

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

--

**MESSAGE ON THE UNITED NATIONS
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF COOPERATIVES**

1 July 2006

The theme of this year's International Day of Cooperatives—"Peacebuilding through Cooperatives"—highlights the growing significance of these enterprises in promoting peace and development.

The international cooperatives movement has been a longstanding voice for peace. As far back as the turbulent period leading up to the First World War, it stood firmly against militarism. And in its aftermath, the International Cooperative Alliance strongly supported both the League of Nations and, subsequently, the United Nations.

Today, cooperatives contribute to peacebuilding by promoting local economic and social development. In post-conflict societies, they reintroduce fair systems of distribution, create supply and marketing systems, provide access to financial services and spur employment. Their economic model—stressing self-help and mutual aid—facilitates social and political reconciliation.

At the same time, cooperatives empower individuals, and provide forums for grassroots democratic processes. Their collaborative nature fosters trust and helps develop social capital within communities. Their benefits are often greatest where they are most needed—by conflict victims, women, and other vulnerable groups, as well as during humanitarian crises. Over the past year and a half, for example, cooperatives played a valuable role in rehabilitating survivors of the East Asian Tsunami.

On this International Day, I encourage governments and civil society to recognize the valuable contributions being made by cooperatives towards peacebuilding, and to engage with them as vital partners in pursuing sustainable development, and in creating a fairer and more peaceful world.