

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**13 September 2023**

**UN Secretary General calls governments to support and strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystems for cooperatives to help accelerate the 2030 Agenda**

The [2023 UN Secretary General report on cooperatives in social development](#) has been released. The report sets out the entrepreneurial ecosystem approach as a key way to support cooperatives in fulfilling their potential to increase economic and social well-being for all. The recommendations focus on research, data, policy dialogue, technical support and capacity-building.

The report was published following the [2021 General Assembly Resolution 76/135](#). It outlines key policies and actions that can assist cooperatives in realizing their full potential for supporting Member States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including by providing decent jobs, advancing poverty eradication, and promoting environmental sustainability. It will be presented to the 78th UN General Assembly to be held from 18 to 26 September 2023 to adopt a new Resolution on cooperatives in social development.

In the report, the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, applauds how cooperatives promote sustainable development in its 3 dimensions of social development, economic development and environmental protection contributing to “social inclusion and the eradication of poverty and hunger”. Although Member States have recognized cooperatives as key partners for sustainable development, says the 2023 UN Secretary General report, “they continue to play a relatively small part in overall economic and social policies and practice, compared with their huge potential contribution”.

*"Increasingly, the United Nations is recognising our business model as a key player in advancing towards the Sustainable Development Goals. This is no coincidence; it is the result of the integration and power that we are demonstrating in each community to respond to the main challenges of the global agenda. We hope that this call by the UN Secretary General to governments will allow us to continue consolidating a cooperative paradigm in each country, in each region and at the global level. The peoples of the world and the environment urgently need to strengthen a system of economic relations that ensure prosperity, equity, democracy, and peace",* says Ariel Guarco, President of the ICA.

The cooperative entrepreneurial ecosystem, as described by the UN, includes 5 key actions:

- Policy and regulatory environment
- Education and capacity-building
- The culture of cooperation
- Funding and finance
- Building networks and partnerships

Two case studies are given as examples of successful cooperative ecosystems that embody all key elements: the worker cooperative examples of [Mondragon Corporation in Spain](#), and the [Kibbutz movement in Israel](#). Other examples mentioned can be found [here](#) “It is necessary to understand the particularities of the ecosystem for alternative types of enterprises and strategize how and through which mechanisms they can be empowered at the policy level and bring greater benefit to their communities”, says the text.

The report highlights 4 key recommendations to the Member States on how to support and strengthen cooperatives as successful business enterprises to increase their ability to support sustainable development and increase economic and social well-being:

- To use the entrepreneurial ecosystem approach, as well as support for further research in order to build a firm foundation for evidence-based policies;
- To collect comprehensive and internationally comparable data on the role of cooperative enterprises in economic and social development and the implementation of the SDGs;
- To integrate cooperatives in national development plans and Sustainable Development Goal reporting processes, in national consultations on social and economic policies and in voluntary national reviews submitted for the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development;
- To provide policy analysis, technical support and capacity-building assistance to promote the continued growth of cooperatives for the achievement of sustainable development.

This report is a result of the discussion within the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Cooperatives in Social Development that was organised by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) in May in which the ICA was involved. The experts were drawn from various fields including researchers from the academia, practitioners from the cooperative movement, and government departments in charge of cooperatives. More information is available [here](#).

The UN has long viewed the cooperative movement as a key partner in enhancing social development and cooperatives as very suited enterprises to achieve the SDGs. The UN General Assembly has been adopting resolutions concerning cooperatives in social development since 1950s and systematically every 2 years since 1992.

As a follow-up to these resolutions, the UN Secretary General submitted this 2023 report to examine their implementation. A previous report published in [2021](#), the UN Secretary General recognised the importance of cooperatives as key economic and social actors in the global recovery strategy following the COVID-19 pandemic. Recently, in April 2023, the UN approved the first ever [Resolution on promoting the social and solidarity economy for sustainable development](#).

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## NOTES TO THE EDITOR

About the International Cooperative Alliance

The International Cooperative Alliance is a non-profit international association established in 1895 to advance the cooperative social enterprise model. The International Cooperative Alliance is a voice for cooperatives worldwide, representing more than 310 cooperative federations and organisations across 110 countries.

12 % of humanity are cooperators. Through its membership, the International Cooperative Alliance represents more than 1 billion people from 3 million cooperatives worldwide. The largest 300 cooperatives in the world have combined annual revenues of 2.16 trillion USD (2015) and 280 million people around the world (10% of the employed population) secure their livelihoods in cooperatives, either through direct employment or by organising themselves through a cooperative.

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

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