparative research to understand how they navigate such tensions and to develop cooperative-based alternatives. She urged the movement to treat cooperative values and principles not only as ethical imperatives but as competitive advantages—by documenting, auditing, and empirically proving their added value. Lastly, she highlighted the gap in cooperative management education, advocating for new curricula and research that equip future managers with cooperative-specific skills and knowledge.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Trust and Long-Term Collaboration:** Sustainable cooperative value chains are built on transparency, reliability, and enduring relationships with buyers and stakeholders. Trust enhances resilience and ensures fair distribution of value.
- **Supportive Policy and Infrastructure:** The expansion of cooperative value chains requires enabling public policies, access to finance, and investment in infrastructure such as storage, logistics, and processing facilities.
- **Social and Environmental Commitments:** Cooperatives are uniquely positioned to integrate climate resilience, animal welfare, and gender equity into their production models—generating both social impact and market differentiation.
- **Bridging Local and Global Markets:** Strengthening the link between local producers and international buyers through certified, traceable, high-quality products is essential for value chain success.
- **Research and Knowledge Sharing:** There is a growing need for empirical, comparative research to understand cooperative dynamics in value chains and to build education systems that support cooperative-specific management skills.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- **Advance Policy Recognition of Cooperatives:** Engage in targeted advocacy to embed cooperative models in national trade, development, and sustainability strategies.
- **Strengthen Infrastructure and Digitalization:** Invest in digital tools for product traceability and logistics solutions to boost market access and transparency.
- **Enhance Skills and Leadership:** Create leadership programs for youth and women to foster the next generation of cooperative managers with expertise in governance and value chain coordination.
- **Promote Certification and Cooperative Branding:** Support cooperatives in obtaining certifications (e.g., fair trade, organic, geographical indication) to access premium markets and reinforce identity.
- **Foster Cross-Sector Alliances:** Encourage collaboration between cooperatives across different sectors to build resilient and integrated cooperative ecosystems.
- **Support Research and Education:** Develop and fund cooperative-focused academic programs and research initiatives to document cooperative impact and equip professionals with relevant tools for value-driven management.



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II.2: Mainstreaming Cooperative Education and Research

CONTEXT

To be an effective 'purposeful leader' one must be confident in the clarity of purpose of their organisation. Cooperative leaders ought to understand the nature of the cooperative member owned and controlled model of enterprise; they need to understand the advantages of the model and recognise opportunities congruent with the values embedded in the cooperative identity and with the *raison d'être* of their operations. To achieve purposeful cooperative leadership one needs access to education fit for this purpose since it often runs against the logic of the mainstream (business) education. Yet cooperative education is not available on all levels, and in all corners of the world. It is particularly not sufficiently present in academic circles with the most impact on trends in business and academia. To mainstream cooperative education one needs to mainstream cooperative research, include this enterprise model in textbooks, and theorise collective entrepreneurship and collective innovation. None of this will be achieved without collective action of the cooperative movement. While education is a principle, and education committees and funding are available in some ecosystems, they are sorely missing in most. Education needs to penetrate institutions of elementary and higher education, rather than remain a narrow internal organisational concern.

Moderator: Dr. Ann Hoyt, Emerita Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA

PANELLISTS:

- Dr. Arturo Alvarado Hierro, Rector, MONDRAGON University México
- Dr. Jacqui Thomasen, CEO, The Co-operative College, UK
- Dr. Stefanie Friedel, Valorisation Coordinator, KU Leuven, Belgium
- Prof. Issac Nyamongo, Deputy Vice Chancellor, The Co-operative University of Kenya
- Mr. Kapil Meena (IAS), Director, National Council for Co-operative Training
- Mr. Remy Gorga Neto, President of OCB/DF, Brazil

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Dr. Arturo Alvarado Hierro advocated for integrating cooperative principles into mainstream education, emphasizing that cooperative education must extend beyond internal training and be incorporated into business and economics curricula.

Dr. Jacqui Thomasen discussed The Co-operative College's role in promoting values-based education and launching cooperative leadership programs. She emphasized partnerships with universities to include cooperative principles in business education and they are active in promoting coop principles since nursery education. This aligns with the plan to support the UK's goal of doubling the cooperative sector.

Dr. Stefanie Friedel highlighted the challenges of mainstreaming cooperative education, such as lack of awareness, funding gaps, and high program costs. She advocated for using digital tools, MOOCs, and free workshops to expand cooperative education access.

Prof. Issac Nyamongo stressed the role of cooperative education in empowering members and institutions, noting the impact of Kenya's cooperative education model in shaping cooperative governance and sustainability.

Mr. Kapil Meena (India): Explained how cooperative law in India mandates the allocation of cooperative profits toward education programs, ensuring cooperative training remains a priority.

Mr. Remy Gorga Neto emphasized the role of SESCOOP in supporting cooperatives through management, governance, and educational products. He also highlighted the importance of parallel cooperative learning for children, alongside traditional schooling. Raised concerns about tailoring cooperative education to meet member needs, using strategic goals to build belongingness within cooperatives.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Integrating Cooperative Education: How to embed cooperative principles into primary, secondary, and higher education systems.

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- **Research and Data Collection:** The need for empirical research to validate the impact of cooperative education.
- **Financial and Institutional Support:** Securing funding and policy support for cooperative education programs.
- **Global Collaboration:** Strengthening networks between cooperative institutions and academic bodies to enhance research and knowledge-sharing.
- **Expand Research Initiatives:** Invest in cooperative research to produce data-driven policy recommendations.
- **Increase Funding Mechanisms:** Secure financial support for cooperative education through public-private partnerships.
- **Promote Digital Education Tools:** Use e-learning platforms and MOOCs to broaden access to cooperative education.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- **Develop Global Cooperative Education Standards:** Establish frameworks for cooperative education in academic institutions.



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II.3 Nurturing executive leadership: Perspective from Business Sectors

CONTEXT

This session explores how sectoral federations and cooperative organizations cultivate leadership that strengthens both the cooperative movement and society. Developing in-house talent is a fundamental aspect of cooperatives, ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience in a competitive market. As outlined in Principle 5, cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees, equipping them with the skills needed to contribute effectively to their cooperatives' success.

The discussion focuses on the strategies and best practices that ICA's sectoral federations use to nurture leadership, highlighting key lessons and opportunities for collaboration across different sectors. Panellists share insights on how cooperative values shape leadership approaches, decision-making, and strategic planning, both within and beyond the cooperative context.

A particular emphasis is on the role of young leaders in shaping the future of the cooperative movement. The session examines the challenges and opportunities in fostering emerging leadership, ensuring that cooperative principles continue to guide business practices, governance, and social impact. Finally, panellists reflect on evolving leadership trends and the skills needed to navigate the future of cooperative enterprise effectively.

**Moderator: Ms. Rebecca Harvey, Executive Editor,
Coop News**

PANELLISTS

- Mr. Inigo Albizuri, President, CICOPA
- Dr. Carlos Zarco, President, International Health Cooperative Organization
- Mr. Hirofumi Kobayashi, Executive Director, Institute for the Development of Agricultural Cooperation in Asia (IDACA), Japan
- Mr. Chandra Sekhar Reddy Tupalle, CEO Mahila Abhivruddhi Society, Andhra Pradesh (APMAS), India

- Ms. Jeonghee Kim
- Mr. Blasé Lambert, Chief Executive Officer, Confederation of Co-operative Housing President, Cooperative Housing International

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Mr. Inigo Albizuri provided an overview of CICOPA's work, explaining that the organisation represents cooperatives in the industrial and service sectors at a global level. He highlighted CICOPA's focus on several pressing issues, including the promotion of decent work, the transition to digital and green economies, reindustrialization, and the development of the care economy. He also emphasized the need to expand membership in Africa.

Dr. Carlos Zarco highlighted the challenges faced by cooperatives in the health sector, emphasizing that despite being the smallest sector within the ICA—currently present in 20 countries—they are striving to expand their reach and impact. He noted that rapid technological advancements often outpace leadership development, making traditional, hierarchical models inadequate due to their rigidity and slow adaptability. Instead, he advocated for a more dynamic leadership approach that prioritizes emotional intelligence, cultural competence, digital literacy, and a deep understanding of digital transformation. He further stressed the importance of fostering collaboration, empathy, and the ability to take calculated risks to navigate the evolving healthcare landscape effectively.

Ms. Jeonghee Kim described iCOOP's approach to leadership development, emphasizing the importance of leadership rotation and the need to transition from centralized training models to more accessible and flexible formats. She highlighted iCOOP's efforts to integrate cooperative history into leadership training, ensuring that new leaders remain grounded in the cooperative mission while addressing modern challenges. She explained that iCOOP fosters member engagement through community events and actively works to identify and develop emerging leaders from within the cooperative network. Investing in leadership development, she concluded, is essential for ensuring long-term sustainability and maintaining a strong cooperative identity.

Mr. Blasé Lambert shared insights from the Confederation of Co-operative Housing's work in supporting leadership

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development across its 200 member organisations. He stressed that cooperative leadership should not be acquired simply by buying shares but should be based on a commitment to serving the community. He explained that the Confederation provides resources, toolkits, webinars, training events, and online activities to help develop leadership skills among members. He emphasized that leadership must be about opening opportunities for others, fostering empowerment within and outside the cooperative, and ensuring the long-term stewardship and succession of leadership roles.

Mr. Hirofumi Kobayashi discussed the work of the Institute for the Development of Agricultural Cooperation in Asia, which has trained over 6,833 cooperative leaders from 135 countries in the past 60 years. He highlighted the pressing need for cooperative leaders who can navigate modern challenges such as sustainability, increasing farmers' power within value chains, and building resilience in cooperative enterprises. He explained that effective leadership in agricultural cooperatives requires a deep understanding of both local and global markets, as well as the ability to advocate for policies that support cooperative growth and sustainability.

Mr. Chandra Sekhar Reddy Tupalle provided an overview of the leadership development efforts undertaken by Mahila Abhivruddhi Society in Andhra Pradesh, which works primarily with women in self-help groups and farmer collectives. He emphasized that leadership development must extend not only to cooperative members but also to staff and board members who oversee executive leadership. He outlined key principles that should guide the emergence of strong cooperative leadership, including the promotion of women leaders, ensuring that struggling institutions receive adequate governance support, fostering cooperation among cooperatives, investing in training and capacity-building programs, and maintaining a strong commitment to member-centric decision-making.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Defining cooperative leadership: what qualities make a strong cooperative leader, and how can cooperatives foster leadership that is inclusive, accountable, and values-driven?
- Addressing leadership gaps in key sectors: identifying leadership challenges in health, housing, agriculture, and

industrial cooperatives and finding solutions to ensure continuity and adaptability.

- Training and capacity building: developing flexible, inclusive, and accessible training programs to equip the next generation of cooperative leaders.
- Promoting women in leadership: exploring strategies to increase the representation and visibility of women in cooperative leadership roles.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- Develop cooperative leadership standards: establish global frameworks that define cooperative leadership competencies and governance best practices.
- Enhance leadership training programs: invest in blended learning, mentorship opportunities, and educational initiatives tailored to the needs of cooperative leaders.
- Encourage leadership rotation: implement policies that prevent leadership monopolization and ensure diverse participation in governance roles.
- Strengthen women's representation: create targeted initiatives to support women in leadership roles within cooperatives and ensure equal opportunities for advancement.



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II.4: Values in Cooperative Business: Perspectives from Large Cooperatives

CONTEXT

This session highlighted the unique value and benefits that cooperatives provide to their members, communities, and society, drawing insights from a year-long study conducted by the ICA International Cooperative Entrepreneurship Think Tank (ICETT). The discussion focused on how cooperatives can adapt to market dynamics while preserving their core values.

Cooperatives are member-owned, democratically controlled enterprises prioritizing social and environmental well-being over profit. Operating across sectors such as agriculture, finance, health, and services, cooperatives emphasize voluntary membership, economic participation, democratic control, education, and community concern. Members benefit from democratic governance, economic participation, and profit-sharing, fostering financial stability and empowerment. Additionally, cooperatives enhance working conditions, ensure income stability, and encourage member participation in decision-making, reinforcing a sense of ownership and collective purpose.

Beyond individual benefits, cooperatives contribute significantly to local communities by promoting economic development, creating jobs, and supporting local businesses. They advance sustainability through environmentally friendly practices, social inclusion efforts, and skill development initiatives. However, larger cooperatives face challenges in maintaining their cooperative identity and democratic engagement amid expansion. Some critics argue that large cooperatives may resemble investor-owned enterprises, yet many proactively communicate their cooperative identity and offer both tangible (economic and service-based) and intangible (democratic and social) benefits.

Moderator: Mr. Gianluca Salvatori, Secretary General, European Institute for Cooperatives and Social Economy, Italy

PANELLISTS:

- Mr. Pete Wetsall, Chief Values Officer, The Midcounties Cooperative, UK

- Ms. Merav Niv, Head of Cooperative Development & Senior Legal Counsel, Kibbutz Movement, Israel
- Mr. Michael Mugo, Director – Branch & Distribution, CIC Group PLC, Kenya
- Mr. Santosh Shukla, General Manager, Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative, India
- Ms. Chitose Arai, Vice President, Japan Consumer Cooperative Union, Japan
- Mr. Thomas Blondeel, International Advocacy Officer, Smart Coop, Belgium

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Mr. Pete Wetsall emphasized the importance of balancing economic performance with cooperative values, demonstrating how Midcounties Cooperative integrates ethical decision-making into its business model.

Ms. Merav Niv shared insights from the Kibbutz Movement in Israel, highlighting its commitment to cooperative democracy and social solidarity while adapting to economic shifts.

Mr. Michael Mugo discussed the role of Kenyan cooperatives in financial inclusion, particularly in underserved communities, through accessible credit and insurance models.

Mr. Santosh Shukla illustrated how Indian agricultural cooperatives, such as IFFCO, leverage member-driven governance structures to enhance food security and rural development.

Ms. Chitose Arai showcased the Japan Consumer Cooperative Union's strategies for maintaining cooperative identity at scale, particularly in member engagement and sustainable supply chains.

Mr. Thomas Blondeel highlighted Smart Coop's innovative approach to cooperative work, ensuring gig economy workers benefit from cooperative protections and social security.

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KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Strengthening Democratic Governance:** Maintaining cooperative ownership within member control while ensuring transparency and accountability.
- **Scaling Up Cooperative Impact:** Using inter-cooperative partnerships to enhance economic resilience and global visibility.
- **Financial Sustainability and Inclusion:** Facilitating access to cooperative finance and investment mechanisms to support long-term stability.
- **Cooperative Response to Environmental Challenges:** Expanding cooperative involvement in climate action and sustainable agriculture initiatives.
- **Reaffirming Cooperative Identity:** Revisiting cooperative principles to ensure they remain relevant in an evolving global economy.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- **Develop Governance Best Practices:** Establish frameworks to maintain democratic control as cooperatives scale.
- **Expand Inter-Cooperative Collaboration:** Foster alliances to strengthen economic resilience and policy influence.
- **Enhance Cooperative Finance Access:** Advocate for tailored funding mechanisms supporting cooperative sustainability.
- **Invest in Green Cooperative Solutions:** Promote cooperative-led environmental initiatives and sustainable business practices.
- **Strengthen Cooperative Education and Advocacy:** Ensure cooperative principles remain central in business and policy discussions worldwide.



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Pillar III Reaffirming the Cooperative Identity

BOOK PRESENTATION BY DR. ARIEL GUARCO AND PLENARY ADDRESS BY MS. KENDRA PRISTIN

Dr Ariel Guarco, ICA President, set the scene for the conversation by announcing the release of his book *Cooperatives in Action: Enterprises with Principles and Values that Change the World*.

Ms. Kendra Pristin, a young cooperador from the Philippines, delivered a plenary address, sharing her experiences with the NATCCO-Aflatoun partnership, which integrates cooperative principles into school curriculums. She highlighted the importance of fostering a savings culture among young students, not only to instill financial responsibility but also to encourage an early connection to the cooperative model. Ms. Pristin emphasized the transformative role that educators play in shaping cooperative awareness among youth, stressing

that learning about cooperatives from an early age equips individuals with essential life skills in financial management and collective decision-making.

CONTEXT

The 33rd World Cooperative Congress, held in December 2021 in Seoul, Korea, launched a global consultation to assess cooperators' understanding of their shared Cooperative Identity and the relevance of the Statement on the Cooperative Identity (SCI). Nearly a decade had passed since the previous Congress and 25 years since the SCI's adoption in 1995. With the world facing new challenges and opportunities, it was time to reflect on its impact.

Following the Congress, the ICA Board established the Cooperative Identity Advisory Group (CIAG) to continue this reflection, gathering insights from cooperators worldwide. Based on these discussions, the CIAG presented recommendations to the ICA Board, which adopted them in October 2024 for further consideration at the upcoming General Assembly.



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This discussion is urgent in today's global context. Climate change, inequality, and geopolitical conflicts threaten communities worldwide, while cooperatives—representing over 1.2 billion people—offer a proven model grounded in democratic governance, equality, and solidarity. With 2025 declared the International Year of Cooperatives, the movement has a unique opportunity to highlight its contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and increase visibility on the global stage.

Living by the values and principles of the SCI ensures that cooperatives remain trustworthy, resilient, and competitive, no matter their size, sector, or country. Throughout history, cooperatives have proven their ability to thrive in both stable and challenging times, reinforcing the cooperative difference as a transformative force for individuals and communities. To maximize this impact, cooperatives must actively communicate their successes, ensuring their model is recognized as both viable and essential.

The ICA's initiative to examine and promote cooperative identity is a crucial step in unlocking the full potential of cooperatives to build a more sustainable, inclusive, and equitable world. These two plenary sessions will explore how cooperators worldwide embrace, strengthen, and advance their identity by fully expressing Cooperative Values and Principles.

Plenary III.A: Perspectives from ICA Global Consultations on the Cooperative Identity

Moderator: Ms. Alexandra Wilson, ICA Board Member and Chairperson, ICA Cooperative Identity Advisory Group

PANELLISTS:

- Ms. Maria Eugenia Perez Zea, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Coomeva Cooperative Business Group, Colombia
- Mr. Doug O'Brien, President/CEO, NCBA-CLUSA
- Ms. Francesca Ottolenghi, Chief of International Relations, Internationalisation and Development Cooperation, LegaCoop Nazionale, Italy
- Mr. Kenki Maeda, General Manager, Department for Cooperation among Cooperatives, Japan Co-operative Alliance (JCA)

- Ms. Om Devi Malla, Chairperson, National Cooperative Federation of Nepal
- Mr. Hyunha Kim, Head of the Policy Planning Team, iCOOP, Korea

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Mr. Doug O'Brien opened by highlighting how the consultation process allowed the American cooperative movement to reassess and strengthen its cooperative identity, particularly in public awareness campaigns and policy advocacy. However, he emphasized that many people still do not fully understand cooperative principles, underscoring the need for enhanced engagement and education.

Mr. Hyunha Kim reflected on the Korean cooperative landscape, explaining how legal reforms have played a crucial role in reinforcing cooperative identity. However, he also pointed out that some cooperatives face regulatory challenges when expanding into new sectors such as healthcare, calling for a broader and more adaptable interpretation of the Statement on the Cooperative Identity (SCI).

Ms. Maria Eugenia Perez Zea stressed the need for greater visibility and advocacy to ensure that cooperatives are well understood by decision-makers. She emphasized that education for policymakers is critical in distinguishing cooperatives from traditional enterprises, as many still lack awareness of their unique structure and societal contributions.

Ms. Francesca Ottolenghi shared how a three-year initiative in Italy helped cooperatives reconnect with their identity. The first phase focused on educating members about cooperative principles, fostering renewed enthusiasm. The second phase addressed how these principles apply to modern challenges like climate change and geopolitical conflicts, emphasizing the need for continuous reflection to keep cooperative identity relevant.

Mr. Kenki Maeda outlined Japan's structured consultation process, starting with nationwide learning activities in 2022, followed by discussions in 2023 where 2,300 cooperators explored the future of cooperatives. The final recommendations, submitted to the ICA in 2024, highlighted the need to strengthen inter-member ties, increase community engagement, and promote worker ownership to reinforce cooperative identity.

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KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Strengthening cooperative identity in a changing world: Cooperative values remain relevant. For some, adaptation is necessary in light of rapid urbanization, digitalization, and social challenges.
- Public awareness and advocacy: Many people do not fully grasp the cooperative model, highlighting the need for stronger branding and outreach.
- Legal and institutional frameworks: Ensuring that legal structures support cooperatives while preventing misuse of the cooperative label.
- Revisiting the SCI: Some panelists favored updating the SCI to incorporate modern issues like digital rights and sustainability, while others advocated for maintaining its core essence.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- Revisiting the Statement: It is encouraged to further discuss on the SCI. Any revisions, if any, should preserve core principles while accounting for newly emergent topics.
- Strengthening Networks: The consultation reinforced the value of collaboration among co-ops regionally and globally. Enhanced data-sharing, peer training, and joint advocacy campaigns are among the recommended methods to build unity and expertise.
- Deepening Education: In addition to public outreach, targeted educational programs for cooperative members, directors, and managers remain crucial. The more individuals understand the “why” behind cooperative principles, the stronger the identity becomes in daily practice.

continued



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Plenary III.B: Living Our Cooperative Identity

Moderator: Ms. Melina Morrison, CEO, Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals, Australia

PANELLISTS:

- Ms. Aicha Errifaai, Director General, l'Office de développement de la coopération (Office for the Development of Cooperatives), Morocco
- Mr. Satish Marathe, Cooperative representative to the Reserve Bank of India
- Mr. Erbin Crowell, Executive Director, NFCA and Board Member, Dot Coop LLC
- Ms. Anne-Laure Desgris, Director, Smart Belgium
- Prof. Ann Hoyt, Professor Emerita at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Ms. Aicha Errifaai opened by stressing the vulnerabilities that cooperatives face, particularly the growing issue of corporate misappropriation of the cooperative label. She explained how some businesses rebrand themselves as cooperatives to benefit from tax advantages or reputational gains without adhering to cooperative principles. Additionally, she highlighted the risk of larger cooperatives drifting toward conventional corporate models, prioritizing profit over member participation and democratic governance. She advocated for stricter legal frameworks and more rigorous oversight to preserve the authenticity of cooperative enterprises.

Mr. Satish Marathe focused on the role of cooperatives in promoting sustainable consumption and mitigating environmental impact. He argued that cooperatives, by their nature, should lead the way in responsible resource management, ensuring that their operations align with ecological sustainability. He called for embedding sustainability into cooperative identity, urging co-ops to develop environmental action plans that not only reduce their footprint but also serve as models for other sectors.

Mr. Erbin Crowell emphasized that trust is the most valuable asset of a cooperative. He warned that when

cooperative identity and actual practices are misaligned, credibility is at risk, leading to diminished member engagement and public confidence. He pointed out that in some regions, regulatory loopholes allow non-democratic entities to present themselves as cooperatives, diluting the strength of the model. To combat this, he stressed the need for stronger policy protections to ensure that cooperative principles are upheld in both legal frameworks and public discourse.

Ms. Anne-Laure Desgris shared how her cooperative of 40000 members actively reinforces cooperative identity through engaged membership and transparent governance. She described how structured participation mechanisms allow members to take an active role in decision-making, ensuring that cooperatives remain democratic and member-driven even as they scale. She also highlighted the importance of accessibility—ensuring that members, regardless of background or experience, feel empowered to contribute meaningfully to governance and operations.

Prof. Ann Hoyt provided a broader philosophical perspective, arguing that beyond simply adhering to cooperative principles, cooperatives must also embody values such as equity, solidarity, and hope. She warned that in times of economic or political instability, people often turn to extreme measures when they feel powerless. Cooperatives, by fostering inclusive decision-making and offering a sense of ownership, can provide a stabilizing force in societies. She stressed that cooperatives should be seen not only as business entities but as vehicles for social transformation that can help prevent conflict and promote long-term resilience.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Preventing mission drift: As cooperatives grow, they must actively reinforce cooperative accountability structures to avoid centralizing power or prioritizing short-term profits.
- Diversity and inclusion: Ensuring broad representation, including youth, women and LGBTQIA+ people is crucial for the cooperative movement. These categories should be represented in the next ICA events to reflect the nature of the movement.
- The intersection of tradition and innovation: Cooperatives must modernize while remaining true to their fundamental principles, using digital tools and climate-resilient business models to stay relevant.

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ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- **Regular Self-Evaluation:** Establish frameworks—such as annual reviews—where cooperatives measure how well they are adhering to principles of openness, democratic participation, and member empowerment.
- **Fostering Inter-Cooperative Collaboration:** Encourage more frequent exchanges—both in-person and virtual—between cooperatives to share solutions. Collaboration in marketing, financing, and advocacy could amplify the cooperative difference. Cooperatives should also encourage each other to use DotCoop in order to advance the cooperative identity.
- **Amplifying the Cooperative Story:** From media campaigns to youth-led social media content, the panelists repeatedly pointed out that narrative power matters. Showcasing success stories—especially those that underscore community-driven change—helps demystify the co-op model and invite broader engagement.

continued



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Session III.1: Cooperatives in the Care Economy

CONTEXT

Care is a universal need and a rapidly growing sector of the global economy. Care workers play a fundamental role in society, yet they often face some of the most challenging working conditions. The prevalence of undeclared and informal care deprives many caregivers of the protections and rights associated with formal employment, disproportionately affecting women, particularly those from migrant backgrounds. Moreover, access to quality and affordable care services is not guaranteed for all, exacerbating social exclusion, discrimination, and economic precarity for vulnerable individuals.

In response to these challenges, cooperatives have emerged as innovative care providers, significantly expanding their role across multiple countries. They address the growing demand for care while tackling key issues within the sector.

Cooperatives have demonstrated their ability to transform undeclared care activities into legally protected employment, particularly empowering women who provide care for children and dependent adults—whether paid or unpaid—thereby contributing to their economic and social inclusion.

This session explores the “cooperative formula” as a model for delivering both quality care services and fair working conditions for caregivers.

Moderator: Diana Dovgan, Secretary General, CICOPA

PANELLISTS:

- Dr. Simel Esim, Manager, ILO Cooperative, Social and Solidarity Economy Unit
- Dr. Sonia George, General Secretary, Self Employed Women's Association, and Executive Committee Member of the International Domestic Workers Federation
- Mr. Giuseppe Guerini, President, CECOP; Representative of CICOPA to the ICA Board
- Dr. Rose Karimi, Cooperative Advisor, HealthPartners

- Ms. Hazel Corcoran, Executive Director Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation
- Ms. Melina Morrison, CEO Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals, Australia

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Dr. Sonia George emphasized that cooperatives play a crucial role in formalizing and professionalizing care work. She explained that by integrating training, social security, and collective bargaining, cooperatives provide caregivers with job stability and fair wages, while also improving the quality of care provided to beneficiaries. She stressed that the cooperative model offers a way to recognize and fairly compensate care workers, who are often women or migrants facing precarious conditions.

Ms. Hazel Corcoran contrasted the policy environment for care cooperatives in Québec versus the rest of Canada, highlighting how legislative support has enabled a thriving cooperative ecosystem in Québec, while other provinces lack the necessary legal and financial backing. She argued that government involvement is crucial in fostering care cooperatives, particularly through policy frameworks that provide incentives, training programs, and financial support.

Mr. Giuseppe Guerini underscored the transformative power of cooperatives in the care sector, particularly in creating models that balance economic sustainability and social responsibility. He highlighted examples of worker-led care cooperatives that empower caregivers while ensuring high standards of service delivery. He also spoke about the importance of cooperatives advocating for their recognition at the policy level, ensuring they are integrated into national healthcare systems.

Dr. Simel Esim emphasized that cooperatives should be seen as key actors in addressing socio-economic inequalities in care work, particularly in the Global South. She called for a global mapping of care cooperatives to identify best practices and scale up successful models. She also stressed the importance of cross-sectoral partnerships between cooperatives, governments, and labor organizations to ensure long-term success.

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Dr. Rose Karimi focused on the intersection of gender and cooperative care models, explaining how care work disproportionately affects women, both as caregivers and as those in need of care. She emphasized that women-led care cooperatives provide a pathway to financial independence, workplace protections, and social recognition, helping to reduce gender disparities in the labor market.

Ms. Melina Morrison discussed the fundamental role of trust in care cooperatives, stating that in the care economy, the relationship between caregivers and those receiving care is built on trust and mutual respect. She warned that this trust must be actively maintained, particularly as cooperatives scale or face competitive pressures from private care providers. She suggested that cooperative principles of democratic participation and transparency should be leveraged to ensure that care recipients and workers remain at the center of decision-making.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Formalizing Informal Labor:** In places where caregiving is performed informally, care cooperatives have introduced structured employment contracts, professional training, and social security benefits. By doing so, these organizations provide both stability for caregivers and high-quality services for clients.

- **Women's Empowerment:** Since most caregivers are women, cooperative models that professionalize care help promote women's inclusion in the labor market.
- **Policy Support:** Participants repeatedly cited that positive outcomes are closely tied to public policy. government incentives, legal recognition, and public funding are essential for care cooperatives to thrive. In contrast, uncertain regulation or the absence of supportive structures can undermine cooperatives.
- **Collective trust and accountability:** ensuring that care cooperatives maintain high ethical and service standards is crucial for long-term sustainability

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- **Building Stakeholder Alliances:** Encourage dialogues between co-ops, policy-makers, and healthcare providers to create integrated care systems.
- **Tech-Based Solutions:** Explore apps or platforms that streamline caregiver recruitment, training, and performance evaluation while maintaining cooperative principles of shared ownership and decision-making.
- **Data Collection:** Conduct global research on the social and economic impact of care co-ops, informing both policy and public awareness campaigns.



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Session III.2: Promoting Cultural Heritage and Purposes through Cooperatives

CONTEXT

Meeting “cultural needs and aspirations” of members is a key purpose of cooperatives worldwide as they promote positive change. In many countries cooperatives safeguard and manage museums, theaters, cinemas, cultural spaces, orchestras, archaeological sites, promote sustainable tourism, ethical journalism, media, and defend the legitimate interests of artists and workers in the creative sector, etc. This advances sustainable development of communities through, among other things, job creation, democratic participation, equity, and education, i.e. living the cooperative identity.

In 2016, the idea and practice of organising shared interests in cooperatives was successfully inscribed in UNESCO’s Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, subsequently reconfirmed in 2021 and 2022 UN high-level documents.

Following the 33rd World Cooperative Congress session on Cooperative Culture and Safeguarding Cultural Heritage, ICA participated actively in the 2022 UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development. This ICA-MONDIACULT side-event showcased how cooperatives innovate Safeguarding Cultural Heritage; Organizing workers and professionals in the Creative Sector; and Educating for a better world.

In view of the 2025 UN International Year of Cooperatives and ICA’s September 2024 Board decision, this parallel session explores specific, measurable, achievable and time bound targets and indicators how cooperatives all over the world are promoting cultural purposes and heritage.

Moderator: Ms. Christine M. Merkel, International Expert; Member, UNESCO’s Expert Facility on cultural policy and governance, Germany

Video message: Mr. Thomas Mende, Department Director & Head of Committees and Communications, DZ BANK AG

PANELLISTS:

- Mr. Tiago Schmidt, Organização das Cooperativas Brasileiras, Brazil

- Ms. Francesca Federzoni, President, Cooperativa Politecnica, Italy
- Mr. Guido Schwarzendahl, Chair Cooperative Housing International; GdW Bundesverband Deutscher Wohnungs- und Immobilienunternehmen e.V (Federal Association of German Housing and Real Estate Companies)
- Ms. Liz McIvor, General Manager, The Co-operative Heritage Trust, UK
- Mr. Jokin Diaz, Social Economy Director, Basque Government, Spain
- Special Discussant from ICA Board: Mr. Iñigo Albizuri Landazabal, ICA Board Member and Global Head of Public Affairs, Mondragon Corporation, Spain

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Mr. Tiago Schmidt shared the Brazilian experience, where cooperatives played an essential role in addressing immigration-related challenges.

Ms. Francesca Federzoni discussed the role of architectural cooperatives in Italy, emphasizing their intergenerational approach to heritage preservation. She explained how cooperatives in architecture ensure that restoration projects maintain historical authenticity.

Mr. Guido Schwarzendahl presented the cooperative housing model in Germany, explaining how cooperatives played a crucial role in rebuilding housing after the war.

Ms. Liz McIvor focused on cooperative museums and cultural institutions, particularly in the UK. She discussed the Rochdale Pioneers Museum and the broader role of cooperatives in managing cultural spaces, while also noting the financial and structural challenges they face in sustaining their activities.

Mr. Iñigo Albizuri Landazabal shared the Basque Country’s experience, explaining how, after the Franco dictatorship (1935-1975), cooperatives played a crucial role in protecting cultural heritage. He highlighted how cooperatives in the region used education and awareness-raising initiatives to safeguard cultural identity, citing Mondragon as an example of how cooperatives contribute to preserving local heritage.

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KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- The role of cooperatives in supporting cultural identity, from preserving historical architecture to integrating immigrant communities
- The contribution of cooperative housing to maintaining historical urban areas
- Financial sustainability challenges faced by cultural institutions.
- The need to strengthen inter-cooperation to unify advocacy efforts for cultural cooperatives

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- Increase public engagement by leveraging digital tools and social media to promote cooperative heritage among younger generations
- Advocate for government support and recognition of cooperatives as key players in cultural preservation, ensuring access to funding and policy inclusion
- Foster international collaboration to document and share best practices for cultural cooperatives, particularly in the context of the 2025 International Year of Cooperatives

continued



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Session III.3: Cooperatives in Educational Institutions

CONTEXT

As part of the ICA Global Cooperative Conference 2024, this panel explores the critical role that Cooperatives in Educational Institutions (CEIs) play in reaffirming the cooperative identity. The fifth cooperative principle—Education, Training, and Information—serves as a foundation, emphasising the need for a continuous transfer of cooperative values to young leaders, ensuring that cooperatives remain sustainable and adaptable to changing global challenges. CEIs, such as university cooperatives and school cooperatives in countries like Japan, Malaysia, and the Philippines, immerse students and faculty in cooperative praxis. These institutions offer hands-on governance, entrepreneurship, and leadership opportunities while promoting core cooperative values such as self-help and mutual aid. In doing so, CEIs contribute to the cultivation of ethical and purposeful leaders capable of advancing the cooperative movement or embedding cooperative principles in broader societal contexts. This session highlights global examples, including case studies from Malaysia, Japan, Spain, and Iran, to show how CEIs foster youth involvement in the cooperative movement. By involving young people early on, CEIs ensure generational renewal in cooperative leadership and create strong foundations for the future of the movement. This session has the following objective:

1. Reaffirm the importance of cooperative identity through education in CEIs.
2. Promote youth leadership by linking early involvement in cooperatives with purposeful, values-driven leadership.
3. Provide global perspectives on how CEIs advance cooperative principles.
4. Facilitate interactive discussions, inspiring cooperative leaders to strengthen the role of CEIs globally.

Moderator: Prof. Yashavantha Dongre, Prof. Yashavantha Dongre, Co-Secretary, ICEI & Vice-Chancellor, Chanakya University

Remarks: Mr. Ganesh Gopal, Secretary, ICA Asia and Pacific Committee on Cooperatives in Educational Institutions (ICEI)

PANELLISTS:

- Dr. C. Pitchai, Professor, Gandhigram Rural Institute (GRI), Dindigul, India
- Mr. Dato Kamarudin Ismail, Member, ICA Global Board and Board Member & Former Dy. President, ANGKASA, Malaysia
- Mr. Patxi Olabarria, President, Basque Cooperative High Council, Spain
- Mr. Junki Ito, National Federation of University Cooperative Associations (NFUCA), Japan

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSION

Mr. Dato Kamarudin Ismail discussed the Malaysian model, highlighting that 35 school-based cooperatives operate across various sectors, including agriculture, retail, and technology. He explained how these cooperatives promote environmental awareness, business skills, and technological advancement, offering students practical experience in cooperative management. He also emphasized the strong financial support provided by ANGKASA, which plays a key role in ensuring their sustainability.

Mr. Patxi Olabarria presented the Basque experience, explaining that cooperatives make up 10% of the regional GDP but face the challenge of an aging cooperative workforce. He emphasized the disconnect between young people and cooperative education, stressing the need for university programs, mentorship initiatives, and specialized training to engage the younger generation and secure the long-term future of the movement.

Mr. Junki Ito shared insights from Japan's National Federation of University Cooperative Associations (NFUCA), where student-run cooperatives operate bookstores, cafeterias, and insurance programs on university campuses. He emphasized that these cooperatives not only provide essential services but also train students in governance, financial management, and democratic decision-making, preparing them for future leadership roles in the cooperative sector.

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Mr. Ganesh Gopal spoke about the Asia-Pacific region, emphasizing the need for stronger collaboration among cooperative education institutions. He suggested that structured student and faculty exchange programs between different countries could enhance cooperative education globally, fostering knowledge-sharing and best practices.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- The role of school and university cooperatives in providing students with hands-on experience in cooperative governance and business operations
- Challenges related to the aging cooperative workforce and the need to attract younger generations through structured educational initiatives
- The importance of international collaboration, including student and faculty exchange programs, to enhance cooperative education worldwide
- The need for institutional and policy support to ensure the long-term sustainability of cooperative education initiatives

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- Develop structured cooperative education curricula that can be integrated into primary, secondary, and university-level education
- Facilitate international partnerships between cooperative education institutions to promote exchange programs and joint research
- Create mentorship and internship programs linking students with cooperatives to encourage career development in the sector
- Advocate for government support to formally integrate cooperative education into school and university systems
- Study, benchmark, and, where and when possible, replicate successful models of school and university cooperatives in other member countries
- Explore the possibilities of hybrid education systems that foster cooperative education in secondary schools and universities

continued



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Session III.4: Resilience as a Response — Case Studies in Hardship Management

CONTEXT

The COVID-19 pandemic, coming just over a decade after the global financial crisis, served as a stark reminder of the need for resilient institutions—ones that can withstand, adapt to, and recover from crises. As shocks become more frequent and severe—from natural disasters and economic downturns to cyberattacks and climate risks—a crucial question arises: Are our institutions effectively strengthening their capacity for resilience?

In this context, cooperatives have proven to be key actors in crisis response and recovery, leveraging their mutual aid systems, democratic governance, and community-driven approaches to absorb and adapt to shocks. Unlike conventional businesses, cooperatives prioritize solidarity, economic stability, and social protection, making them uniquely positioned to support their members and communities through times of hardship.

This session explores noteworthy examples of cooperative resilience. What can we learn from cooperatives that have successfully navigated crises? How have they absorbed shocks, adapted to disruptions, and transformed challenges into opportunities to build long-term prosperity and resilience?

Moderator: Ms. LuAnn Werner, Deputy Executive Director, Overseas Cooperative Development Council, USA

PANELLISTS:

- Mr. Hiroshi Inamura, Managing Director, Kokumin Kyosai Co-op, Japan
- Mr. Kishor Kumar, Chief Project Coordinator, Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative Society Ltd, India
- Ms. Anna Tibblin, Secretary General, We Effect, Sweden
- Ms. Debbie Robinson, Chief Executive Officer, Central Co-op, UK
- Mr. Noel Raboy, CLIMBS Life and General Insurance Cooperative, The Philippines

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSION

Kishor Kumar presented the Indian experience of Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative Society Ltd. (ULCCS), emphasizing how the cooperative has ensured long-term sustainability by diversifying into sectors such as IT, education, and infrastructure development. He explained that this diversification strategy has helped ULCCS withstand economic downturns and unexpected challenges, strengthening its ability to respond effectively to crises.

Hiroshi Inamura shared insights from Japan's cooperative-driven disaster relief efforts, focusing on how mutual aid cooperatives have played a crucial role in responding to earthquakes and fires. He explained how these cooperatives provide economic and financial support to their members, particularly in times of crisis, and have advocated for improvements in Japan's national disaster security policies.

Anna Tibblin highlighted the importance of knowledge-sharing and cooperation among cooperatives worldwide. She emphasized that resilience is built through collaboration and the exchange of best practices, allowing cooperatives to learn from each other's crisis response strategies. She also stressed the role of solidarity-based solutions in strengthening cooperative resilience.

Debbie Robinson discussed the experience of Central Co-op in the UK, explaining how cooperatives have supported vulnerable communities during crises. She highlighted how cooperatives provide economic and social security through local partnerships and international collaboration in response to poverty and economic instability.

Noel Raboy shared insights from the Philippines, focusing on how Climb's Life and General Insurance Cooperative has implemented climate-responsive insurance models to help members recover from climate-related disasters. He explained how these financial mechanisms support cooperative members, particularly in agriculture and rural areas, in rebuilding after severe weather events.

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KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Diversification as a resilience strategy: Expanding into multiple sectors strengthens cooperatives' ability to withstand economic shocks and crises.
- Mutual aid systems in crisis response: Solidarity-based financial and support mechanisms enhance cooperatives' ability to assist members during disasters.
- Community engagement and governance: Transparent decision-making and active member participation ensure faster and more effective crisis management.
- Balancing external and internal support: While government partnerships can provide funding, cooperatives must maintain autonomy by strengthening internal resilience mechanisms.
- Global knowledge-sharing and solidarity: International cooperation is crucial for exchanging crisis response strategies, but solutions must remain adaptable to local contexts.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- Create a global resilience platform for cooperatives to exchange best practices and crisis management strategies.
- Develop cross-border mutual aid networks to enable quick and coordinated responses to global crises.
- Promote disaster preparedness programs tailored to cooperative structures and local needs.
- Encourage research on cooperative resilience to document best practices and provide a framework for crisis response.
- Advocate for government recognition and support to strengthen cooperatives' role in disaster recovery and economic resilience.
- Enhance visibility of cooperative crisis responses by sharing success stories to inspire replication and policy support.



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Pillar IV Shaping a Cooperative Future

PLENARY ADDRESS

Cory Efram Doctorow, best-selling author of *The Internet Con: How to Seize the Means of Computation*, warned about the growing dominance of tech giants like Google and Amazon. He described “Enshittification,” a process where platforms initially serve users, then businesses, and ultimately prioritize profits by exploiting both. Once users are locked in, platforms degrade their experience while suppressing competition.

Doctorow argued that these corporations fear regulation more than market competition, working to sidestep privacy, labor, and consumer protection laws. However, he noted that governments are beginning to take competition law more seriously. He also highlighted the decline of digital services and worsening labor conditions, with mass tech layoffs in 2023 contributing to what some call the “shinternet” — a fragmented, degraded internet.

To counter monopolization, Doctorow advocated for stronger regulation and the role of cooperatives in reclaiming digital spaces. He emphasized that democratic ownership can offer an alternative to exploitative corporate models but warned that large cooperatives must stay engaged with their members to avoid demutualization.

“We need a good internet founded on the principles we’ve discussed here,” he stated, urging cooperatives to take the lead in building a fairer, more inclusive digital economy.

CONTEXT

The global crises we face today—economic, social, environmental, and humanitarian—were long predicted by the authors of *Limits to Growth*. They identified shifting mindsets and redefining economic goals as key levers for systemic change. Cooperatives, by nature, already embody a different mindset, as captured in the Statement on the Cooperative Identity (SCI). Rooted in democratic governance and collective purpose, cooperatives offer both a vision for the future and a framework for addressing evolving challenges.

A defining feature of the cooperative model is its ability to form purpose-driven networks, making it uniquely suited to drive socio-economic transformation. The 6th Cooperative Principle—Cooperation among Cooperatives—enables them

to innovate, pool resources, and navigate complex challenges, from digital transformation to capital investment and circular economy strategies.

The circular economy, while widely discussed in environmental terms, lacks a strong social dimension—a gap that cooperatives naturally fill by fostering equitable, community-driven value systems. By placing people over profit, cooperatives ensure that economic activity serves humanity, not the other way around. Their vision for the future is one where workers have control over their livelihoods, basic needs are protected from market speculation, financial capital serves real economic needs, and prosperity is shared.

To measure and amplify their impact, cooperatives must influence both what is valued and how progress is measured. Sustainability metrics often fail to capture cooperative contributions, reinforcing the need for cooperative-driven indicators that redefine success beyond traditional financial benchmarks. By shaping sustainability accounting, cooperatives can ensure that economic systems evolve toward resilience, fairness, and long-term sustainability.



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IV.A: Creating and Measuring Cooperative Impact

Moderator: Prof. Sonja Novkovic, Professor of Economics and Academic Director of the International Centre for Co-operative Management Saint Mary's University, Canada

Panellists

- Prof. Axel Marx, Deputy Director Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies, KU Leuven, Belgium
- Dr. Sifa Chiyoge, Regional Director, ICA Africa
- Prof. Trebor Scholz, Platform Cooperatives Consortium, New York
- Dr. Ilcheong Yi, Senior Research Coordinator, UN Research Institute for Social Development, Switzerland
- Ms. Tone Cecile Faugli, Managing Director, Fairtrade Norway
- Dr. Simel Esim, Manager, ILO Cooperative, Social and Solidarity Economy Unit

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Prof. Axel Marx emphasized the need for precise sustainability indicators that align with cooperative governance models and values, ensuring their impact is accurately measured.

Prof. Fredrick Wanyama presented the Coops Star Project (Africa), an initiative focused on cooperative-driven sustainable transformation. The project involves 20 African researchers and will culminate in a publication highlighting cooperative economic resilience and entrepreneurship.

Prof. Trebor Scholz discussed the Resurge Community Building and Research Initiative, spanning 53 countries and focusing on platform cooperatives. These initiatives have demonstrated transformative effects, such as doubling wages for workers and advocating for equitable digital rights.

Dr. Ilcheong Yi introduced the SDPI Tool, emphasizing the need for cooperatives to differentiate themselves from conventional ESG reporting. Existing tools often fail to capture the full scope of cooperative impact, making the

SDPI a key step in reshaping cooperative sustainability measurement.

Ms. Tone Cecile Faugli from Fairtrade highlighted the role of cooperatives in ensuring fair wages and promoting sustainable supply chains. Fairtrade certification programs help cooperatives enhance income stability, reduce deforestation, and foster democratic participation in supply chains.

Dr. Simel Esim outlined the ILO's efforts to improve cooperative data collection. The 2013 International Statistical Conference sparked collaboration among national statistical offices to create standards for cooperative data. In partnership with COPAC, the ILO launched four key studies on cooperative classification, employment, and their economic contribution. In 2018, guidelines for cooperative statistics were developed, and these have been piloted in several countries to improve their application. Additionally, working groups have been formed to further explore and address the economic contributions of cooperatives.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Getting Standards Right, Not Just Data Collection:** Cooperatives need measurement frameworks that reflect their unique governance models.
- **Sustainability Indicators Will Shape the Future:** The choice and types of indicators used in cooperative reporting will influence how cooperatives adapt to global sustainability goals.
- **Policy Advocacy and Reporting:** Strengthening cooperative engagement in shaping sustainability policies at the national and global levels.
- **Digital Cooperatives and Networking:** Recognizing the role of platform cooperatives in creating equitable digital economies.
- **Expanding Fairtrade and Certification Programs:** Supporting cooperatives in obtaining ethical certification to enhance their global market presence.
- **Long-Term Impact Assessment:** Advocating for extended impact tracking beyond financial performance to showcase cooperative resilience and long-term contributions to sustainability.

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ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- **Develop a Cooperative-Specific Measurement Framework:** Ensure that cooperatives have tailored sustainability indicators distinct from traditional Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) metrics.
- **Promote Global Collaboration:** Foster partnerships between cooperatives, policymakers, and research institutions to develop impact measurement tools.
- **Enhance Data Collection Practices:** Improve cooperative data collection methodologies through global initiatives such as the ILO and UNRISD projects.
- **Expand Fairtrade and Ethical Certification Programs:** Encourage cooperatives to integrate fair trade principles into their sustainability initiatives.
- **Advocate for Policy Inclusion:** Engage with policymakers to ensure cooperatives are included in national and global sustainability reporting mechanisms.
- **Foster Digital Cooperatives:** Promote the development of digital platforms that align with cooperative values and economic justice.



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IV.B: Market-Based Solutions by and for Cooperatives

Moderator: Mr. Jeroen Douglas, Director General, ICA

PANELLISTS

- Ms. Rose Marley, CEO, Cooperatives UK
- Mr. Shatadru Chattopadhyay, Solidaridad Network Asia, India
- Mr. Puvan Selvanathan, President and Founder, Bluenumber
- Ms. Violetta Nafpaktiti, CEO, DotCoop LLC
- Mr. Wouter Vandersypen, Executive Director, Kampani, Belgium
- Mr. Aaron Stewart, Deputy CEO, Coop-Exchange, Malta; UK
- Mr. Harm Haverkort, Director of Partnerships Asia & Pacific, Rabobank

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Ms. Rose Marley emphasized the need for cooperatives to improve communication and branding. She highlighted the Equal Care Cooperative as an example of a cooperative model advocating for fair access to essential services. She warned that cooperatives risk losing their voice in promoting alternative business models if they do not engage more actively in storytelling. A unified cooperative label and network infrastructure could enhance visibility and collective impact.

Mr. Shatadru Chattopadhyay focused on sustainable trade and its intersection with cooperative models. He stressed the importance of fair trade standards, democratic processes, and inclusive market participation. He cited Indonesia's tea standard initiative, where cooperatives developed a locally recognized label to compete effectively with large corporate entities.

Mr. Puvan Selvanathan highlighted the challenge of data ownership and monetization. He emphasized that cooperatives should have the right to sell their data directly at the source, ensuring fair economic participation rather

than relinquishing control to dominant tech corporations. The ability to certify cooperative-generated data would further enhance its value and authenticity.

Ms. Violetta Nafpaktiti spoke about the importance of digital identity and cooperative branding. She noted that domains and marque names serve as key differentiators and highlighted the potential of platforms like Worldmap.coop to help cooperatives expand their global presence.

Mr. Wouter Vandersypen introduced cooperative financing challenges, explaining that Kampani provides capital for capital expenditures (CapEx) rather than operational expenses (OpEx), offering patient growth capital without collateral requirements.

Mr. Aaron Stewart discussed the need for cooperative reinvestment mechanisms, particularly for digital and AI-driven cooperatives, which often struggle to secure funding from traditional sources. Coop-Exchange was established to fill this gap and recycle capital back into the cooperative movement. He also noted that transitioning to a green economy will require an estimated \$300 trillion in financial investment, underscoring the importance of cooperative-led financing solutions.

Mr. Harm Haverkort introduced Acorn, a technology designed to measure biomass and tree growth, which supports climate-focused cooperatives. He highlighted that 80% of the revenue from Acorn projects goes directly to farmers, demonstrating how cooperatives can integrate into carbon markets and sustainability-focused financial ecosystems.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Revenue Sharing and Financial Sustainability: Ensuring cooperatives establish fair revenue distribution models.
- Technological Inclusion: Encouraging cooperatives to take control of their digital presence and data monetization while expanding cooperative-led digital services.
- Investment in Green Transition: Leveraging cooperative financing mechanisms to support carbon trading, sustainability-focused farming, and renewable energy initiatives.

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- **Data Ownership and Monetization:** Cooperatives need to develop strategies for controlling and selling their data as an economic asset.
- **Local and Collective Action:** Community-driven branding and localized trade, such as Indonesia's tea initiative, highlight how cooperatives can effectively compete by leveraging local production and market access.
- **Facilitate Cooperative Investment Mechanisms:** Expand cooperative-led financing options, such as Coop-Exchange, to support emerging cooperatives.
- **Advocate for Policy Changes in Data Rights:** Push for regulations that recognize data as an economic asset owned by cooperatives and their members.
- **Support Green Cooperative Initiatives:** Leverage platforms like Acorn to integrate cooperative efforts into carbon markets and climate solutions.
- **Strengthen Cooperative Storytelling:** Improve communication strategies to better promote cooperative values and solutions in competitive global markets.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- **Develop Revenue-Sharing Models:** Ensure cooperative-led trade agreements and financial structures prioritize equitable revenue distribution for members.
- **Expand Digital Branding and Market Access:** Strengthen cooperative presence on digital platforms and reinforce cooperative domain ownership.

continued



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IV.1: Fit for UN SDG12: Textile Cooperatives as an Alternative Response to Global Demands Through a People-Centered Circular Economy

CONTEXT

Since 2015, the UN Sustainable Development Goal 12 has called for a multi-stakeholder approach towards a socially and environmentally responsible circular economy. However, the increasing over- production and -consumption of goods and services are hindering its achievement. A key example is the fashion industry. While its production provides around 300 million jobs (mainly to women) for a global worth of \$2.4 trillion-dollar (UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion), it is also depleting our habitat, from gas emissions to microplastics in the oceans, incentivizing overconsumption and breaching social rights, as shown by the fast fashion. Textile cooperatives have been long challenging these negative trends. Not only they rely on local production and distribution networks, proving the circularity and traceability of their business model and value chain. They also use their fashion products to express and export their socio-cultural identity and concern for the glocal community. But are they aware of this uniqueness? And how about development partners and policymakers, or even the coop movement itself? This session will focus on the untapped potential of textile coops as a responsive and responsible solution to correct the ongoing over-production and -consumption patterns, within and beyond the fashion supply chain. Regional experiences will highlight the positive glocal multiplier effect of textile coops, complemented by international practices that can help boost their economic value. It aims to raise awareness among coops and development partners on the need to build the capacity of coops in the textile sector and strengthen dialogue to prove that coops are fit-for-purpose to achieve global goals.

Moderator: Ms Annalisa Vallone, International Development Coordinator, Cooperatives Europe

PANELLISTS

- Ms. Christine M. Merkel International Expert; International Expert, UNESCO/EU Technical Assistance in Cultural Governance and sustainable development

- Ms. Marcelina Zjawińska, Founder of the Splot Społeczny Foundation, Obieg Twórczy & Obieg Rzeczy co-creator. ICA Youth Network Vice-President for Europe Cooperatives Europe Youth Representative
- Mrs. Gabriela Cabrera, Vice-President, Manos del Uruguay
- Ms. Maja Drca, EU Representative, Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification [PEFC]
- Ms. Anne Chappaz, Chief – Institutions and Ecosystems, Division of Enterprise, Competitiveness and Institutions, International Trade Center
- Ms. Mandkhai Mendbayar, Member of Parliament of Mongolia

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Ms. Marcelina Zjawińska focused on the role of her cooperative-like organization in promoting a repair and re-use culture, especially among the youth. By collaborating with major brands to provide recycling services, and involving the local Polish community, including migrant women, in their work, they are leading a people-centered transformation of consumption patterns while decolonizing traditional “unilateral” help practices.

Mrs. Gabriela Cabrera: Shared how Manos del Uruguay reduces the gap between consumers and local textile products, which the fast-fashion trend is increasingly widening. By creating a women-friendly working ecosystem, they not only create quality jobs for rural women across Uruguay but also produce and export globally sustainable clothing that celebrate local traditions and craftswomanship.

Ms. Mandkhai Mendbayar highlighted the cross-sectorial impact of an enabling cooperative environment. Designed in an effort to tackle land degradation and environmental challenges, the two programs are promoting herder cooperatives, with economies of scale in the national agriculture and textile value chains.

Ms. Maja Drca highlighted the often underrated link between forestry and textiles, pointing at the need to better investigate the role of farmer/forestry cooperatives in ensuring the sustainable sourcing and production of wood-based (instead of fossil fuels-based) fiber. She

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also highlighted that in a market economy, ensuring the utilisation of sustainably sourced inputs is increasingly becoming a precondition to participate in value chains and to access markets. Cooperatives in the textile value chain belong to the so-called “creative economy”

Mrs. Christine M. Merkel highlighted the increasing interest by UNESCO in promoting a culture of collaboration in the creative industry inspired by the cooperative and fair-trade principles. In this regard, cooperatives are excellent strategic partners to bring a provocative change, because of the flexibility of their model, their people-centered nature as well as their potential for preserving old techniques through innovative ways.

Mrs. Anne Chappaz highlighted the perception of cooperatives as the type of local structure that preserves and sustainably advances the knowledge, the networks, and the actions of international development projects so that a scalable impact remains once the international donor leaves. That is crucial against the ongoing debate around a new development paradigm towards partnerships and cooperation and away from simple “aid”.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Circular Economy and Cooperatives:** Textile cooperatives naturally align with circularity, ensuring sustainability through local production, reuse, and ethical supply chains.

- **Empowering Women and Local Communities:** Cooperatives create economic opportunities for rural women and marginalized groups, fostering financial independence and preserving craftsmanship.
- **Sustainability in Global Trade:** Policies supporting sustainable textiles and cooperative integration into global value chains enhance cooperative competitiveness.
- **Certification and Market Access:** Sustainability certification can be a game changer in ensuring cooperative products reach fair markets.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- **Create Cooperative Sustainability Labels:** Develop an international label to verify sustainable and ethically produced cooperative textiles.
- **Enhance Global Awareness:** Promote cooperative fashion initiatives within UN SDG12 and sustainable development frameworks.
- **Expand Market Opportunities:** Support textile cooperatives in gaining fair access to international markets through funding and advocacy.
- **Encourage Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Link textile cooperatives with forestry and environmental initiatives to create sustainable supply chains.

continued



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IV.2: Cooperatives and Digital and New Technologies

CONTEXT

Cooperatives are increasingly exploring how new technologies can be leveraged not only to enhance competitiveness, but also to drive systemic change rooted in democratic and inclusive values. Emerging technologies present significant opportunities for cooperative entrepreneurship, especially when used to build shared digital infrastructures, strengthen intercooperation, and serve community needs. At the same time, they raise questions about data ownership, digital sovereignty, and equitable access—areas where the cooperative model can offer ethical alternatives. As cooperatives navigate this transformation, support from federations and targeted investment mechanisms becomes crucial to ensure that digital innovation remains aligned with cooperative principles.

Moderator: Ms. Diana Dovgan, Secretary-General, CICOPA

PANELLISTS:

- **Mr. Piero Ingrosso**, Legacoop, Italy
- **Mr. Manuel Leiva**, President of FACTTIC, Member of Patio.coop
- **Mr. Steve Ediger**, Founding Worker-Owner of ChiCommons Cooperative
- **Ms. Viraj Desai**, Senior Associate, IT for Change, India

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSION

Ms. Diana Dovgan introduced the session by highlighting that emerging technologies offer not only opportunities for cooperative entrepreneurship but also the potential for systemic change that serves the public good. At the same time, digital transformation is crucial for established cooperatives to remain competitive. Cooperation among cooperatives—one of the core cooperative principles—can help traditional sectors benefit from the innovations of tech-oriented cooperatives. The discussion will focus on how to put this into practice and identify enabling conditions for cooperatives to thrive in the digital age, including the role of federations in supporting this transition.

Ms. Viraj Desai presented the challenges posed by the digital economy and platform capitalism, where data is extracted from users and monetized by large corporations. She proposed an alternative model based on data cooperativism, where cooperative members maintain democratic control over their data. In particular, her cooperative developed a project with Sewa Federation to support women agri workers. Her organization, IT for Change, developed governance principles centered around data minimization, informed consent, pseudonymization, and collective rights to ensure fair use and protection. She stressed the importance of co-designing inclusive digital ecosystems rooted in cooperative principles.

Mr. Manuel Leiva described how FACTTIC, the first federation of technology cooperatives in Argentina, was created 15 years ago to support the growth and sustainability of IT co-ops. It addresses access barriers to technology by offering services to other cooperatives and SMEs. FACTTIC fosters inclusive digital development and operates as a mechanism to transform traditional IT workers into cooperative entrepreneurs. He underlined the federation's rapid growth which demonstrates the efficiency and social value of the cooperative model in the tech sector.

Mr. Steve Ediger traced his journey from early food co-ops to the founding of ChiCommons, a tech cooperative offering services to small businesses and NGOs. He emphasized the power of cooperation across borders through initiatives such as the Data Commons project and the US Tech Peer Network. Steve explained how global collaborations like Patio.coop facilitate job sharing, best practice exchanges, and joint development of tech standards. He also highlighted the joy and solidarity that comes with working in an international cooperative network.

Mr. Piero Ingrosso outlined Legacoop's strategy to promote digital innovation through its mutual fund, Coopfond. The fund supports cooperatives with equity investment, loans, and grants for innovation projects such as AI-enhanced supply chains and cooperative digital marketplaces. He emphasized a human-centered innovation model that combines funding with education, research, and strategic partnerships. Coopfond also fosters youth entrepreneurship and promotes cooperation among cooperatives as a form of open innovation.

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KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- **Digital Sovereignty and Data Governance:** Cooperatives can lead in creating ethical, democratic data ecosystems.
- **Federation and Ecosystem Building:** National and global federations (like FACTTIC and Patio.coop) are crucial for scaling cooperative tech models.
- **Access to Finance:** Dedicated cooperative funds, such as Coopfund, are essential to overcome the financial barriers to digital transformation.
- **Tech for All:** Cooperative models enable technology access and innovation even for marginalized communities.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Addressing the gender gap in tech co-ops is vital, through inclusive governance and representation.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- **Build Ethical Digital Infrastructures:** Support the Cooperative Digital Infrastructure Manifesto and promote open, democratic tech ecosystems.
- **Promote Cross-Cooperative Innovation:** Encourage partnerships between traditional co-ops and tech co-ops to foster shared development.
- **Support Data Rights Frameworks:** Co-design data governance principles that protect member rights and promote equitable data use.
- **Invest in Capacity Building:** Expand training programs and mentorship in digital skills, especially targeting women and youth.
- **Strengthen Global Networks:** Join federations like Patio.coop to share resources, develop joint projects, and amplify cooperative visibility.



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IV.3: Measuring the Cooperative Impact Towards Sustainability

CONTEXT

Indicators used to measure progress toward a sustainable future serve as important feedback loops as long as they provide information required to change behaviors. Cooperatives are democratic member organisations with associational and mutualist character, networked inter-cooperative structures, and a direct relationship through members' use of the enterprise for a particular need-satisfying purpose, rather than a purely financial investment. They promote human dignity in all aspects of their operations. With these characteristics, there is evidence that they have the potential to impact on system change and provide leadership in transition toward sustainable societies.

This session will address developments of tools and indicators used to measure and report on the performance and impact of cooperatives. These tools will include the Sustainable Development Performance Indicators (SDPI) tool launched recently by UNRISD (<https://sdpi.unrisd.org/>), after a global testing phase where large cooperative groups including the Mondragon Corporation have participated.

Moderator: Prof. Sonja Novkovic, Professor of Economics and Academic Director, International Centre for Co-operative Management, Saint Mary's University, Canada

PANELLISTS:

- **Mr. Ilcheong Yi**, Senior Research Coordinator, UN Research Institute for Social Development, Geneva
- **Mr. Ibon Zugasti**, Partner and Director, PROSPEKTIKER & International Project Manager, LKS Mondragon Corporation, Spain
- **Ms. Chiara Carini**, Senior Researcher, EURICSE, Italy
- **Dr. Justin Bomda**, Director General, MUFID Union, Cameroon

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS

Ms. Chiara Carini emphasized that existing sustainability and ESG frameworks often fail to capture the unique contributions of cooperatives. EURICSE has been working on cooperative-specific indicators that align with SDGs. The study classified 40 indicators into six categories, covering governance, economic impact, and community development. The aim is to test the feasibility of these indicators and understand potential challenges in their application.

Dr. Justin Bomda presented MUFID's experience in Cameroon, where financial sustainability remains a challenge. MUFID focuses on governance, credit portfolio management, and social impact measurement to ensure cooperatives' long-term viability. Regulatory constraints and macroeconomic instability create further challenges for cooperative growth.

Mr. Ilcheong Yi stressed that cooperative performance measurement must go beyond financial metrics to include social and solidarity economy dimensions. He highlighted that many global frameworks exclude small cooperatives and fail to consider power dynamics, inequality, and long-term impact. He suggested a five-year record approach to showcase cooperatives' contributions more comprehensively.

Mr. Ibon Zugasti underscored the need for creative approaches to measuring cooperative impact. He advocated for collaboration with UN bodies such as the UNDP, FAO, and ILO to establish a globally recognized cooperative index. He noted that the UN SDGs and Agenda 2030 provide a strong foundation, but cooperatives must ensure that their metrics reflect their identity rather than simply adapting corporate-driven frameworks.

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KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Defining Cooperative Impact: Traditional ESG frameworks do not capture the full scope of cooperative contributions to social and economic sustainability.
- The Role of Measurement Tools: Data collection and indicators should reflect cooperative values, emphasizing mutualism, inclusivity, and long-term impact.
- Cooperative Reporting Needs: Cooperatives must develop user-driven reporting systems that serve both members and external stakeholders.
- Engaging Policymakers: Cooperatives should collaborate with global institutions to influence sustainability measurement frameworks.

ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

- Develop a Cooperative-Specific Sustainability Index: Design performance indicators tailored to cooperative enterprises.
- Strengthen Data Collection: Expand research on cooperative impact measurement through global partnerships.
- Advocate for Policy Change: Work with UN bodies and governments to integrate cooperative sustainability metrics into regulatory frameworks.
- Enhance Cooperative Education: Train cooperative leaders on sustainability reporting and data-driven decision-making.



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IV.4: Workshop on Accelerating Towards Sustainable Development

Moderator: Mr. Jeroen Douglas, Director General, ICA

OBJECTIVE

The ICA is revising its strategic plan to address emerging challenges and opportunities, aiming to strengthen the relevance and impact of the cooperative movement. The primary objective is to redefine the cooperative movement's strategic direction for 2026-2030 using the Theory of Change (ToC) framework. This involves envisioning a clear pathway from foundational principles (Alpha) to long-term goals (Omega) while addressing challenges and leveraging opportunities. The strategy aims to organize thought processes, align interventions, and establish measurable short-term (2030) and long-term (2035) outcomes. Additionally, it seeks to strengthen the cooperative identity, foster collaboration with social and solidarity economy actors, and translate priorities into actionable initiatives. Ultimately, the goal is to empower members, enhance resilience, and ensure the relevance and influence of the cooperative movement globally.

1. Strengthening Cooperative Identity and Strategic Partnerships:

- **Deepen the Cooperative Identity:** Reinforce core values and principles to strengthen the movement's foundation.
- **Forge Strategic Alliances:** Collaborate with social economy organizations, governments, and businesses to amplify impact.

2. Fostering a Thriving Cooperative Ecosystem:

- **Advocate for Supportive Policies:** Champion policies that promote cooperative development and innovation.
- **Cultivate Entrepreneurial Spirit:** Encourage cooperative entrepreneurship and business development
- **Promote Cooperative Clusters:** Facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing among cooperatives at the local level.

3. Developing Purposeful Cooperative Leadership:

- **Invest in Leadership Development:** Equip cooperative leaders with the skills and knowledge to navigate complex challenges.
- **Promote Diversity and Inclusion:** Ensure that cooperative leadership reflects the diversity of the communities they serve.

4. Building a Sustainable Cooperative Future:

- **Embrace Technology and Innovation:** Leverage technology to enhance efficiency, transparency, and reach.
- **Prioritize Sustainability:** Promote environmentally and socially responsible practices.
- **Expand the Cooperative Movement:** Encourage the formation of new cooperatives, particularly in underserved areas.

The integration of a Theory of Change (ToC) into the cooperative movement's strategic framework provides a structured and visionary pathway to guide future actions. By identifying an overarching principle (Alpha) and defining the desired destination (Omega), the ToC offers clarity on goals and a roadmap to navigate suboptimal paths while turning priorities into actionable strategies.

As highlighted, the ToC enables a collective effort to transform the cooperative movement through a focus on identity, targeted interventions, and measurable short-term (2030) and long-term (2035) outcomes. It also emphasizes aligning strategy with key assumptions and engaging communities of influence to achieve strategic objectives.

While recognizing limited capacities, the process reflects a commitment to organizing thoughts, refining methodologies, and advancing the eight pillars of progress. This revision is a crucial step toward enhancing the cooperative movement's impact, ensuring its relevance, and achieving its envisioned goals for the future.

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By incorporating these suggestions, the ICA's strategic plan can be more impactful, inclusive, and future-oriented.

- **Highlighting the Cooperative Difference:** Clearly articulate the unique value proposition of cooperatives, emphasizing their social and economic impact.
- **Member-Centric Approach:** Prioritize the needs and aspirations of individual cooperative members.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Invest in rigorous research and data analysis to inform strategic decisions.
- **Global Impact:** Expand the reach of the cooperative movement to new markets and regions.
- **Strengthening the Cooperative Enterprise Ecosystem:** Support the development of a robust ecosystem of cooperative businesses and service providers.
- **Redefining ICA's Role:** Clearly articulate the ICA's value proposition to members and stakeholders, adapting to the evolving global context



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Closing ceremony

During the closing ceremony, several meaningful moments highlighted the spirit and future of the cooperative movement. Ms. Ana Aguirre, chairperson of the ICA Youth Committee presented the outcomes of the Coopathon, showcasing youth-led innovation and collaboration within the global cooperative movement. This was followed by an address from Mr. Howard Brodsky, President of CCA Global, who reflected on the role of Artificial Intelligence in strengthening Principle 6. He emphasized how AI can not only enhance cooperation among cooperatives but also help preserve their identity and core values.

A major milestone of the ceremony was the official release of the “[New Delhi Action Agenda: Cooperatives Accelerating Progress towards the SDGs](#)”. This strategic roadmap is built on four pillars: reaffirming cooperative identity, enabling supportive policies, developing strong leadership, and building a sustainable future. It outlines tangible actions across seven key stakeholder levels: cooperatives, communities, civil society, the private sector, opinion shapers, governments, and multilateral institutions.

Dr. Ariel Guarco, President of the ICA, expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Indian Cooperative Movement through a Vote of Appreciation, acknowledging both its significant contributions and the generous hospitality shown throughout the event.

ICA Asia-Pacific President, Dr. Chandra Pal Singh Yadav highlighted that, while cooperatives have long offered societal services, they have gained recognition only after the formation of the Ministry of Cooperation in 2021 and he expressed gratitude to H.E. Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, and to the Ministry of Cooperation for their support.

Dr. Dileep Sanghani, President of ICA-GCC, thanked all participants and reaffirmed the importance of continued global collaboration to address the challenges facing the cooperative movement.

The conference was formally closed by the Guest of Honour, Mr. Muralidhar Mohol, Minister of State for Cooperation (Government of India), who delivered a congratulatory message, underscoring the expanding role of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) in fostering rural development, functional diversification, and positive community transformation.

The ceremony concluded with an enchanting cultural showcase celebrating India's rich heritage. The audience was captivated by classical and folk performances including Odissi from Odisha, Kathak from Uttar Pradesh, Bharatanatyam from Tamil Nadu, the rhythmic Pungcholam from Manipur, and the graceful Mohiniattam from Kerala. The program also featured regional folk dances, contemporary choreography, and martial arts demonstrations, offering attendees a vivid journey through India's artistic and cultural diversity.

The entire closing ceremony was [streamed live on YouTube](#) and remains available online for viewing.

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On Thursday, 28 November, many ICA regional offices, sectoral organisations, and thematic committees held institutional meetings and workshops. Below, we highlight the organisations that hosted meetings, along with their websites, which you can visit if you are interested in learning more about their work:

International Health Cooperative organisation (IHCO)	https://health.coop/
Gender Equality Committee (GEC)	https://genderequality.coop/en
International Cooperative Fisheries organisation (ICFO)	http://www.icfo.coop/main/
ICA Youth Committee	https://globalyouth.coop/en
ICA Africa	https://icaafrica.coop/en
Cooperatives Europe	https://coopseurope.coop/
ICA Asia-Pacific	https://icaap.coop/
International Health Cooperative organization (IHCO)	https://idloom.events/files/events/66022/files/vqi8phjiyed-zup19.pdf
International Cooperative Entrepreneurship Think Tank (ICETT)	https://ica.coop/en/icett
International organisation of industrial and service cooperatives (CICOPA)	https://www.cicopa.coop/
International Cooperative Development Platform (ICDP)	https://coops4dev.coop/en/icadp
International Cooperative Bank Association (ICBA)	https://www.icba.coop/index.php
Cooperative Housing International (CHI)	https://www.housinginternational.coop/
Asia Pacific Cooperative Development Platform (APCDP)	https://icaap.coop/2024/12/10/asia-pacific-cooperative-development-platform-members-meet-in-new-delhi/
ICA Cooperative Law Committee	https://ica.coop/en/welcome-landing-page-ica-cooperative-law-committee-ica-clc#:~:text=ICA%2DCLC%20is%20a%20thematic,institution%20and%20regulate%20its%20operations. https://ica.coop/en/become-a-law-committee-member
Arizmendiarieta Social Economy Think Tank (ASETT)	https://asett.org/

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The ICA General Assembly is the highest authority of the International Cooperative Alliance and is made up of representatives appointed by International Cooperative Alliance member organisations. The agenda covered essential topics, including the confirmation of the mandate of At-large Directors appointed by the ICA Board by co-option announcement of new Directors, the presentation of the ICA President's and Director General's reports, the approval of the 2025 Work Plan and the International Year of Cooperatives, as well as discussions on the 2026-

2030 Strategic Plan. Additionally, the Assembly reviewed proposed amendments to the Internal Rules of the General Assembly and the report from the working group on voting rights and membership fees. The Cooperative Identity Consultation and Recommendations were also presented and debated.

To learn more about the ICA General Assembly that took place in New Delhi, please visit the event page.





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