

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF COOPERATIVES

2 July 2011

The theme for this year's International Day of Cooperatives, "*Youth, the Future of Cooperatives*", highlights the enormous value of engaging the energy and drive of young people.

In the wake of the global financial and economic crisis, youth unemployment is at an all-time high. Expanding opportunity through youth entrepreneurship is one way to address this challenge. The cooperative model enables young people to create and manage sustainable enterprises. Cooperatives are underpinned by the pooling of financial and human resources, technical knowledge and business skills. Furthermore, their member-driven structure roots them in communities, encouraging socially responsible businesses that meet local needs.

Through their distinctive focus on values, cooperatives have proven themselves a resilient and viable business model that can prosper even during difficult times. This success has helped prevent many families and communities from sliding into poverty. Cooperatives have also continuously provided reliable access to credit and other financial services for many small business holders. Moreover, cooperatives have done so while promoting self-reliance and creating stability in the markets in which they operate.

Throughout this year's observance of the International Year of Youth, decision makers around the world have stressed the importance of including young people at all levels of the development process. The active inclusion of young women and men in social and economic development helps reduce social exclusion, improve productive capacity, break cycles of poverty, promote gender equality and raise environmental responsibility.

As we move into the International Year of Cooperatives, which will be officially launched this October, I invite young people to explore the benefits of pursuing cooperative enterprise and other forms of social entrepreneurship. At the same time, I encourage the cooperative movement to engage with youth, in a spirit of dialogue and mutual understanding. Let us recognize young women and men as valuable partners in strengthening the cooperative movement and in sustaining the role of cooperatives in social and economic development.