

“Cooperative values and principles for corporate social responsibility”



Message from Juan Somavia Director-General of the International Labour Office (ILO) on the occasion of the 85th ICA International Day of Cooperatives 13th UN International Day of Cooperatives

The ILO welcomes the focus on “cooperative values and principles for corporate social responsibility” (CSR) on International Cooperatives Day 2007.

The cooperative movement embraces the values and principles of self-help and solidarity, equality, equity and openness. Caring for their members and their communities is an integral part of the cooperative ethos. Responsible business practices and standards that take into account economic, social and environmental objectives and promote democratic practices of good governance and transparency, are the “cooperative way” of doing business.

The ILO’s standards, guidelines and other instruments developed on a tripartite basis provide a framework of reference for the meaning of corporate social responsibility. This year the ILO celebrates the 30th anniversary of its Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy. It offers a global platform for corporate social responsibility and has proved its worth over time.

The ILO brings these practical instruments to our long-standing association with the cooperative movement based on the convergence of objectives on social justice in and through the world of work.

Corporate social responsibility is an opportunity for companies to demonstrate how they share and promote societal values while doing good business. The cooperative movement has a 150-year old commitment to social responsibility, pursuing practical programmes for social justice. It is actively engaged in advancing the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda, improving the lives of women and men, their families and communities, opening up pathways out of the informal economy. The movement is in the vanguard of the contemporary quest for globalization with a human face and it is not surprising that cooperatives have shown leadership in realizing the values of good corporate citizenship. It has practiced corporate social responsibility since long before the term was invented.

The nearly 1 billion strong global cooperative movement—with its 100 million employees and 800 million members—is a highly significant sector of the world of work.

Cooperatives have led the way in showing that social concern can also be good business strategy. This International Day of Cooperatives is an opportunity to draw on cooperative ideals and practice to strengthen CSR initiatives that help to realize a globalization with social progress.