



# REPORT OF THE 11TH ASIA PACIFIC COOPERATIVE MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

**April 28 - 30, 2024 – Dead Sea, Jordan**

Partnerships between Government  
and Cooperatives for Cooperative  
Resilience, Sustainable  
Development, and Inclusive Growth  
in Asia Pacific, Middle East and  
North Africa Region



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE .....	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	6
RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS.....	9
OPENING CEREMONY.....	9
SESSION 1: State of Partnerships in Asia-Pacific and MENA.....	11
SESSION 2: Accelerating the Cooperative Identity .....	13
SESSION 3: Adapting to Changing Environment and Building Resiliency .....	14
SESSION 4: Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 1, 5, 8, 13).....	18
CLOSING CEREMONY .....	20
JORDAN DECLARATION.....	22
ANNEXURES.....	26
1. BACKGROUND PAPER.....	26
2. PROGRAM AGENDA .....	34
3. COUNTRY STATEMENTS.....	37
AUSTRALIA .....	37
EGYPT .....	39
FIJI .....	42
INDIA.....	45
IRAN.....	48
JAPAN.....	49
MALAYSIA .....	52
MOROCCO.....	56
NEPAL .....	57
PALESTINE .....	59
PAPUA NEW GUINEA.....	64
PHILLIPPINES .....	67
SAUDI ARABIA.....	68
THAILAND .....	69
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES .....	71
4. PROFILE OF KEY DIGNITARIES AND SPEAKERS.....	74
5. LIST OF INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS .....	85

## PREFACE

I am delighted to present to you the Conference Report of the 11<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Cooperative Ministers Conference (APCMC) on “Partnerships between Government and Cooperatives for Cooperative Resilience, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Growth in Asia Pacific, Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA).” The report contains the declaration and a summary record of the proceedings of the Conference held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in the Dead Sea from April 28 to 30, 2024.

The importance of cooperatives and the consequent need for partnerships between government and cooperatives have been amply emphasised by the multilateral institutions in the recent past. The resolutions of the General Conference of ILO held in 2002 recommend government support for the activities of the cooperatives to meet the specific social and public policy outcomes, such as employment promotion or developmental activities benefiting disadvantaged groups through appropriate policy changes. This includes facilitating access to support services to strengthen the visibility and their capacity to generate employment and income.

The UN Resolutions adopted in the General Assemblies held in 2021 and 2023 have again underscored these elements. The 76/135 resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021 emphasizes the role of cooperatives in social development. The secretary general's report submitted pursuant to the General Assembly resolution 76/135 outlines key policies and activities for the member countries to assist cooperatives in playing a significant role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and calls for adopting and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Approach in positioning cooperatives in the economy. It calls for governments to identify and expand the availability, accessibility and dissemination of evidence based research on the operations and contribution of cooperatives to develop statistical frameworks for systematic and comprehensive data on best practices.

The International Cooperative Alliance Asia-Pacific (ICA-AP) is grateful to the government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for its whole-hearted support throughout the conference. Our sincere thanks to the Jordan Cooperative Corporation (JCC) for their exemplary organization and to H.E. Khaled Mousa Shehadeh Alhuneafat, Minister of Agriculture and Mr. Abdelfattah M.Q. Al-Shalabi, Director General, JCC for their tireless efforts during the conference. Our gratitude to all the honorable Ministers and senior government officials who attended the conference and contributed to the conference proceedings. We are thankful to the international organizations who attended the conference and made valuable recommendations.

I would like to thank all ICA members from the region for their enthusiastic participation during the regional consultations and the conference. I am grateful to Dr. Ariel Guarco, President ICA and Mr. Jeroen Douglas, Director General ICA for attending the conference. My thanks to Mr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav, President of ICA-AP and the Regional Board for their generous support and encouragement. My special gratitude to Dr. Nizar Haddad, Director of the National Agricultural Research Center (NARC) of Jordan, for his continuous support and guidance before, during and after the conference. I am also thankful to Mr. Michael Pilbrow, Ms. Nadia Alkhasawneh, Mr. Santosh Kumar and Ms. Dulce Bustamante for painstakingly putting

together the conference declaration. I would like to acknowledge the rapporteurs, Majd Abuselem, Sana Al Yousef, William Alkhoury, Abdel Razzaq, and Riyad Al-Sharif, for diligently taking notes of the proceedings. Their meticulous documentation has been invaluable in capturing the key discussions and insights from the consultation. I would like to acknowledge the terrific support from staff at the Regional Office and especially acknowledge the efforts of Mohit Dave, Shivali Sarna, Monalisa Kashyap, Simren Singh, Kulbhusan Kukreja, and Shree Padmanabhan.

The conference's theme was of pivotal importance. It played a crucial role in facilitating meaningful dialogues and fostering collaboration among ministers, policymakers, cooperators, and other stakeholders. The ICA International Conference and Global Assembly will be hosted in India from November 25 to 30, 2024. This event promises to be a pivotal moment, especially as it will serve as the kick-off for the 2025 International Year of Cooperatives. The Asia Pacific region has an important role to play in ensuring the commitments made at these important platforms are met. We are committed to taking forward the Declaration coming out of the conference.

Balasubramanian (Balu) G. Iyer  
Regional Director, ICA Asia and Pacific

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 11<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference (APCMC) was held from April 28-30, 2024, at the Dead Sea in Jordan. Organized by the International Cooperative Alliance Asia-Pacific (ICA-AP) and hosted by the Jordan Cooperative Corporation and the Ministry of Agriculture, this landmark event brought together key stakeholders from governments, cooperative enterprises, civil society organizations, and international agencies across the Asia Pacific and MENA regions.

With the theme "Partnerships between Government and Cooperatives for Cooperative Resilience, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Growth," the conference underscored the pivotal role of cooperatives in driving socio-economic development and the need for strengthened collaboration between governments and the cooperative sector.

The event featured distinguished speakers, including government officials from 17 countries, cooperative leaders, and representatives from international organizations, who highlighted the contributions of cooperatives across various sectors and the importance of supportive partnerships for resilient and sustainable growth.

Key highlights of the 11<sup>th</sup> APCMC included:

- Discussions on the current state of cooperatives in the Asia Pacific region, strategies for enhancing government-cooperative partnerships, leveraging digitalization for inclusivity, and promoting gender equality within cooperatives.
- The initiation of a comprehensive study to evaluate existing government support frameworks for cooperatives and identify avenues for enhanced cooperation, aligning with the conference's overarching themes of resilience, sustainability, and inclusivity.
- Interactive panel discussions and statements from government officials, fostering the exchange of insights, exploration of synergies, and co-creation of actionable solutions.
- The significance of hosting the conference in the Middle East for the first time, highlighting the growing recognition of cooperative principles as catalysts for sustainable development and social cohesion.
- Engaging with government officials and cooperatives in the MENA region to leverage their shared history, culture, and economic structures and enhance their capacity to contribute to sustainable development and economic resilience.



*(L-R)Mr. Khatib, Spanish Interpreter; Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, ICA-AP Regional Director; Eng. Sultan bin Jorais Aljorais, H.E. Deputy Minister in charge of Social Development Sector, Saudi Arabia; Datuk Ewon Benedick, Minister of Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development, Malaysia; Mr. Balaram Adhikari, Minister of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation, Nepal; Dr. Ariel Guarco, ICA President; H.E. Khaled Mousa Shehadeh Alhuneafat, Minister of Agriculture, Jordan; HRH Princess Basma bint Ali, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan; Dr. Chandra Pal Singh Yadav, ICA-AP President; Dr. Abbas Al-Haj Hassan, Minister of Agriculture, Lebanon; Mr. Abdelfattah Al-Shalabi, Director General, JCC; Mr. Jeroen Douglas, ICA Director General; and Dr. Nizar Haddad, Director General, NARC, Jordan*

The Jordan Declaration distinctly recognizes the power of cooperatives to foster partnerships (SDG 17) and build peaceful, just and inclusive institutions (SDG 16) in furtherance of the SDGs. The Declaration identifies key areas for cooperative-government collaboration such as:

- Ending poverty and promoting gender equality
- Fostering decent work and economic growth
- Combating climate change
- Promoting inclusive development for marginalized groups

The Declaration urges governments to position cooperatives as vehicles for inclusive growth through open membership and volunteerism. It calls for jointly implementing cooperative solutions with stakeholders for local and global challenges, fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships for innovation in areas like healthcare, education, green economy and aged care.

The Declaration emphasizes equitable gender representation in cooperatives, collaborating with the ICA to promote digital technologies, and upholding the 6th Cooperative Principle of Cooperation among Cooperatives. It encourages regional and international cooperation among governments, cooperatives and stakeholders to share best practices, exchange knowledge and create an enabling environment for cooperative resilience and growth across

Asia-Pacific, MENA and Small Island/landlocked nations. Finally, it commits to tracking progress through annual ICA-AP Board meetings and the next APCMC, with the 2025 UN International Year of Cooperatives providing a key opportunity.

The 11<sup>th</sup> APCMC provided a valuable platform for stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue, share best practices, and forge collaborative partnerships to promote the growth and development of cooperatives in the region. The conference outcomes and resolutions will inform future policies and initiatives aimed at creating an enabling environment for cooperative enterprises to thrive and contribute to inclusive and sustainable development goals.

## RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

The Asia Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference (APCMC) was instituted by the ICA-AP in 1990 as a quadrennial conference to provide a platform for cooperative leaders and ministers in charge of cooperatives from countries in the Asia Pacific region to discuss current and emerging issues, set a common agenda for development of cooperatives and advocate for an enabling legal and policy environment for cooperatives to operate. The 11<sup>th</sup> APCMC was organized in the Dead Sea, Jordan from April 28-30, 2024 in collaboration with the Jordanian Cooperative Corporation (JCC) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of Jordan. The Conference was attended by over 155 participants from 17 countries in the region and ten countries were represented by their ministers in charge of cooperatives.

The conference adopted a resolution on “Partnerships for Cooperative Resilience, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth”, building on the theme of the conference. The 11<sup>th</sup> APCMC was organized on the theme "Partnerships between Government and Cooperatives for Cooperative Resilience, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Growth in Asia Pacific, Middle East and North Africa (MENA)". The conference focused on topics such as food security, new cooperative approaches, public-private partnerships, formalizing the informal economy, and enabling regulatory environments.

### OPENING CEREMONY



*Mr. Abdelfattah Alshalabi sharing his opening remarks*

Mr. Abdelfattah Al-Shalabi, Director General of the JCC, welcomed participants on behalf of Jordan's cooperatives and members. He highlighted Jordan's long cooperative history since 1952 and the strategic goals including promoting development, self-reliance and an enabling

environment. The ICA President, Mr. Ariel Guarco reminded the gathering that cooperatives were the first international economic group committed to the SDGs in 2016, with their model ensuring economic stability through democracy, solidarity, justice and equity. The ICA-AP President Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav expressed gratitude to Jordanian hosts and looked forward to shaping the path towards realizing the SDGs through the conference.



*Dr. Chandra Pal Singh Yadav sharing his welcome remarks*

In the opening ceremony on Day 1, keynote speaker Mr. Abdelfattah M.Q. Al-Shalabi spoke about the establishment and strategic goals of cooperatives in Jordan:

- The cooperatives movement has been present in Jordan since 1952. New legislation regulates their establishment.
- Key strategic goals include promoting economic, social and cultural development, self-dependence, building JCC's capacities, enhancing the cooperative sector's regulatory environment, and applying best standards.
- Recent law changes have increased the number of seats for women on JCC's local committees to promote gender empowerment.
- Models of government-cooperative partnerships exist with various ministries like Agriculture, Water & Irrigation, Planning, Labor, Finance, Environment, Local Administration.
- There is royal recognition and support for cooperatives from royal initiatives and management.

Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director of ICA-AP, provided an introduction highlighting:

- Challenges requiring updates to cooperative laws.
- The need to strengthen government-cooperative partnerships.
- Using the sessions to highlight issues like the role of youth and women in cooperatives.

H.E. Khaled Mousa Shehadeh Alhuneafat, Minister of Agriculture stressed the duty to support cooperatives and reduce people's suffering. Overall, the opening sessions outlined Jordan's cooperative landscape, emphasized government-cooperative collaboration, and set the stage for discussing identity, resilience, sustainability and inclusive growth through cooperatives.

## SESSION I: State of Partnerships in Asia-Pacific and MENA

The first session featured two important presentations. Dr. Yashvantha Dongre, Chairperson of the ICA-AP Committee on Cooperative Research, presented findings from a study assessing government-cooperative partnerships across 8 countries - India, Japan, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Nepal, Korea and the Philippines.

The exploratory study, conducted through qualitative analysis of documents and stakeholder perceptions, found that while partnerships exist in all countries, their nature differs. Cases from India, Jordan and the Philippines demonstrated gains accruing to stakeholders from such partnerships. However, legislations often act as obstacles. The study recommended government recognition of the 2023 UN Resolution acknowledging cooperatives' role in achieving SDGs. It emphasized cultivating consultation with cooperatives in policymaking, developing clear partnership guidelines, strengthening cooperative capacities, and sharing best practices across nations.

Dr. Samir Barhoumeh, Research Consultant, provided additional context on the study team and methodology. He highlighted that the case studies concluded collaboration between government and cooperatives plays a crucial role in promoting socio-economic and environmental development by improving legislations and policies. This aligns with the conference's core theme of fostering partnerships for resilience, sustainability and inclusive growth.

The presentations underscored the imperative of robust, well-designed government-cooperative partnerships as enablers for cooperatives to optimize their unique strengths in uplifting communities and realizing the Sustainable Development Goals across the Asia-Pacific, MENA and globally. Key enablers identified include supportive policies, stakeholder engagement, capacity building and cross-country knowledge exchange.

H.E. Mr. Manoa Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications, Fiji highlighted Fiji's renewed commitment to the cooperative movement, reflected in including "Cooperatives" in the ministry's name after the formation of the new government in December 2022. He provided examples of successful women-led cooperatives in Fiji that have managed to market their products online and on Amazon. Recommendations included involving the Pacific region in cooperative initiatives, offering discounts on subscription fees, launching a strategic discussion for cooperatives, replicating Jordan's successful cooperative experience, and providing technical assistance after reviewing cooperative laws. He called for a strong footprint of cooperatives in Fiji and the Pacific, and made a heartfelt plea to the International Cooperative Alliance to establish a presence and office in Fiji.

H.E. U.Sec. Joseph "Joy" Ballota Encabo, Chairman, Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), Philippines was represented by Ms. Maria Corazon Montallana, Chairperson, NATCCO. In his statement, he emphasized the importance of cooperative movements in shaping the international community. He outlined critical steps needed to bolster agricultural cooperatives and ensure food security, including identifying resources and strategies, strengthening the CDA, emphasizing sustainable production through science, and accelerating clustering and consolidation efforts in farming, fisheries, and livestock management. The CDA has introduced initiatives to maximize the potential of agricultural cooperatives, such as integrating smart farming techniques, farm mapping, and enhancing supply and value chain management. He highlighted the CDA's efforts to promote mergers and consolidation of micro and small cooperatives to avoid dissolution, leverage resources, achieve economies of scale, foster efficiency, and reduce promotional costs. It has also launched initiatives to attract international opportunities by promoting cooperative products through the internet.



*(L-R) H.E. Mr. Manoa Kamikamica, Fiji; H.E. Dr. Abass Al-haj Hassan, Lebanon; H.E. Mr. Balaram Adhikari, Nepal and Ms. Maria Montallana Corazon on behalf of H.E. U.Sec. Joseph "Joy" Ballota Encabo, Philippines*

H.E. Mr. Balaram Adhikari, Minister of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation, Nepal emphasized the importance of learning from developed countries' experiences and encouraging country development through cooperatives. He highlighted the contribution of the cooperative sector to economic enhancement, increased production, and work efficiency in Nepal. He mentioned the existence of around 3,000 cooperatives in Nepal, operating in sectors such as food, agriculture, tea, and coffee, which support economic development. He noted the potential of globalization and technology changes to facilitate the work of cooperatives. The Nepalese government is working to reduce the impact of global changes on the cooperative sector. He emphasized strengthening partnerships between cooperatives and the government through the outcomes of the current conference.

H.E. Dr. Abass Al-haj Hassan, Minister of Agriculture, Lebanon emphasized the necessity of humanizing cooperation and collaboration. He highlighted the challenges and difficulties faced by the cooperative sector in Lebanon, driving the need for support, guidance, and partnership with the private sector. He stressed the urgent need to increase agricultural cooperatives to further advance the Lebanese agricultural sector. He cited women's cooperatives in Lebanon as a strong and effective example of the success of cooperative work and achieving desired goals.

## SESSION 2: Accelerating the Cooperative Identity

Session 2 was chaired by Mr. Michael Pilbrow, Director and Chairman, Strategic Development Group, Australia. He was representing the Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals (BCCM) in Australia.

Mr. Hani Farhan Alodainat, Director of the Cooperative Training Center, JCC highlighted the multifaceted benefits of cooperatives, emphasizing their roles in ensuring business sustainability, community commitment, democratic governance, and financial security. He proposed several strategic measures to enhance the relevance of cooperatives in facing contemporary challenges. These measures include maintaining cooperative principles to build resilience, forming strategic alliances with governments, investing in education, and establishing technology-focused cooperatives. He also suggested that governments could support cooperatives by increasing awareness, providing facilities, especially for marginalized groups, developing supportive policies, and conducting statistical surveys to better understand cooperative needs.

Mr. P. Santosh Kumar, Director of Legislation, ICA presented findings from the ICA Cooperative Identity Survey, which engaged cooperators from 136 countries. The survey aimed to deepen the understanding of cooperative identity and foster global dialogue. Results showed a strong recognition of the cooperative identity statement, though familiarity varied by respondent type and country. Key cooperative principles, especially democratic member control, were identified as distinguishing factors of cooperatives. This survey highlighted the importance of cooperative values and provided insights into their evolution, reinforcing their global significance.

Mr. Kenki Maeda, General Manager, Japan Co-operative Alliance (JCA), introduced the Identity Consultation in Japan with the participation of many cooperators, from which the JCA put together recommendations to the ICA. He emphasized, as the most important idea underlying the recommendations, that, as the sustainability of local communities is being questioned due to ageing and depopulation, cooperatives need to be actively involved in their communities and realize their sustainability through cooperation among members, among cooperatives, and with other SSE actors. He concluded that the commitment to communities should be more strongly mentioned in the Identity Statement and that an institutional environment needs to be created to facilitate such commitment.

H.E. Eng. Sultan bin Jorais AlJorais, Deputy Minister for Social Security and Empowerment, Saudi Arabia stressed Saudi Arabia's commitment to the cooperative movement as part of its

Vision 2030. He highlighted the importance of collaboration between the private and governmental sectors to boost employment and work efficiency. Saudi Arabia is launching initiatives to support cooperative development and seeks to strengthen regional and international partnerships.

H.E. Mr. Pankaj Kumar Bansal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Cooperation, India underscored the Indian government's support for cooperatives, noting the establishment of a ministry dedicated to cooperatives. He highlighted the significant role of cooperatives in key economic sectors and the importance of technology in enhancing cooperative operations. India's approach ensures the autonomy and ownership of cooperatives, promoting social transparency and systemization.

Hon. Dr. (Ms.) Mervat Sabrin, Assistant Minister of Social Solidarity, Egypt outlined Egypt's longstanding support for cooperatives, which are integral to the country's developmental economy. She emphasized the role of cooperatives in empowering local communities, reducing poverty, and fostering social integration. Egypt's legal framework and strategic initiatives reflect a strong commitment to cooperative development. The cooperative sector is granted various tax exemptions and enjoys a robust partnership with the government, aiming to reduce unemployment and support national industries. To address economic challenges, Egypt plans to restructure its cooperative sector, draft a unified law, and enhance women's and youth participation.

The Chair highlighted the following key recommendations from the session:

1. Promote Collaboration: Encourage collaboration beyond cooperatives while preserving cooperative identity.
2. Dynamic Identity: Treat cooperative identity as a living, evolving concept.
3. Stakeholder Engagement: Share conference outcomes with local and global cooperatives.
4. Education and Awareness: Strengthen education about cooperatives and their significance.
5. Legal and Policy Support: Implement supportive legal frameworks to enforce conference recommendations and foster cooperative growth.

The session underscored the importance of cooperatives in addressing global challenges, fostering resilience, and enhancing socio-economic development through strategic initiatives and collaborative efforts.

### **SESSION 3: Adapting to Changing Environment and Building Resiliency**

Session 3 was chaired by Dr. Manoj Nardeosingh, Secretary General, African-Asian Rural Development Organization.

Mr. Abdul Hakim Elwaer, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative, FAO Near East and North Africa (NENA) discussed the need for a transformative approach in the NENA region that is equitable, inclusive, and sustainable. Emphasizing gender equality and social inclusion, he highlighted rural areas as crucial for global food security but also vulnerable to

socio-economic challenges. Women, often employed in agriculture but not in managerial roles, face restricted financial services. Effective Rural Advisory Services (RAS) are lacking, hindering market access and agribusiness support. Despite this, the NENA region has a tradition of community collaboration and tribal cooperative behaviors. A SWOT analysis revealed strengths in grassroots empowerment and weaknesses in management and market entry. Recommendations included fostering cooperative endeavors, enhancing women's roles in cooperatives, leveraging new technologies, and updating regulatory frameworks.



*(L-R) Session Chair Dr. Manoj Nardeosingh with Speakers Mr. Abdul Hakim Elwaer, FAO; f Dr. Nizar Haddad, NARC and Ms. Om Devi Malla, NCF Nepal*

Dr. Nizar Haddad, Director General, National Agricultural Research Center (NARC), Jordan presented Jordan's role as a hub of agricultural innovation, focusing on sustainable agriculture amid severe water scarcity. The NARC adapts innovations to Jordan's conditions, benefiting other regions facing similar climate challenges. Historical achievements in agriculture, such as ancient bread-making and water management, were highlighted. With Jordan's population surge stressing water resources, NARC focuses on technological solutions, including water desalination and advanced irrigation techniques. Jordan's investment in marginal water use, second only to Japan, demonstrates its commitment to maximizing resources. Collaboration with FAO and digital technology initiatives aim to support farmers and optimize water consumption.

Ms. Om Devi Malla, Chairperson, National Cooperative Federation of Nepal emphasized the resilience of cooperatives, rooted in joint ownership, democratic control, and broad member participation. The Nepalese constitution supports cooperatives as a means to achieve economic prosperity and social justice. Despite global variability in cooperative resilience, countries with cooperative development models at grassroots levels fared better during economic crises. Nepal's legal framework promotes cooperative principles, ensuring member

participation and equitable wealth distribution. Challenges include ineffective governance, limited education and training, regulatory inadequacies, youth engagement issues, and political interference. Enhancing cooperative resilience requires ongoing collaboration between cooperatives and the government.

There was a question from the audience on how cooperatives have helped in implementing agricultural innovations. Dr. Haddad responded that NARC has collaborated with FAO and IFAD since 2001, using participatory approaches like Farmer Field Schools to train and build capacity in small groups, eventually guiding them to establish cooperatives and access resources. Interventions from the audience emphasised that cooperatives are integral to community development, emerging from local needs. In Jordan, increasing genuine participation from women and youth is essential. The role of cooperatives should be measured by their impact on business efficiency.

The chairperson highlighted that the session underscored the importance of adapting to changing environments through inclusive and sustainable practices, particularly in agriculture. Presenters highlighted the roles of women and youth, the significance of technological advancements, and the necessity of robust legal frameworks to support cooperative resilience. The session called for enhanced collaboration, both within the cooperative sector and between cooperatives and governments, to address current challenges and foster a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future.

H.E. Dr. Hamed Veyskarami, Deputy Minister of Cooperative Affairs, Iran was represented by Mr. Alireza Banaefar, International Relations, Iran Chamber of Cooperatives. His statement emphasized that cooperatives are deeply rooted in the nation's culture, helping people solve their problems while maintaining traditions. The cooperative movement in Iran began formally with the trade law of 1925, and the official formation and registration of cooperatives started in 1935. Iran's cooperative sector spans agriculture, industry, and services, contributing significantly to the national economy alongside private and government sectors. This sector boasts over 18 million members, 99,000 active cooperatives, 60 national unions, and 40 provincial and city chambers, and has created 1.8 million jobs, playing a critical role in various fields such as healthcare, handicrafts, tourism, education, transportation, housing, and fisheries, thereby promoting development and sustainability.

Mr. Bilal Omer, Chairman of the Cooperative Work Authority, Ministry of Labour in Palestine, highlighted the essential connection between cooperation values and humanity, with cooperatives balancing the three pillars of sustainable development. However, challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing conflicts pose significant obstacles. He stressed the urgent need for accelerated action before 2030 to meet the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), noting that policies and legislation in Palestine are vital for creating an enabling environment for cooperative and sustainable development. Given the occupation and unique challenges, achieving SDGs in Palestine is seen as a luxury, requiring a reconsideration of sustainable development approaches.

Ms. Aicha Errifaai, General Director of the Office of Cooperation Development in Morocco, discussed the significance of Morocco's Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), officially recognized in 2021 as a fundamental component of national development. The Office of Cooperative Development supports and enhances the cooperative sector, emphasizing the

importance of global collaboration and sharing best practices to strengthen the cooperative network. Actions align with strategies from the 12th Africa Ministerial Cooperative Conference to boost cooperative efforts, market access, participation, research, innovation, and financing opportunities.

H.E. Yang Berhormat Datuk Ewon Benedick, Minister of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives from Malaysia, outlined the historical and current significance of the cooperative movement in Malaysia, which began in 1922. Malaysia's cooperative sector includes 15,805 cooperatives, 7.2 million members, \$3.7 billion in shares and subscriptions, \$35.1 billion in assets, and a \$13.7 billion turnover. The Malaysia Cooperative Policy 2030 (DaKoM 2030) aims to achieve RM60 billion in revenue by 2025 and RM73 billion by 2030 through four core policies and 20 strategies, focusing on uniting, educating, building, and growing the sector. The Cooperative Digitalization Action Plan 2021-2025 enhances technology-based business capabilities in cooperatives. Significant achievements include the establishment of the first cooperative bank, recognition in the top 300 world cooperative monitors, and successful financing services for SMEs. Future directions emphasize regional cooperation for economic resilience, focusing on food security, optimized trade processes, and a supportive environment for cooperative-to-cooperative trade.



*(L-R) H.E. Abdulaziz Almutairi, Kuwait; H.E. YB Datuk Ewon Benedick, Malaysia; H.E. Ms. J.A.D.S.P. Wijegunasekara, Ambassador of Sri Lanka in Jordan; Ms. Rasha Bassam Karkouki, Syria and Representative for H.E. Wafaa Al-Kelani, Minister of Social Affairs, Libya*

Ms. Rasha Bassam Karkouki, Assistant Minister of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection, Syria, presented the statement on behalf of H.E. Eng. Mohammed Hassan Qatana, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform from Syria. She stressed the importance of the conference in addressing the Arab region's significant challenges, requiring collaboration and innovation. In Syria, cooperatives are vital for sustainable development and economic growth, especially

in post-conflict scenarios. Despite substantial government support, Syrian cooperatives have been severely impacted by terrorism and economic sanctions. A comprehensive strategy is needed to support and revitalize the sector, including rebuilding efforts, training, incorporating advanced systems, and seeking financial partnerships. There is optimism for developing relationships with Arab and international partners to enhance cooperative efforts and community-wide objectives.

H.E. Abdulaziz Almutairi, Deputy Minister of Social Affairs, Kuwait highlighted the establishment of Kuwait's cooperative movement in 1962 through Law 20 and its significant contributions to the national economy and food security. The government prioritizes enhancing the investment climate and supporting cooperatives and small businesses. Ahmed Mulla, President of the Cooperatives Union in Kuwait, provided details on the 79 cooperative societies generating \$3 billion in annual sales and \$230 million in profits, with \$30 million reinvested to serve shareholders and support community welfare initiatives.

Representative for H.E. Wafaa Al-Kelani, Minister of Social Affairs, Libya discussed Libya's longstanding tradition of cooperative systems across various sectors, such as agriculture, housing, economics, and support for marginalized communities. The Ministry of Social Affairs, along with public authorities, plays a crucial role in supporting productive families, facilitating marketing of their products, and fostering the development of businesses and cooperatives through collaboration with both private and public sectors.

#### SESSION 4: Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 1, 5, 8, 13)

Session 4 was chaired by Mr. Jeroen Douglas, Director General, ICA.

Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP presented a comprehensive study conducted by the ICA-AP on the role of cooperatives in Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). This study highlighted how cooperatives are contributing to the achievement of the SDGs across various countries. The findings underscored the importance of integrating cooperatives into national development strategies and recognized their potential to drive inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The study emphasized the need for governments to incorporate cooperative data and narratives in their VNRs to better reflect the impact of cooperatives on achieving SDGs.

Ms. Simel Esim, Head – ILO's Cooperative Unit, shared her views on "Promoting Sustained, Inclusive, and Sustainable Economic Growth, Full and Productive Employment, and Decent Work for All." She addressed the critical role cooperatives play in promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth. She emphasized that cooperatives provide full and productive employment and decent work opportunities for all, contributing significantly to SDG 8. She discussed various initiatives and programs supported by the ILO that focus on enhancing the capacity of cooperatives to generate employment, ensure fair wages, and provide safe working conditions. Ms. Esim also highlighted successful case studies from different regions where cooperatives have effectively addressed unemployment and underemployment issues, particularly among vulnerable groups.

Ms. Chitose Arai, Chairperson, ICA-AP Committee on Women made a presentation on “Strengthening Policies and Legislation that Promote Gender Equality”. It focused on the importance of strengthening policies and legislation to promote gender equality, aligning with SDG 5. She stressed the need for legal frameworks that support women's participation and leadership in cooperatives. Ms. Arai shared insights into the work of the ICA-AP Committee on Women, which advocates for gender-sensitive policies and creates platforms for women's empowerment within the cooperative movement. She presented examples of best practices from countries that have successfully implemented gender-inclusive policies, resulting in increased female participation in cooperative leadership and decision-making processes.



*(L-R) Atty. Dulce Bustamante, ICYC; Ms. Simel Esim, ILO; Session Chair Ms. Jeroen Douglas, ICA; Mr. Bhima Subrahmanyam, Chairperson of ICBA and NAFSCOB, India; Ms. Chitose Arai, Japan and Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, ICA-AP*

Atty. Dulce Bustamante, Chairperson, ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation (ICYC) presented on “Creating Productive Employment and Decent Work for Youth”. She highlighted the challenges and opportunities related to youth employment within the cooperative sector, addressing SDG 8. She emphasized the need for creating productive employment and decent work for young people, focusing on the role of cooperatives in providing such opportunities. Ms. Bustamante discussed initiatives undertaken by the ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation to engage young people in cooperatives, develop their entrepreneurial skills, and create a supportive environment for youth-led cooperative enterprises. She shared success stories of youth cooperatives that have thrived by leveraging innovative approaches and technology.

H.E. Mr. V. N. Vasavan, Minister for Ports & Cooperation, Government of Kerala, India provided an overview of Kerala's efforts to integrate cooperatives into its development agenda. He highlighted key policies and programs aimed at strengthening the cooperative sector and

enhancing its contribution to sustainable development. He also discussed initiatives to support small and medium-sized cooperatives, promote digitalization, and improve access to financial services.

H.E. Mr. Wisit Srisuwan, Director-General of the Cooperative Promotion Department, Thailand shared Thailand's experiences in promoting cooperatives as a means to achieve sustainable development. He outlined the government's strategies for enhancing cooperative governance, increasing market access, and fostering innovation within the sector. Mr. Srisuwan also emphasized the importance of public-private partnerships in supporting cooperative growth and resilience.

H.E. Mr. Hiroshi Ono, Director, Office of Consumer Cooperative Societies, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan discussed the role of consumer cooperatives in Japan's social and economic landscape. He highlighted the initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare to support consumer cooperatives, particularly in areas such as health care, social services, and disaster resilience. Mr. Ono also emphasized the significance of consumer education and member participation in strengthening the cooperative movement.

## CLOSING CEREMONY

The closing ceremony began with members of the drafting committee - Mr. Michael Pilbrow, Ms. Nadia Alkhasawneh, Mr. Santosh Kumar and Ms. Dulce Bustamante presenting the outcomes, including a joint declaration and recommendations which emphasized the need for stronger partnerships between governments, cooperatives, and international organizations to promote inclusive and sustainable development.

The Jordan Declaration adopted at the 11<sup>th</sup> APCMC in April 2024 serves as a powerful call to action for fostering partnerships between governments and cooperatives to drive resilience, sustainable development and inclusive growth across the Asia-Pacific, Middle East and North Africa regions. This landmark declaration recognizes cooperatives as key vehicles for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with their unique people-centered model empowering marginalized communities and promoting social justice. It identifies critical areas for cooperative-government collaboration such as poverty alleviation, gender equality, decent work opportunities, climate action and inclusive development. The declaration urges governments to create an enabling environment for cooperatives through supportive policies, regulatory reforms and inclusion in national development plans.

Moreover, it emphasizes the need for equitable representation of women, youth and indigenous groups in cooperative governance and decision-making processes. It advocates harnessing digital technologies to further education, training and awareness about cooperative principles and values, especially among young leaders. Crucially, it calls for deepening partnerships between governments and the cooperative movement through capacity building, knowledge sharing, access to finance and upholding autonomy.

The Jordan Declaration envisions increased regional and global cooperation to exchange best practices and create an ecosystem conducive to cooperative growth, including focused efforts for small island and landlocked nations. With the 2025 UN International Year of Cooperatives

on the horizon, it presents a roadmap for tracking progress through annual ICA-AP meetings and the next APCMC. By bringing cooperatives and governments together as equal partners, this declaration paves the way for realizing the transformative potential of cooperatives in building a resilient, sustainable and inclusive future.

H.E. Khaled Mousa Shehadeh Alhuneafat, Minister of Agriculture, Jordan, and Mr. Abdelfattah M.Q. Alshalabi, Director General, JCC, delivered closing remarks, underscoring the importance of continued collaboration and innovation within the cooperative sector to address global challenges and achieve the SDGs.

Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP, expressed gratitude to all participants, speakers, and organizers for their contributions to the successful completion of the session. He reiterated the commitment of ICA-AP to supporting cooperative development and advancing partnerships with Governments across the region.

# JORDAN DECLARATION

## 11<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference

### "Partnerships between Governments and Cooperatives for Resilience, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth in Asia Pacific, Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region"

**Crowne Plaza, Dead Sea, Jordan  
28-30 April 2024**

The Asia Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference,

Having been convened at the Dead Sea area of Jordan by the ICA Asia and Pacific, the regional branch office of the International Cooperative Alliance, and the Jordan Cooperative Corporation on 28 and 29 April 2024, and

Extending its participation for the first time to the governments of countries in the Middle East and North Africa;

Recognizing, the International Statement on the Cooperative Identity (the Statement) of which the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) is the global custodian, reflects the centrality of people in the cooperative enterprise form, and through the seventh cooperative principle on 'Concern for Community', the aspect of 'sustainable development of communities through policies approved by members'.

Noting, the Statement confers on the ICA and its member organizations, as well as the wider cooperative movement worldwide, the responsibility of building meaningful partnerships and alliances with all stakeholders, particularly the Governments, in accelerating the attainment of the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Considering, cooperatives have been recognized as key partners in delivering social justice, reducing economic and social inequalities and promoting equitable enterprises that build positive peace and inclusive development,

Recalling, the recognition of cooperatives as vehicles for transforming the world, and in advancing Sustainable Development through the UN Agenda 2030, the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, as well as the 2022 ILO Resolution on Decent Work and Social and Solidarity Economy and the 2023 UN General Assembly Resolution on the Social and Solidarity Economy, and

Having acknowledged that cooperatives worldwide comprise 3 million enterprises and 1 billion members, and generate more than 280 million direct and indirect work opportunities, and

Recognizing the significant contributions of cooperatives in the Asia Pacific region to economic growth, job creation, poverty alleviation, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability and acknowledge the unique democratic and people-centered nature of cooperatives, and their ability to empower individuals, communities, and marginalized groups;

Affirming that the Asia-Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference established in 1990, as a quadrennial conferencing instrument provides an effective platform for cooperatives and governments to discuss current and emerging issues and set a common agenda towards the establishment of new forms of cooperation between them,

Reaffirming the commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in relation to ending poverty (SDG 1), promoting gender equality (SDG 5), fostering decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), and combating climate change (SDG 13), and

Appreciating the resilience and adaptability evidenced by cooperatives during times of crises, such as economic downturns, multi-dimensional conflicts, natural disasters, and public health emergencies, by taking all measures required to supporting their members and communities, and

Noting with great concern that the overall progress towards attaining the UN Sustainable Development Goals has not been on track, and

Noting further, the Asia Pacific region is home to more than 50% of young persons, and

Committing to accelerating towards the UN-SDGs with the help of meaningful and result-oriented partnerships between cooperatives, government and other relevant stakeholders, with the aim to achieving resilience and inclusive growth,

Committing further, to advancing and promoting the idea and practice of cooperation, as a virtue for peace-building, and that cooperation has no geographical and political borders;

adopts this on the twenty-ninth day of April of the year two thousand twenty-four, the following declaration which may be cited as the ICA-AP Declaration for Partnerships for Sustainable Development.

The Ministers and Heads of Delegations responsible for cooperatives, gathered in Dead Sea, Jordan from April 28 to 29, 2024, for the 11th Asia Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference (APCMC), do hereby declare our intention to:

Foster meaningful and strategic dialogue between governmental bodies and cooperatives, as complementary equals, to understand mutual goals, challenges, and opportunities for collaboration, and to create an enabling environment for cooperative development;

Emphasize the critical role of cooperatives, rooted in and owned by communities, in promoting inclusive development and ensuring that no one is left behind in our pursuit of sustainability, and in addressing the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups;

Recognize the importance of bringing inclusivity and diversity for cooperative development and governance through equal participation and inclusion of women, youth, and indigenous communities, with accountability through regular reporting on participation in decision-making roles;

Review and revise, where necessary, cooperative policies and legal frameworks at the national and international level, to advance strategic objectives to build a better world, such as gender-equality, education, equitable trade and peaceful communities, and further, strengthen partnerships between cooperatives and governments, and facilitate the inclusion of cooperatives into national development plans, recognizing cooperatives as key partners in achieving sustainable and inclusive growth;

Promote partnership and align efforts towards achieving UN SDGs and in so far as possible, address collectively, goals concerning eradicating poverty, meeting gender equality, advancing decent work and productive employment, acting on environmental protection and climate change, by harnessing and maximizing the potential of cooperatives and the wider Social and Solidarity Economy;

Promote actively, the cooperative-difference and the advantages of the cooperative enterprise form, its universal values and principles to ensure its value in addressing global challenges and fostering resilient, sustainable and inclusive communities is recognised more widely;

Accelerate steps for governments and cooperatives to deepen their partnership, while also maintaining cooperative autonomy and independence, in pursuit of inclusive sustainable development through capacity-building, community involvement, sharing of best practices, knowledge-sharing, access to finance, and the promotion of cooperative principles and values;

Promote cooperative culture, particularly through digitalization, digitization, and innovation, especially for communications, education, and training, with the aim to foster the 5th Cooperative Principle on Education, Training and Information, and in the context of the UN International Year of Cooperatives 2025, generate awareness among youth, members of the general public and young opinion leaders on the benefits of cooperation;

Commit to striving towards a safe environment in local and global communities by upholding peace and humanity while ensuring dignity and freedom for all, and call for an immediate ceasefire to stop the barbaric war happening in Gaza, and stand by the cooperative societies in Palestine, especially in Gaza;

Encourage regional and international cooperation among governments, cooperatives, and other stakeholders to share best practices, exchange knowledge, and foster an enabling environment for cooperative resilience and growth across the Asia Pacific region, with a redoubled effort to ensure that the strengthening of the cooperative sector in the Small Island States and land-locked countries is supported; and

Honor the spirit and substance of the rich contributions and cooperation at this conference by holding ourselves accountable to deliver and track progress arising both on an annual level through ICA-AP Board meetings and through reporting at the next Asia Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference or any other similar ICA conference organized earlier, while also recognising that the UN International Year of Cooperatives in 2025 provides a special opportunity to make meaningful progress on our shared ambitions.

Thus, in consideration of the foregoing declaration, we call upon all stakeholders, including governments, cooperative organizations, civil society, non-government organizations, and the diverse private sector, to cooperate with the APCMC in this endeavor, and work collaboratively towards a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive future for the Asia Pacific, Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

*Adopted in Dead Sea, Jordan, on April 29, 2024*

#### **Members of the Drafting Committee**

Mr. Michael Pilbrow, Special Adviser, Business Council for Cooperatives and Mutuals, Australia; Dr. (Ms.) Nadia Alkhasawneh, Director of Public Relations, Jordan Cooperative Consortium; Mr. Santosh Kumar, Director of Legislation, International Cooperative Alliance; and Atty. Dulce Bustamante, Chairperson, ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation.



*The drafting committee members and the team of rapporteurs*



*Ministers and high-level Government officials from 17 countries, and cooperative leaders and renowned experts from 28 countries participated in the Conference*

# ANNEXURES

## I. BACKGROUND PAPER

### Introduction

The Asia-Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference (APCMC) established in 1990 by the International Cooperative Alliance Asia Pacific (ICA-AP), is a quadrennial event organized to provide a platform for cooperatives and governments to discuss current and emerging issues and set a common agenda towards the establishment of new forms of cooperation between governments and cooperatives. The APCMC helps to create a sustained and enabling policy and regulatory environment that is conducive to cooperative development.

The APCMC's have been held in Australia (1990), Indonesia (1992), Sri Lanka (1994), Thailand (1997), China (1999), Nepal (2002), India (2004), Malaysia (2007), Thailand (2012), and Vietnam (2017). The 10th APCMC was organized in Hanoi in 2017 in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Vietnam Cooperative Alliance (VCA). The Hanoi Conference was inaugurated by H.E. Madam. Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh, Vice President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, it was attended by over 200 participants from 23 countries and eight countries were represented by their Ministers in charge of cooperatives. The theme of the Conference was, "Visioning Ahead to 2030: Promoting Stronger Partnership between Government and Cooperative Stakeholders in Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)."

Cooperatives have been recognized as key agents of socioeconomic development, particularly in the Asia Pacific region. With their democratic, member-owned and community-oriented structure, cooperatives have the potential to foster resilience, sustainable development, and inclusive growth. To maximize their impact, collaboration between governments and cooperatives is crucial. However, to unlock the full potential and partnership between government entities and cooperatives there is a need to foster a collaborative and supportive environment, establish a clear legal framework, and develop policies that recognize the value and importance of cooperative enterprises as a vital component of the economy and society. By working together and building a strong partnership, the government and cooperatives can create a conducive environment for economic growth, job creation, and social development, benefiting both the cooperative sector and society as a whole.

The 11<sup>th</sup> APCMC has set forth the theme: Partnerships between Government and Cooperatives for Cooperative Resilience, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Growth in Asia Pacific, Middle East, and North Africa (MENA).

The 11<sup>th</sup> APCMC is being hosted by the ICA-AP, together with the Jordan Cooperative Corporation (JCC) on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan from 28 to 30 April 2024 in Dead Sea, Jordan.

### Hosts of the 11<sup>th</sup> APCMC

The ICA is an independent, non-governmental organization established in 1895 to unite, represent and serve cooperatives worldwide. ICA-AP regional office was established in New Delhi in 1960 to provide a voice and forum for knowledge, expertise and coordinated action

for and about cooperatives in the region. The 110 ICA-AP members are national cooperative organizations across 29 countries from all sectors of the economy, including agriculture, industry, services, banking, retail, fisheries, health, housing and insurance.

A member of ICA, the Jordan Cooperative Corporation (JCC) is an independent organization formed by the government which supervises the cooperative sector (societies and unions) and works to raise the economic, social, cultural, and local communities. As the official umbrella for cooperatives, they promote self-reliance to achieve the social and economic benefits of cooperatives. The conference is supported by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

### **Cooperatives in the Asia Pacific**

The Asia-Pacific region spans diverse cultures, economies, and landscapes, and faces a myriad of challenges. Cooperatives in the Asia-Pacific region have deep historical roots, with some dating back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. They emerged as a response to the exploitation faced by workers, farmers, and small-scale entrepreneurs during colonial times and rapid industrialization. The first cooperatives in the region were primarily agricultural cooperatives, focused on improving the livelihoods of rural communities by pooling resources and sharing risks.

Agricultural cooperatives have helped farmers gain access to credit, modern farming techniques, and markets, thus enhancing productivity and income levels. In many Asia-Pacific countries, traditional financial institutions have limited reach in remote and underserved areas. Cooperatives, particularly credit unions and savings cooperatives, have filled this gap by providing essential financial services to marginalized communities. Consumer cooperatives have played a vital role in empowering consumers. By prioritizing the needs of their members and serving the community, they have fostered a sense of ownership and solidarity among consumers. In recent years, cooperatives in the Asia-Pacific have recognized the importance of sustainability and environmental stewardship and engaged in eco-friendly practices, such as organic farming, renewable energy production, and waste management initiatives.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the relevance of cooperatives in Asia-Pacific countries remains undiminished. As the region faces complex challenges like income inequality, climate change, and digital transformation, cooperatives can offer innovative and inclusive solutions. Cooperatives have a role to promote inclusive economic growth by empowering marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and indigenous communities. Cooperatives have been at the forefront of social innovation, starting as business models that prioritized people and the planet over profit alone. There is a continued need to demonstrate the potential of cooperatives to address pressing societal challenges. As the world rapidly adopts digital technologies, cooperatives in the Asia-Pacific need to leverage these tools to enhance their operations and reach a broader audience. Cooperatives need to be actively involved in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

### **Cooperatives During Times of Crisis**

Cooperatives have proven to be invaluable in times of crisis, providing a resilient and community-focused response to various challenges. Whether facing economic downturns, natural disasters, or public health emergencies, cooperatives have demonstrated their ability

to support members and communities with solidarity, resource pooling, and adaptive strategies.

During economic crises, cooperatives acted as stabilizing forces in local economies. By sharing risks and resources among members, cooperatives helped alleviate the impact of financial hardships on individuals and small businesses. They prioritized job retention over layoffs, ensuring the livelihoods of their members and contributing to sustainable employment. AMUL in India, a dairy cooperative, responded by increasing support to its dairy farmers. Instead of reducing milk procurement, AMUL continued to purchase milk from its members at competitive prices, ensuring a steady income for farmers during a time of market uncertainty. In the face of natural disasters, cooperative networks play a critical role in disaster response and recovery efforts. Whether in agricultural, housing, or consumer cooperatives, the collective nature of these organizations allows for the mobilization of resources and immediate assistance to affected communities. In the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, typhoon Haiyan in 2013, 2015 earthquake in Nepal and other disasters, cooperative organizations in affected countries and from across the region played a crucial role in providing relief, rehabilitation, and long-term support to impacted communities.

Cooperatives also demonstrated their resilience and adaptability during public health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The Palestine Agriculture Cooperative Union supported the community by collecting fresh vegetables from members as grants and distributing them to the closed governorates affected by the virus. In the Philippines, cooperatives launched a nationwide campaign of donations to combat the virus and used the Cooperative Development Fund to help the elderly and the most vulnerable in their community. In India, the Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative (IFFCO) led efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 by organizing social awareness campaigns to highlight preventive and precautionary measures like social distancing, sanitization, healthy diet and prevention through face masks. Healthcare cooperatives, across the region provided essential medical services to communities, while consumer cooperatives ensured food security and distribution to vulnerable populations.

### **Building a Better Asia and Pacific**

From economic integration and environmental sustainability to cultural exchange and cooperation, cooperatives have been contributing to a comprehensive and harmonious approach to shaping a brighter future.

The Association of Asian Confederation of Credit Unions (ACCU) has included as its Sixth C – Climate Compliance to its credit lending in addition to character, collateral, capacity, capital, and condition (risks). In Australia, the Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals (BCCM) has shown that cooperatives play an important part in economic recovery by virtue of being resilient and stable businesses. The Australian government has recognized cooperatives and listed them alongside other business structures. IFFCO, India has developed nano fertilizers which can reduce the excess use of urea application, reduce harmful effects on the soil, protect plants better and improve crop yield. In Japan, the Japanese Workers Cooperative Union (JWCU) was successful in getting the Workers Cooperative Act passed during the pandemic. The Act will allow them to create diverse employment opportunities for vulnerable people such as the elderly, people with disabilities and women/ youth with various social difficulties and to implement businesses to meet diverse demands in local communities.

In Korea, COOP built the Natural Dream Park in Gyuze in 2014, a new cooperative business model, which combines production and consumption. Each part of the consumer, producer, and provider system is a cooperative owned and managed by its members. The park was built with loans and investment from cooperative members who view the process as a way to practice self-help and autonomy. In Nepal, the National Cooperative Federation (NCFN) has launched a campaign with its members to promote SDG 12 – sustainable production and consumption. The Nepal Agricultural Central Cooperative Federation managed to collect and sell members' fresh vegetables in Kathmandu during the lockdown period, selling products at as low a cost as possible. MASS-SPEC Cooperative Development Center in the Philippines launched the Reconstruction and Rebuilding Financing Program (RRFP) to assist member-cooperatives who have been affected by disruptions or disasters to provide re-financing with more flexible terms and conditions and putting into practice the cooperative ideology of cooperatives who 'have more' help members who 'have less.'

### Recognition to Cooperatives

The importance of cooperatives has been recognized across countries and is reflected in the National Constitution, strategy documents to enhance contribution to GDP, the creation of new Ministries, and in the implementation of SDGs.

The UN Secretary-General Report, 'Cooperatives in Social Development,' presented at the seventy-sixth session (July 2021) states, "Business as usual is not sustainable, and the world needs a new social contract that acknowledges the interlinkages among the economy, social protection, health and the environment. The cooperative identity and business model can lead the way towards a just recovery from COVID-19, as their principles and many actions during the pandemic have shown." In June 2022 at the 110th session of the ILO conference on Decent Work and the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), there was explicit mention of cooperatives in the definition of the SSE. In 2016, UNESCO added cooperatives to the list of intangible cultural assets. Cooperatives were described as entities that "allow for community building through shared interests and values creating innovative solutions to societal problems.

The United Nations General Assembly, adopted a new [resolution on cooperatives in social development](#), on November 3, 2023 calling for the proclamation of **2025 as an International Year of Cooperatives (IYC)**. The resolution encourages the member states, the United Nations as well as all other relevant stakeholders to take advantage of the IYC as a way of promoting cooperatives and raising awareness of their contribution to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and to overall social and economic development. The resolution further draws governments' attention to the recommendations of the 2023 [UN Secretary General report on cooperatives in social development](#) to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem for cooperatives as sustainable and successful business enterprises.

For the period 2016 to 2022, 28 countries from the Asia-Pacific region which have one or more members of the ICA presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on the implementation of the SDGs. Cooperatives in some form or the other found mention in the VNRs of 15 countries - China, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, Palestine, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vanuatu. They were largely mentioned in relation to SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 8

(Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). This reflects the number of cooperatives working in agriculture and rural areas. The frequent reference to cooperatives in SDG 8 shows that Governments expect them to play their role in promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work.

The Government of India created the Ministry of Cooperation in July 2021 to deliver India's vision of "Sahakar Se Samridhhi" (prosperity with cooperation). In Malaysia, cooperatives are seen as a vehicle or "silver bullet" in driving the socio-economic growth of the people to achieve the goals set by the Government. The National Entrepreneurship Policy 2030 has targeted the contribution of the cooperative sector to GDP to be increased to RM100 billion or about 5% by 2030. The Constitution of Nepal recognizes cooperatives as one of the three pillars of the economy along with the private and public sectors.

### **Cooperative Sector in Jordan**

In Jordan, the cooperative movement plays a major role in many aspects of people's lives and contributes to the development of society on many levels. The national strategy of the Jordanian cooperative movement (2021-2025) was developed in order to advance the cooperative movement based on a human-centered approach to promote social justice and equal opportunities for all.

Jordan has shown a high readiness to face the challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic through the steadfastness of many cooperative societies. In light of the pandemic, which has posed significant challenges to food security in Jordan, cooperatives have played a crucial role in maintaining the continuity of food and agricultural product supply chains. Their efforts have ensured an uninterrupted provision of essential goods to the citizens of Jordan throughout the crisis. Among the many other agricultural cooperative societies that played a major role in Jordanian society are the Jordan Falcons Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society, Kanz Al Ard Cooperative Society, and Kafr Soum Agricultural Cooperative Society for Pomegranate Producers.

The public sector modernization plan launched by the Jordanian government also included a clear reference to the JCC as one of the pillars of the economic activities sector. The government will take a number of institutional measures during the two years (2023-2024) to develop the business environment, stimulate local and foreign investments, and strengthen partnerships with the private sector, including restructuring the JCC. According to the plan, the restructuring aims to raise and improve the efficiency of the cooperative institution to enhance its role in supporting the vision of economic modernization, the contribution of cooperatives to local development and develop agricultural and other economic activities.

### **SWOT Analysis: Government-Cooperative Partnership**

The partnership between governments and cooperatives is a dynamic relationship that holds the potential to drive socio-economic development, foster inclusive growth, and address pressing societal challenges. This collaboration brings together the collective strengths of both entities, aiming to harness their unique capabilities for the betterment of communities and economies. However, like any partnership, it is not without its challenges and potential pitfalls. The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the government-cooperative partnership, below provides insights into its current status and identify areas for improvement. It sheds light on the positive aspects that can be capitalized on, the weaknesses

that need to be addressed, the opportunities that can be seized, and the potential threats that must be navigated.

<b>Strength</b>	<b>Weakness</b>
<p><b>Support:</b> Governments can provide financial resources, policy support, and technical assistance to cooperatives,</p> <p><b>Regulatory Framework:</b> Governments can establish favorable regulatory frameworks that facilitate cooperative development, protect cooperative interests, and encourage their contribution to sustainable development.</p> <p><b>Financial Assistance:</b> Governments can allocate financial resources to support cooperative initiatives, including providing access to loans, grants, and subsidies.</p> <p><b>Technical Expertise:</b> Governments can offer technical assistance and capacity-building programs to enhance the skills and capabilities of cooperative members and leaders.</p>	<p><b>Lack of Awareness:</b> Some governments may have limited awareness of the benefits and potential of cooperative enterprises, which could hinder their support for cooperative resilience and growth.</p> <p><b>Inconsistent Policies:</b> The lack of consistency and coherence in government policies regarding cooperatives create uncertainties, barriers for their development, and at times impinge on autonomy.</p> <p><b>Limited Resources:</b> Governments may face constraints in terms of financial resources and capacity to provide adequate support to cooperatives across the region.</p> <p><b>Inconsistent Implementation:</b> Despite supportive policies, inconsistencies in the implementation and enforcement of regulations related to cooperative development, hindering their growth and impact.</p> <p><b>Lack of Collaboration:</b> Limited coordination and collaboration between government agencies and cooperatives may result in missed opportunities and ineffective utilization of resources.</p>
<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Threat</b>
<p><b>SDGs:</b> Cooperatives can align their activities with the SDGs, and governments can leverage these partnerships to advance progress towards the SDGs, particularly in areas such as poverty reduction, gender equality, and environmental sustainability.</p> <p><b>Innovation and Technology:</b> Governments can support cooperatives in adopting innovative technologies and digital solutions to enhance their efficiency, competitiveness, and sustainable practices.</p>	<p><b>External Competition:</b> Cooperatives face competition from other forms of enterprises, including multinational corporations and foreign companies, which may have more significant resources and market influence.</p> <p><b>Economic and Political Instability:</b> Economic downturns or political instability in some countries can pose challenges for cooperative resilience and growth, as they may face reduced demand, limited access to resources, and uncertain regulatory environments.</p>

**Regional Collaboration:** Governments have the opportunity to collaborate with other countries in the Asia Pacific region to share best practices, exchange knowledge, and foster cooperative resilience and growth.

**Market Access:** Governments can facilitate market access for cooperatives by promoting fair trade practices, creating market linkages, preferential sourcing, and supporting export opportunities.

**Limited Capacity and Infrastructure:** cooperatives lack the necessary capacity and infrastructure to take advantage of government support effectively, including challenges in governance, management, and technological capabilities.

**Lack of Resources:** Limited financial resources and budget constraints may pose challenges in providing adequate support and investment for cooperative initiatives.

**Policy and Regulatory Barriers:** Inconsistent or restrictive regulations can impede the growth and operations of cooperatives, limiting their ability to contribute to inclusive growth.

Partnerships between governments and cooperatives are essential for promoting cooperative resilience and achieving sustainable inclusive growth in the Asia Pacific region. Governments can contribute by creating an enabling environment, promoting cooperative identity, and strengthening the legal framework. By implementing supportive policies, raising awareness, and enacting appropriate regulations, governments can unlock the full potential of cooperatives as drivers of economic and social development. Collaboration between governments, cooperatives, and other stakeholders is vital to address challenges, capitalize on opportunities, and build a thriving cooperative sector that contributes to a more sustainable and inclusive future in the Asia Pacific region.

### Objectives of the 11<sup>th</sup> APCMC

1. To examine the current state of cooperatives in the Asia Pacific and their potential for contributing to resilience, sustainable development, and inclusive growth.
2. To analyze the existing partnerships between governments and cooperatives in the region and identify successful models that have yielded positive outcomes.
3. To highlight the benefits of collaborative initiatives between government and cooperatives, including improved access to resources, enhanced regulatory frameworks, and increased social inclusion.
4. To identify challenges and obstacles in building effective partnerships and propose strategies to overcome them.
5. To provide recommendations for policymakers and cooperative stakeholders to strengthen and expand government-cooperative partnerships for sustainable and inclusive development.

### Conclusion

The cooperative sector constitutes a fundamental pillar in the economies of many countries around the world and is a driver of comprehensive and sustainable development in many societies. It plays an important role in achieving economic and social balance and enhancing environmental sustainability by:

1. Enhancing democratic participation and promoting inclusivity by meeting the needs of various segments of society.
2. Strengthening and developing the local economy and supporting local economic projects and activities and small and medium businesses, in a way that contributes to creating job opportunities and promoting social economic development.
3. Providing basic services and improving the quality of life in by providing basic services to individuals and communities, through cooperation in many areas such as finance, insurance, health care, education, and protection from economic risks.
4. Stimulating innovation and promoting sustainable development by encouraging innovation and leadership in various fields and focusing on environmentally friendly and sustainable economic practices in the long term.
5. Strengthening communication and social solidarity between communities by bringing together individuals from different backgrounds.
6. Achieving SDGs which aim to eliminate poverty, improve living conditions, and preserve the environment.

The 11<sup>th</sup> APCMC will bring together distinguished leaders and leading minds with diverse experiences who are working together to advance the movement. It will provide a platform for cooperatives in Jordan and the region to build a strong and sustainable cooperation network. It marks the beginning of an extensive and promising journey towards transformative change, aspiring to create a positive and significant impact within our cooperative societies, both nationally and internationally. This endeavor is rooted in our collective ambition to bolster economic stability, which is pivotal for realizing our shared aspiration of building a better and more secure world for ourselves and future generations.

## 2. PROGRAM AGENDA

<b>DAY 1: April 28, 2024</b>	
09:00 – 10:00	Registration
09:30 – 09:50	Gathering of ministers and key delegates in VIP room
10:00 – 10:50	Inauguration of the conference
<p>Cultural Performance Video on Jordanian Cooperative Movement Introduction of Ministers and key delegates</p> <p>Welcome Address <b>Mr. Abdelfattah M.Q. Al-Shalabi, Director General, Jordan Cooperative Corporation (JCC)</b></p> <p>Inaugural Address <b>Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav, President, International Cooperative Alliance Asia Pacific (ICA-AP)</b> <b>Dr. Ariel Guarco, President, International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)</b></p> <p>Opening Address <b>H.E. Khaled Mousa Shehadeh Alhuneafat, Minister of Agriculture, Jordan</b></p>	
10:50 – 11:10	Group Photo followed by Break
11:10 – 11:30	Keynote Address “Partnerships between Government and Cooperatives for Cooperative Resilience, Sustainable Development, and Inclusive Growth” by <b>Mr. Abdelfattah M.Q. Al-Shalabi, Director General, JCC</b>
11:30 – 12:00	<p>Introduction of the Conference by <b>Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Statutory Proceedings – Agenda</li> <li>- Announcement of Conference Chair</li> <li>- Adoption of Rules and Procedures</li> <li>- Announcement of Drafting Committee</li> </ul>
<p><b>Session 1 – State of Partnerships in Asia-Pacific and MENA</b></p> <p><b>Chair – Dr. Nizar Haddad, Director General, National Agricultural Research Center (NARC), Jordan</b></p>	
<p>Cooperatives play a vital role in fostering sustainable development, economic resilience, and inclusive growth in many countries in the Asia Pacific and MENA region. These member-owned, member-operated organizations operate in various sectors, including agriculture, finance, housing, and more. To harness their full potential, partnerships between government entities and cooperatives are important. What is the state of partnership between governments and cooperatives? What are the drivers to sustain the partnership? How do we improve government–cooperative partnerships?</p>	
12:00 – 13:00	<p>Study to assess partnerships between the Government and Cooperatives <b>Dr. Yashvantha Dongre, Chairperson, ICA-AP Committee on Cooperative Research (Online) supported by Dr. Samir Barhoumeh, Research Consultant, ICA-AP</b></p>
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch Break
14:00 – 15:30	<p>Statement by Government representatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>H.E. Mr. Manoa Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications, Fiji</b></li> <li>• <b>H.E. U.Sec. Joseph “Joy” Ballota Encabo, Chairman, Cooperative Development Authority, the Philippines (Represented by Maria Corazon Montallana, Chairperson, NATCCO)</b></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H.E. Mr. Balaram Adhikari, Minister of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation, Nepal</li> <li>• H.E. Dr. Abass Al-haj Hassan, Minister of Agriculture, Lebanon</li> </ul>
15:30 – 16:00	Tea Break
<b>Session 2 – Accelerating the Cooperative Identity</b> <b>Chair – Mr. Michael Pilbrow, Special Adviser, Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals, Australia</b>	
<p>The Statement of Cooperative Identity unites cooperatives to work for the common good. The values and principles give people control of their own lives, their future, and form base that sets cooperatives apart from other types of enterprises. How can we ensure the cooperative business model continues to be relevant in addressing global challenges and how do we accelerate the cooperative identity?</p>	
16:00 – 16:45	<p>How can we ensure the cooperative business model continues to be relevant in addressing challenges?  <b>Mr. Hani Farhan Alodainat, Director of the Cooperative Training Center, JCC</b></p> <p>Findings from the ICA Cooperative Identity Survey  <b>Mr. P. Santosh Kumar, Director of Legislation, ICA</b></p> <p>How do we accelerate the cooperative identity?  <b>Mr. Kenki Maeda, General Manager, Japan Cooperative Alliance</b></p>
16:45 – 17:30	<p>Statement by Government representatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H.E. Eng. Sultan bin Jorais AlJorais, Deputy Minister for Social Security and Empowerment, Saudi Arabia</li> <li>• H.E. Mr. Pankaj Kumar Bansal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Cooperation, India</li> <li>• H.E. Ms. Neven Alqabbaj, Minister of Social Solidarity, Egypt</li> </ul>
19:00 – 21:00	Gala Dinner

**DAY 2: April 29, 2024**

<b>Session 3 – Adapting to changing environment and building resiliency</b> <b>Chair – Dr. Manoj Nardeosingh, Secretary General, African-Asian Rural Development Organization</b>	
<p>The importance of cooperatives has been recognized across countries, reflected in National Constitution, strategy documents to enhance contribution to GDP, and through creation of new Ministries. How do cooperatives respond to the rapidly changing environment? What is the support needed from governments to create an enabling environment and develop resiliency within cooperatives?</p>	
10:00 – 10:45	<p>Inclusive transformation in the Near East and North Africa  <b>Dr. Abdul Hakim Elwaer, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative, FAO Near East and North Africa</b></p> <p>Agricultural Innovation and Entrepreneurship: NARC as a Case Study  <b>Dr. Nizar Haddad, Director General, NARC, Jordan</b></p> <p>Resilience of cooperatives recognized in the National Constitution  <b>Ms. Om Devi Malla, Chairperson, National Cooperative Federation of Nepal</b></p>
10:45 – 11:30	Statement by Government representatives

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H.E. Dr. Hamed Veyskarami, Deputy Minister of Cooperative Affairs, Iran</li> <li>• Mr. Bilal Omer, Chairman, Cooperative Work Authority, Ministry of Labour, Palestine</li> <li>• Ms. Aicha Errifaai, General Director of the Office of Cooperation Development, Morocco</li> </ul>
11:30 – 12:00	Tea Break
12:00 – 13:00	<p>Statement by Government representatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H.E. Yang Berhormat Datuk Ewon Benedick, Minister of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives, Malaysia</li> <li>• H.E. Ms. J.A.D.S.P. Wijegunasekara, Ambassador of Sri Lanka in Jordan</li> <li>• H.E. Ms. Rasha Bassam Karkouki, Assistant Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, Syria</li> <li>• H.E. Abdulaziz Almutairi, Deputy Minister of Social Affairs for the Cooperative Sector and External Relations Department, Kuwait</li> <li>• H.E. Wafaa Al-Kelani, Minister of Social Affairs, Libya</li> </ul>
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch Break
<p align="center"><b>Session 4 – Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 1, 5, 8, 13)</b>  Chair – Mr. Jeroen Douglas, Director General, ICA</p> <p>Cooperatives across the Asia-Pacific and MENA region are actively involved in the implementation of the SDGs and their role has focused on SDG1 (no poverty), SDG5 (gender equality), SDG8 (decent work and economic growth), and SDG13 (climate action). The efforts of cooperatives have been recognized and are reflected in national SDG plans and in the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) of many countries. How do governments support the role of cooperatives in the implementation of the SDGs and give more visibility and recognition to their efforts?</p>	
14:00 – 15:00	<p>ICA-AP study on Cooperatives and VNRs  Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP</p> <p>Promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all  Ms. Simel Esim, Head - Cooperative Unit, International Labor Organization</p> <p>Strengthening policies and legislation that promote gender equality.  Ms. Chitose Arai, Chairperson, ICA-AP Committee on Women</p> <p>Creating productive employment and decent work for youth  Atty. Dulce Bustamante, Chairperson, ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation</p>
15:00 – 16:00	<p>Statement by Government representatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H.E. Mr. V. N. Vasavan, Minister for Ports &amp; Cooperation, Government of Kerala, India</li> <li>• Mr. Wisit Srisuwan, Director-General of the Cooperative Promotion Department, Thailand</li> <li>• Mr. Hiroshi Ono, Director, Office of Consumer Cooperative Societies, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan</li> </ul>
16:00 – 16:30	Tea Break
16:30 – 17:30	<p>Concluding Session</p> <p>Report of the drafting committee, Joint Declaration and Recommendations</p>

	Closing speech H.E. Khaled Mousa Shehadeh Alhuneafat, Minister of Agriculture, Jordan Mr. Abdelfattah M.Q. Al-Shalabi, Director General, JCC  Vote of thanks by Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer, Regional Director, ICA-AP
19:00 – 21:00	Farewell Dinner

<b>DAY 3: April 30, 2024</b>	
8:00 – 20:00	Field visit to the Rose City of Petra (one of the wonders of the world) for heads of delegations and dignitaries, and visit to one of the cooperatives in the region.
21:00 onwards	DEPARTURE OF DELEGATES

### 3. COUNTRY STATEMENTS

#### **AUSTRALIA**

Statement of Michael Pilbrow on behalf of the Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals

Ministers, Cooperators,

On behalf of the Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals in Australia (the BCCM), the national apex for cooperatives active in all industry sectors in Australia, I acknowledge H.E. Khaled Mousa Shehadeh Alhuneafat, Minister of Agriculture of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and all other Ministers and government representatives participating in this conference.

I thank the Jordan Cooperative Corporation and the International Cooperative Alliance Asia-Pacific for hosting the conference.

In Australia, one of the most important recent cooperative policy developments is the partnership between the Australian Government and the cooperative movement to grow the cooperative economy.

This has been through two government funded partnerships.

The first was to increase Australian farmers' access to advice and information on forming cooperatives for growing export markets, supply chain control and value-added processing.

This partnership is called the Coop Farming Program.

The second federally funded partnership is to help regional, remote, and rural communities to access education and advice on setting up cooperatives to help deliver care at the community level (such as aged care, disability care, primary health care and other forms of care).

This partnership is called the Care Together Program.

This program commenced in 2023 and runs for 2.5 years.

It is being delivered by the BCCM on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.

Both the agriculture and care programs have stand-alone websites for more information.

These programs were funded at the request of the cooperative movement, through the BCCM, because there is policy recognition that cooperative models can address some of the most compelling challenges of our times such as remote workforce, productivity, access to services, cost of living inflation and supply chain vulnerability.

By partnering with the BCCM, the government is unlocking cooperative development methods, networks and expertise to grow the presence and awareness of cooperatives in the economy.

These projects operate in different parts of Australia and regional areas where other business models focused on profit maximisation are not proving to be viable.

Without provision of essential services such as social care in the regions, the associated agricultural production, processing and exports (often through cooperatives), will be at risk.

The Care Together Program not only supports individual projects but also seeks to strengthen cooperative networks and collaboration within, and across, industries.

We know from international experience that Cooperation among Cooperatives is the way that our movement can achieve scale and change whole sectors of the economy to operate sustainably in the interests of ordinary people.

The close engagement with the Australian Government is facilitating improved policy awareness of where legal and regulatory barriers are holding cooperatives back.

This is still a work in progress, but one we are optimistic about.

The BCCM stands ready to exchange information with cooperators and government representatives on the Coop Farming Program and Care Together Program and any similar developments in your countries during this conference and beyond.

Finally, with the International Year of Co-operatives fast approaching, the BCCM is preparing for celebrations of the cooperative model in Australia.

We are advocating for all levels of government in Australia to heed the United Nation's call to celebrate the contribution of cooperatives to the Sustainable Development Goals, to review legislation and regulation that impacts cooperatives, and to strengthen the development ecosystem for cooperatives.

## **EGYPT**

**H.E. Khaled Hunaefat, Minister of Agriculture, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**

**Dr Ariel Guarco, President of the International Cooperative Alliance**

**Dr Chandrapal Singh Yadav, President of the International Cooperative Alliance for the Asia-Pacific Region**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, Ministers and Excellencies**

I am honoured to participate today in the 11th Asia-Pacific Cooperative Ministerial Conference, which brings together ministers and cooperative leaders from across countries in the Asia-Pacific region, representing two-thirds of the world's population, as well as United Nations agencies and development partners, to strengthen partnerships between governments and cooperatives, contribute to achieving sustainable development, exchange experiences and highlight the economic, social, cultural and environmental contributions of the cooperative sector.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Cooperatives are a successful development model that can play a pivotal role in different countries by empowering vulnerable communities, reducing poverty, generating job opportunities, achieving food security, and social integration to promote social and economic development. According to the International Cooperative Alliance, as of 2023, more than 12% of the world's population belongs to the 3 million cooperative institutions in the world; the total revenue of the 300 largest cooperatives reached more than 2 trillion US dollars, and cooperatives contribute to sustainable economic growth and stable and quality employment, providing job opportunities for about 280 million people in the world (10% of the total number of workers in the world).

Ladies and gentlemen,

The coronavirus pandemic has impacted economic growth in the region on several fronts. For example, the number of people living below poverty has increased, youth aspirations have been hindered, inequality has increased, and environmental imbalances have been exacerbated. It has also shown the need to look beyond current economic models, which value short-term gains at the expense of long-term viability. Cooperatives and social and solidarity organisations around the world have provided effective initiatives in response to the coronavirus pandemic, transforming their products and services to meet the urgent local demand for protection, food supplies and social care.

The Egyptian state has recognised the strategic importance of cooperatives and their economic and social role, especially since the philosophy of cooperatives is that they aim to improve social, economic, environmental and cultural life through self-financing that does not burden the state budget, which is consistent with the social axis of Egypt's 2030 strategy and the recommendations of the economic conference held in October 2022, and this interest in the role of cooperatives was reflected in the current Egyptian Constitution issued in 2014, which stipulates in Articles 23, 33 and 37 that the state must sponsor and support cooperatives in all their forms and that cooperative property is protected, and the law ensures its protection and support.

The importance of the role of cooperatives in Egypt is due to the fact that it is one of the first countries that defined the cooperative system as part of the developmental economy, and even issued legislation in this field ahead of many countries, as the first Egyptian law in the field of cooperatives was in 1923, then the Agricultural Credit Bank was established in 1931, then Law 109 of 1957 to establish consumer cooperation, then production cooperation, the law on agricultural cooperation, the law on housing cooperation, agricultural cooperation, the law on water resources cooperatives, the law on the General Union of Cooperatives and the law on educational cooperative societies, which shows that Egypt works to protect and develop what these cooperatives contribute.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The age of the Egyptian experience is reflected in the increase in the number of operating cooperative societies, which reached more than 13,000 societies distributed among five central federations as follows: 6,911 agricultural cooperatives, 2,935 housing cooperatives, 2,491 consumer cooperatives, 101 aquaculture cooperatives, in addition to educational cooperatives, and the number of members of these cooperatives is about 12 million members, representing about 11% of the total population of Egypt with a turnover of 60 billion pounds in 2023.

The Central Cooperative Federations play an important role in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Goal (1): No Poverty, Goal (3): Good Health and well-being, Goal (8): Decent Work and Economic Growth, Goal (11): Sustainable Cities and Communities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Cooperatives, according to the laws governing them, enjoy many benefits such as exemption from taxes on commercial and industrial profits and taxes on non-commercial professions, in addition to exemptions from customs taxes, import duties and additional fees, and cooperative companies have the possibility to import and export and obtain better benefits than public sector companies.

The partnership model between the government and cooperatives works to achieve several objectives, the most important of which are:

- Contributing to reducing unemployment and poverty by providing productive employment opportunities for youth of both sexes.
- Supporting self-sufficiency and reducing imports by meeting the basic needs of citizens in terms of quality and competitive prices.
- Providing various services and goods such as production inputs, agricultural crops and food commodities, as well as providing passenger transport services, in addition to implementing a large part of the state's plan regarding medium and low-cost housing, building schools and health units, paving roads, etc.
- Supporting the state's efforts in the field of human development by providing administrative and technical training programmes.
- Supporting large national industries through the provision of parts and components by craft workshops and small cooperative factories.
- Supporting the capacity of the Egyptian economy by working to open more foreign markets for the export of handmade goods and products and adopting mechanisms that help in this regard.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Ministry of Social Solidarity has been supporting the Cooperative Production Union since the beginning of its supervision in 2016, which includes Facilitating microcredit through the Ministry's Nasser Social Bank, creating marketing opportunities through internal and external exhibitions, extending insurance and social protection to cooperative members, facilitating the establishment of nurseries in densely populated areas, providing financial and in-kind support services and compensation in cases of accidents and calamities, preparing a strategy to develop this sector, and creating a digitised database containing all the data of productive cooperative organisations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

With all this attention and support, we see that the cooperative sector in Egypt needs to be restructured in light of the challenges faced by the global and local economy, and the vision of the Ministry of Social Solidarity focuses on activating and increasing the flexibility of cooperatives in the face of crises and disasters:

- Preparing a unified law for cooperatives, especially since the organising legislation has been in place for 60 years
- Developing a comprehensive national strategy for co-operatives
- Creating a supportive environment for the work of cooperatives and developing investments directed to the cooperative sector
- Localising industries, reducing imports and opening internal and external markets
- Completing the establishment of a digitised database that includes the data of the entire sector
- Enhancing the participation of women and youth in cooperative work and increasing the representation of women on the boards of directors of cooperatives
- Transition from the informal to the formal economy through the expansion of cooperatives and the inclusion of irregular labour
- Extending social protection to all cooperative members, facilitating lending and providing in-kind and cash support in case of emergencies and crises
- Activating the role of the Arab and African Union, which Egypt presides over, to open Arab and African markets for cooperative products
- Spreading cooperative thought and teaching it in schools and universities.
- Establishing partnerships and cooperation protocols with European and Asian countries with successful cooperative experiences through joint higher committees between Egypt and other countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the end, we look forward to the participating countries to enhance cooperation and exchange of experiences among them in order to support growth and sustainable development in our region and beyond, and the governance and reform of the work of cooperatives, thus mitigating the negative effects of the global economic slowdown on the local economy and achieving national goals at the economic, social and cultural levels.

I would also like to thank all those responsible for organising the conference from the International Cooperative Alliance. I would also like to thank His Excellency Minister Khaled Hunaefat and his team for the effort exerted, hospitality and reception, and I wish the brotherly country of Jordan continued success and prosperity for its government and people.

**May God's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you.**

## **FIJI**

His Excellency and Jordan Minister of Agriculture - Khaled Mousa Shehadeh Alhuneafat,

Chairman of the Jordan Cooperative Corporation - Mr. Abdelfattah Al-Shalabi

President for International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific - Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav

Fellow Honourable Ministers and Excellencies Invited Speakers and Guests

Members of the Conference,

Greetings and all protocols observed!

Good Afternoon and as we say in Fiji – Bula Vinaka!

I would like to acknowledge and congratulate His Royal Highness, King Abdullah Al-Hussein on his 25 years and Silver Jubilee celebrations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an absolute pleasure to be here today. I thank the host country, Jordan for a warm welcome and hospitality.

I thank the organisers of this critical forum, the International Cooperative Alliance Asia Pacific for organising the Minister's forum. As far as we can remember and I stand to be corrected, this is the first time Fiji is participating in the Minister's Conference.

We appreciate that fact that we are present at the Minister's forum, together with our fellow South Pacific brothers – Papua New Guinea.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Fiji has had a milestone democratic change in December 2022 and under the new Fiji – the Government has placed critical importance on the cooperatives movement in Fiji.

In fact, one of the first things the new Government did was to include “cooperatives” in the title of the Ministry in order to denote its importance. This was done in an effort towards providing a renewed impetus to the growth and wellbeing of Cooperatives and the many thousands of Fijians that depend on it.

Thus I address you as Fiji's Minister for Trade Cooperatives Micro Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications.

Ladies and Gentlemen

For those that don't know where Fiji is, we are a small nation with just under a million in population. We are located in the South Pacific with Tourism and Remittances being our largest foreign earners.

We are known for our contagious smile, friendly people, pristine environment and our Rugby!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Fiji gained her independence from the British colony in 1970 and we are very much a young nation and a developing one.

Fiji Cooperative Landscape

Despite gaining our independence in 1970, the cooperative movement has been present in Fiji since 1940s.

Since then, cooperatives have grown and are an integral part of our economic development. As we speak today, there are 590 operating cooperatives that exist across 15 sectors.

One of the more successful cooperatives, Fijian Teachers Association Cooperatives Thrift Limited are made up of more than 3000 teachers around Fiji who have formed a loans and savings (thrift and credit) cooperative. They have now diversified into other sectors such as agriculture, real estate, property management and development to name a few. These strategic investments by the cooperative have improved the economic welfare of the teachers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Collectively, Fiji cooperatives hold \$151 million (\$US 66.2 million) worth of assets, earning revenue of \$26 million and generating \$2.5 million in profits.

Under the new Government, we have seen our fellow Government Ministries such as Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Fisheries and Forestry convert their cluster groups into cooperatives before offering grant assistance.

Moreover, we have a dedicated Department under the Ministry called the Department of Cooperative Businesses that undertakes registrations, advisory, monitoring and training to cooperatives.

We have seen an increase in interest in women-led cooperatives over the past few years. From having 46 women lead cooperatives in 2022 to now having 58 in 2024. This number continues to grow as well. In fact, in terms of women in leadership, this has increased by 236% over the same period too.

Speaking of women led cooperatives, we have had a women led cooperative that runs a village store since the 1970's. This cooperative, through its operations, has been able to build a village library and the village kindergarten. They also help the members in their "back to school" shopping before the school year begins.

And now they are looking to expand to have a computer lab for the school students in the community, so they do not have to travel far to town to complete their school projects and also readily have access to information.

Another amazing example I would like to share of how women's based cooperatives are able to get their products on Amazon. We have about 2 to 3 women led Cooperatives that prepare uniquely crafted traditional artifacts that is supplied to their partner (Rise Beyond the Reef) who has an account on Amazon and is able to push these talented women's products online.

So ladies and Gentlemen- if you want to gift your partner or decorate your homes, please go to Rise Beyond the Reef Facebook page or on Amazon and support them because you will be directly supporting Fijian Cooperatives.

Ladies and Gentlemen

These are just some key figures and examples that demonstrates the cooperative movement is vibrant and very much alive in Fiji and the South Pacific.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As you can clearly observe, cooperatives is very important fabric of our development. The cooperative way suits our way of life - Culturally and Traditionally - we in the Pacific live communally - everything we do is done communally.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Cooperatives in Fiji have stood the test of time and remained relevant and evolved to remain sustainable.

Due to the nature and structure of cooperatives, we have seen an increase in cooperatives registrations in Fiji. In fact there has been an annual Year Over Year growth of 77 new cooperative registrations.

Cooperatives are the drivers of economic diversification and economic empowerment to the most vulnerable. Cooperatives does not discriminate against, age, gender or race – it unifies a group of like minded individuals for economic success.

More importantly, one cannot underscore the invaluable contribution that Cooperatives make towards Sustainable Development Goals. For a developing nation like Fiji, it is important to recognise that cooperatives contribute positively to all SDGs.

Key messages to the international cooperative community.

Therefore, in the interest of time - I will keep my wishlist short.

My first message is - with the strong footprint of cooperatives in Fiji and Pacific, I sincerely make a heartfelt plea – on behalf of the Pacific region, International Cooperative Alliance to establish a presence and office in Fiji.

Why ?

- Fiji is strategically located in as the regional hub of the South Pacific. We have multi-national donor agencies and development partners such as United Nation Offices, World Bank and Asian Development Banks based in Fiji.
- Strong Regionalism Cooperation – we in the pacific have a very strong brotherhood. Our sense of unity, love and care for our community and region is ingrained in our way of living – this is the Pacific Way!
- Asia Pacific ICA – Most if not all ICA AP office is established in Asia but as the regional body suggest – Its Asia Pacific but not Pacific presence
- Growth and alignment of Cooperatives to international best practices
- Increase ICA membership from Cooperatives in the South Pacific.

Secondly - Please include Fiji and the South Pacific in Committees and working groups under ICA. We would like to play a more active role in voicing our concerns for the Fiji and South Pacific on these platforms.

Additionally - We request if a special membership fees or category could be considered for ICA membership for Cooperatives from South Pacific.

Finally, we seek technical assistance in the review and the modernisation of our Cooperatives Act of 1996 and reviving our Cooperative Appex Body.

In conclusion, I wish to thank you for the invitation and the opportunity to participate in such meetings. We hope that our requests will be taken into consideration and further discussions with all outside this forum.

Thank you

## **INDIA**

Good Morning/afternoon everyone.

It is a matter of privilege for me to address this session of the 11th Asia-Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference.

On behalf of Government of India, I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the International Cooperative Alliance - Asia and Pacific for providing this valuable platform for strengthening partnerships between Governments and cooperatives across the Region.

This session on the role of cooperatives in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals is indeed of utmost significance, as it refers to the idea of balancing economic growth, social well-being and environmental protection. Sustainable development emphasizes the need for responsible consumption and production, and this is where cooperatives take a pivotal role. Cooperatives are also based on similar values, where cooperative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

The cooperative movement in India has its roots in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with the establishment of agricultural cooperatives aimed at empowering farmers and rural communities. The sector has experienced significant growth and development since its

inception and now Cooperatives play a crucial role in various sectors of the Indian economy, including agriculture, banking, consumer goods, housing, and healthcare.

The Government of India has implemented various policies and schemes to promote and strengthen the cooperative sector. A separate full-fledged Ministry has been formed for the Cooperative Sector and within two and half year of the formation of the Ministry, more than 54 initiatives have been taken to strengthen the Cooperative Sector. Here, I would like to present the major initiatives taken by the Government of India, through which cooperative societies of the country are getting new possibilities for their economic development and expansion.

Firstly, I would like to mention the efforts made towards strengthening of Primary Cooperative Societies and making them viable economic enterprise.

Traditionally, primary credit, dairy and fishery cooperatives were involved in sector – specific activities only. To make primary cooperatives more empowered and economically viable, Model Bye-Laws were prepared with the aim of making them multipurpose entity. This has increased their sources of income and created new employment opportunities in more than 25 areas like dairy, fisheries, storage, etc.

Further, to enhance the efficiency of Primary Credit Societies and make them more professional, computerization of about 63,000 Primary Credit Societies has been started. This is bringing transparency in the system and enabling PACS with ease of doing business through ERP based software.

Around two-third of the Indian population lives in rural areas, where Cooperatives have significant impact on improving their socio-economic conditions. With this idea, Government of India has set a target of setting up new Multi-purpose Primary Cooperative Societies in the uncovered Panchayats/Villages. Moreover, various schemes of the Government of India are also being converged at the level of these Primary Cooperative Societies.

Further, World's largest Decentralized Grain Storage Program in Cooperative sector has been launched. Under this scheme, different types of agricultural infrastructure such as godowns, custom hiring centres, processing units, fair price shops, etc. are being created through convergence of various schemes of the Government of India at the Primary level. This not only ensures food security but also reduces wastage of food grains, and results in better price to farmers for their produce and helps in meeting various agricultural needs at the Primary level itself.

Primary Cooperatives are now facilitated to be enter into other business avenues like running Petrol/Diesel Pumps, LPG Distributionship, Fertilizer distribution centers, running generic medical shops, running single window solutions centre named CSC, becoming business correspondent of banks.

Secondly, I would like to mention the efforts made towards strengthening of Cooperative Sector across the States through establishment of National Level Cooperative Societies. The Government of India has constituted three new Multi-State Cooperative Societies for Exports, Certified Seeds and Organic Products. Cooperative societies from Primary to

National level including District, State, National level federations and Multi-State Cooperative Societies can become their members.

Through Export's Society, the Export of farmers' products are being facilitated and the farmers are getting better price for their products.

Similarly, Society for Certified Seeds is involved in cultivation, production and distribution of improved seeds under a Single Brand name. This has increased availability of improved seeds to the farmers and boosted productivity of crops.

To encourage farmers to shift from conventional agriculture to Organic Farming, National level organic society is working for production, distribution and marketing of certified and authentic organic products, resulting in increase in the profit of the farmers.

Thirdly, Sincere efforts have been made towards redressal of difficulties faced by Cooperative Banks and making them economically sound.

The cooperative banking sector in India, including cooperative credit societies and cooperative banks, provide financial services to rural and semi-urban areas. There are about 1500 Urban Cooperative Banks across the urban centres and 385 District and State Cooperative Banks catering to the requirement of the rural cooperative sector. These cooperative banks have more than 22 crore deposit accounts with them and hold deposits of more than 140 billion dollars. Government of India has taken several initiatives to strengthen the Cooperative Banks by allowing them the level playing field vis-a vis other commercial entities and provided opportunities for ease of doing financial business. The Cooperative banks are being benefited by the campaign being run in the name of "Cooperation amongst Cooperatives". Under the campaign, the cooperative societies are being made business correspondents of Cooperative Banks and are provided with micro-ATMs. The members of the Cooperative banks are now provided Rupay Kisan Credit Cards at relatively lower rate of interest which facilitates them to get the requisite credit available at all times. Further, efforts are being made for transformation in cooperative banking through adoption of modern technology.

Fourthly, A National Cooperative Database has been created to meet the requirement of planned development of Cooperative Sector. Data of more than 8 Lakh Cooperative societies has been mapped on the Portal which involves Cooperatives in about 30 sectors with about 29 crore members.

Fifthly, efforts have been made to bring level playing field in the area of taxation for the Cooperatives. Citing special and unique requirements of the primary cooperatives specific relaxations and exemptions in taxation have been granted by the Government which facilitates the growth of the Cooperatives. Some of the sector specific cooperatives like Primary Sugar Cooperatives have been provided necessary hand holding through availability of the required working and term capital and relief in taxation.

Most importantly, I would like to mention here that a financial institution named National Cooperative Development Corporation has progressed in leaps and bounds in last 3 years. In the year 2021, it had disbursed Rs. 24,000 crores while within three years it has increased its disbursement to about 2.5 times to 60,000 crores.

Similarly, in the area of Cooperative education and training the Ministry is working to reach to all its 29 crore Cooperative Members through its training institutes named National Council for Cooperative Training and VAMNICOM.

In conclusion, the cooperative sector in India has evolved into a dynamic and diverse network of institutions contributing to economic development, social empowerment, and community resilience. With continued support from stakeholders and a focus on sustainability and innovation, the cooperative movement is poised to play a vital role in India's growth story.

I hope that all of you might have found these initiatives as beneficial to cooperatives and similar reforms may also be initiated by different Nations, for empowerment of cooperatives in the Region.

Thank You all for patient hearing.

## **IRAN**

Dear Honorable Ministers, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

First, I would like to thank my host, Mr. Khaled Al-Hanifat, the Minister of Agriculture and the head of the Cooperative Union of the Kingdom of Jordan and the Asia Pacific Regional Office of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA- AP). I want to extend warm greetings from Iran and our cooperators. I hope that the targets of this conference are fully realized and result in positive economic cooperation between our countries and around the world.

The culture of cooperation has had a special place among Iranians for a long time, and the existence of many traditions in different countries and the diverse geography of our country, Iran, is clear proof of this fact. Will Durant mentioned traditions and socio-economic behaviors as cooperatives in his book, History of Civilization. Cooperation has always been common among the people of this land to solve life's problems while preserving their rich traditions. However, the beginning of official cooperatives in Iran can be seen with the approval of the Trade Law in 1925, which discussed production and consumption cooperatives in some cases of this law. Cooperatives in Iran began with the approval of the Trade Law in 1925, which included production and consumption cooperatives. However, in terms of the formation and registration of official cooperatives, 1935 can be considered the beginning of cooperative activities in Iran. The cooperative economy also has a special place from the Islamic point of view in our country (from the perspective of the government and the nation). According to Article 44 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the cooperative sector has the second economic pillar next to the government sector, and the private sector is recognized as a complement to these two sectors. For this reason, the government has always supported the cooperative sector of Iran's economy.

Besides, the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, has named the new year in Iran the year of production growth with public participation. Cooperation, as the most critical and prominent platform for realizing this motto, has been increasingly at the center of the government and people's attention.

There are about 103,000 cooperatives in Iran, with a membership of over 2.5 million people and an asset volume of about 5.7 billion dollars, which produces 90% of fish, 75% of agriculture, 30% of livestock production, 26% of metal minerals, etc.

As you can see, the cooperative sector has grown vertically in Iran's economy recently and has had an active presence. However, the cooperative sector needs more dynamism and a more innovative approach to be more effective in various industries and compete with other economic activities.

Therefore, all the innovative aspects of the cooperative economy, including innovation in approach, model, method, and innovation in the product to improve businesses, providing solutions based on cooperation for the problems and needs of the society, using Current economic forms such as platform cooperatives, increasing productivity and producing competitive products, are on the agenda of various components of Iran's cooperatives, consisting of the Deputy of Cooperative Affairs, Iran Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC), Tose'e Taavon Bank, Cooperative Investment Guarantee Fund and Cooperative Scientific Association of Iran.

Moreover, all the components of the cooperative sector of Iran's economy are ready to cooperate with all the activists of the cooperative movement around the world in various aspects such as joint production, export and import of products and services, exchange of knowledge and technology, and establishment of joint companies to cooperate internationally.

Finally, I want to mention some proposals regarding international cooperation in the cooperative economy.

As you are all aware, the cooperative economy is based on cooperation. Therefore, international relations among cooperative economic enterprises should also be redesigned based on cooperation and beyond the conventional commercial relations of other enterprises. In this regard, it is recommended that the International Cooperative Alliance, by establishing international thematic consortia with the membership of active cooperatives around the world, establish commercial relations based on cooperation between cooperatives, maintain the market value of various industries of the cooperative sector in competition with other sectors, and help economic systems.

It is also suggested that international production value chains be formed with the participation of cooperatives in a Solidarity Economy to reduce production costs and absorb the maximum added value created by collaborating cooperatives.

Finally, I would like to thank the organizers of this conference for their hospitality and wish success to all the participants and cooperative economy activists.

## **JAPAN**

His Excellency Eng. Khaled Musa Al Henefat, Minister of Agriculture, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Mr. Ariel Guarco, President of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav, President of ICA Asia-Pacific Region, I would like to express my gratitude for inviting me to the 11th Asia-Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference.

Distinguished guests, esteemed chairperson, it is with great honor that I, representing the Japanese government's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, stand before you today to

provide an update on two critical fronts: the progress of Japanese consumer coops in their pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the advancements in the establishment of worker cooperatives after the enforcement of the Workers Cooperative Act in October 2022.

### Related to Consumer Coops

#### Noto Peninsula Earthquake

In Japan, on January 1st of this year, an earthquake occurred in the Noto Peninsula, causing extensive damage. We deeply appreciate the warm messages and support from many countries and relevant agencies towards people affected by the earthquake.

While the Japanese government has been exerting its utmost efforts to support the lives and work of the affected victims, consumer coops across Japan have provided various forms of support since the immediate aftermath of the disaster.

For instance,

- They provided Essential supplies for evacuees based on agreements with the government.
- Many of them have been raised Disaster relief funds and delivered the funds to the affected areas.
- They have dispatched their staff members to support distribution operations conducted by coops to ensure timely delivery of food and other necessities to coop members in the affected areas.

I take pride in the proactive engagement of Japanese consumer coops in supporting the disaster-stricken areas. Once again, the disaster brought home to me the preciousness of the principle of "mutual help" that is common to cooperatives.

#### Progress on SDGs

Now, the theme of this fourth session is the promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs include objectives such as eradicating poverty and addressing climate change. The philosophy of the SDGs is ideal for Consumer coops, and they have long been addressing these challenges.

To achieve the SDGs, I believe that social solidarity valuing "human dignity" is necessary, both internationally and domestically. The National Federation of consumer cooperatives declares its commitment to contributing to the achievement of SDGs, sets the action plan, and implements activities towards creating a society where "no one is left behind."

Let me introduce some examples.

- To address the problem of poverty, consumer coops participate in the activities of "food banks" which deliver food to families in need, and "children's cafeterias" which provide meals to children in needy families.

- To address climate change, consumer coops set their own targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promote the installation of solar power generation facilities, engage in tree planting and greening activities, and invest in green bonds aimed at raising funds for projects contributing to solving environmental issues.

Thus, the efforts of consumer coops regarding the SDGs are extremely diverse and I believe they will continue to make further advances in their efforts.

### Engagement with Government

Over a long period of time, Japanese consumer coops and the Federation have played a vital role as representatives of consumer voices. They have actively taken part in key government advisory councils addressing issues such as food safety, healthcare, resource and energy management, as well as agricultural supplies, and contributed to significant policy-making decisions.

### Worker Cooperatives

#### Workers Cooperative Act and the current situation of the establishment of Worker Cooperatives

- In October 2022, the Workers Cooperative Act was enforced. The act established the basic principle of worker cooperatives, emphasizing that workers should invest as members and actively participate in reflecting their opinions. As a result, a new type of cooperative, the Worker Cooperative, was introduced alongside other cooperatives.
- Now, as of April 1, 2024, a year and a half, since the law came into effect, a total of 87 organizations have been established under this act.
- These worker cooperatives engage in various businesses such as managing campgrounds by revitalizing degraded forests, funeral services, adult guardianship support, household chores assistance, meal preparation, elderly care, and more. They are pioneering new ways of working across diverse fields of business.

Similar to consumer coops, workers cooperatives initiate their activities aligned with the theme of "Sustainable Development Goals". I expect that a wide range of their initiatives will continue to be implemented in communities in the future.

### Conclusion:

- Last but not least, as we look ahead, collaborative efforts between private organisations including cooperatives, and government entities are paramount in realizing the SDGs. The Japanese government remains steadfast in fostering partnerships with cooperatives and will strive to ensure that the value of cooperatives and the role they play in today's society are widely recognized.
- The United Nations has declared 2025 the International Year of Cooperatives. I am hopeful that the cooperative movement will continue to flourish across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

## **MALAYSIA**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Jordan Cooperative Corporation (JCC) for inviting me to this auspicious 11th Asia Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference (APCMC). I believe that this quadrennial conference will present opportunities for participating countries to share and exchange of experiences on the partnership between government and cooperatives that is taking place in our respective countries. The 11th APCMC is also timely given that the United Nations General Assembly's Resolution on Cooperatives in Social Development had proclaimed that the year 2025 is to be the International Year of Cooperatives, which will open up windows for collaboration between all cooperatives within the Asia-Pacific region.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

2. In Malaysia, the cooperative sector is under the purview of Ministry of Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development. We have two agencies that work hand in hand to enhance the sector's role in enhancing Malaysia's socio-economic growth, namely:

- i. The Malaysia Cooperative Societies Commission which regulates the sector and oversees the development of relevant policies for cooperatives; and
- ii. Cooperative Institute of Malaysia which serves as the training arm of cooperative movement.

3. Besides these two agencies, we also have ANGKASA, the apex cooperative body that represents the Malaysian cooperative movement at national and international level. ANGKASA is an active member of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), and their officials are also elected representatives at the regional and global level of the ICA. On top of that, ANGKASA is also presiding the ASEAN Cooperative Organization, a sub-regional centre for ASEAN cooperative movement; overseeing more than 300,000 cooperatives with 65 million individual cooperators. Furthermore, ANGKASA is also assisting its members in stimulating and developing their cooperative businesses in promoting the understanding of cooperative values and principles.

### **MALAYSIA COOPERATIVE LANDSCAPE AND PERFORMANCE**

4. Malaysia's cooperative movement began in 1922 following the introduction of the Cooperative Societies Enactment 1922. This sector has expanded steadily over the years and continues its major role to drive socio-economic development a guide for the country. With only 11 cooperatives at the beginning of its existence, this number grew remarkably to 15,809 registered cooperatives with 7.2 million members in 2023, which represents about 21 percent of the country's population. Meanwhile, the shares and subscription of the cooperatives sector currently stand at USD3.7 billion with USD35.1 billion worth of assets and USD13.7 billion of annual turnover.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

### **MALAYSIA COOPERATIVE POLICY 2030 (DaKoM 2030)**

5. The ever-evolving global landscape due to the constant shifts in economic, social and environmental aspects, has prompted the Malaysian Government to formulate policies and

strategies for the cooperative movement to adapt to and build its resiliency. Hence, the Malaysia Cooperative Policy 2030 or known as DaKoM 2030 was launched in 2023. It is a policy document that outlines strategic directions for cooperatives movement in enhancing their economic performance and members' social well-being with the vision to position this sector as a key catalyst for Malaysia's socio-economic growth.

6. DaKoM 2030 was formulated to map out the direction of the cooperatives movement until 2030; in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It was designed with four core principles and 20 strategies to achieve the targeted revenue of USD 12.69 million in 2025 and USD15.44 million by 2030. The three key objectives of DaKoM 2030 are:

- i. To ensure that cooperative sector contributes significantly to Malaysia's economic growth;
- ii. To form a capable and established cooperatives that are accepted by all Malaysians; and
- iii. To position cooperatives as a preferred business model in driving Malaysia's socio-economic development.

7. In addition, the four core principles of DaKoM 2030 centre around the transformation of cooperative's support towards developing a more holistic and conducive ecosystem; increase the understanding and appreciation of the cooperative principles, enhancing the capacity and capability of cooperatives; and advancing the cooperative sector as the main vehicle for socioeconomic development.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

#### COOPERATIVE DIGITALIZATION ACTION PLAN 2030 (DigiKOP2030)

8. The Covid-19 pandemic has led to an inevitable surge in the use of digital technologies due to nationwide and global lockdowns. People and organizations all over the world have had to adjust to new ways of work and life. The impact of digitalization in business during the pandemic shows that it is crucial for all business entities to shift from their traditional business model to online presence to remain relevant in the business.

9. In response to this changing environment, the Ministry has launched the Cooperative Digitalization Action Plan 2030 (DigiKOP 2030) in July 2023. This plan consists of strategic initiatives to drive a progressive, competitive, and sustainable cooperative movement in Malaysia.

10. The objectives of this plan are:

- i. To transform the cooperatives movement towards digitization. Cooperatives need to shift from their conventional ways of doing business into adapting technology and digitization in offering their products and services, as well as modernizing their back-end processes using computerized technology and digital systems;
- ii. To develop knowledgeable, efficient and competent digital talents to embrace and be successful in digital economy; and
- iii. To create an integrated, inclusive, safe, and ethical digital ecosystem.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF UNIVERSITI KEUSAHAWANAN KOPERASI MALAYSIA (UKKM)

11. In order for Malaysia to build a resilient and high-performing cooperative sector, we believe that it is crucial to strengthen cooperatives' human capital development. Adopting lifelong learning approach through training for cooperative members, managers, employees and elected representatives, is the best approach to equip them with necessary skills and knowledge to manage their cooperative efficiently and effectively.

12. In this regard, the Malaysian government has officially opened the Universiti Keusahawan Koperasi Malaysia (UKKM) in March 2022, is the first cooperative university in the country, it focuses solely in developing professionals and talents in the cooperative sector. Its aims is to ensure that the cooperative sector will be led and managed by competent, dynamic and forward thinking individuals.

13. UKKM currently offers seven learning programs with the highest being the Doctor of Philosophy in Entrepreneurship. All programs have been accredited by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency, the statutory body which oversees quality standards universities. The accreditation by MQA indicates that the programs offered by UKKM have met the required standard of high-quality education for its students.

14. The cooperative sector in Malaysia has immense potential for progress in Malaysia's socioeconomic development. Previous achievements have articulated how this sector's policies have been improvised to deal with the uncertainties especially those influenced by the external environment. The success of cooperatives is determined by their ability to continue to survive and compete in the business world which is persistently becoming more challenging in the era of globalization and market liberalization.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

## SUCCESS STORIES OF SELECTED MALAYSIAN COOPERATIVES

15. The effectiveness of policies introduced by the Ministry can be seen through the remarkable achievements of some of the cooperatives in Malaysia. For example, Bank Rakyat is the biggest Islamic cooperative bank in Malaysia has achieved significant accomplishments in 2023. It has been listed among the top 300 global cooperatives and ranked 244th in the World Cooperative Monitor. It is a recognition of their performance and contribution to the country's economy. Bank Rakyat also stands out in the financial sector by holding the largest market share when it comes to offering personal financing in Malaysia.

16. In addition, the Malaysian Armed Forces Cooperative has achieved a notable performance recently by announcing a dividend payout amounting to USD 27.24 million to its members, compared to USD 18.59 million distributed in the previous year. The cooperative also reported a net income of USD 53.47 million for the year, with profits before tax and zakat totalling USD 32.17 million. These strong financial results are attributed to the cooperative's successful financing services offered to Small and Medium Enterprises.

17. The Malaysian Armed Forces Cooperative has also provided assistance amounting to USD 3.70 million to its members in the areas of education, medical needs, and general welfare. In recognition of its performance, the Malaysian Armed Forces Cooperative has been given the recognition as one of the premier cooperatives from the Malaysia Cooperative

Societies Commission for the third consecutive year, highlighting its consistent ability to offer high returns to its members amidst challenging economic conditions.

18. Last but not least, Coopbank Pertama Berhad (CBP), has recorded its highest profit before tax in its history, amounting to USD 21.60 million for the financial year ending December 31, 2022; an impressive 20% increase compared to the previous year. This led to the highest dividend payout of USD 12.72 million to more than 90,000 of its members. The bank attributed the growth in profit to its personal financing and Islamic pawn broking services (Ar Rahn), as well as home financing, alongside cooperative and corporate financing.

19. Apart from these premier cooperatives, school cooperatives play a vital role in enhancing the cooperatives ecosystem in Malaysia. Until 2023, a total of 2,485 school cooperatives has been registered with a total membership of 2.05 million. Its achievement has contributed of the overall stellar performance of the cooperative sector. What makes it even more impressive is that several school cooperatives manage to achieve an annual turnover of more than USD200 thousands. The resounding success of the school cooperative movement lies in its comprehensive approach in imparting entrepreneurial skills to students in school by fostering business acumen, and instilling values of integrity, empathy, and innovation, to empower students to excel in today's dynamic landscape.

WAY FORWARD - Conducive environment for cooperative-to- cooperative business to happen

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

20. Food security is a global and challenging issue to resolve, and Malaysia is no exception to the growing threat of rising food insecurity. We believe that cooperatives can play a significant role in enhancing not only food security for our respective nation but also for the Asia Pacific region. Therefore, building a network of cooperatives in the region and forming collaborations through this network will help to enhance food security in the region. We can leverage on the strengths of these cooperatives and learn from their mistakes to further enhance their business particularly those related to the import and export of food supplies.

21. I would like to take this opportunity to call upon all ministers and governments involved in cooperative development across the Asia Pacific region, to prioritize initiatives that provide an enabling environment for cooperative-to-cooperative (C-2-C) trade to happen. By collectively supporting and championing these efforts, regional cooperation among cooperatives will be enhanced and substantial contribution can be made in addressing food security challenges in the Asia Pacific region. In addition, the collective action among all stakeholders to prioritize and support cooperation among cooperatives especially in providing conducive conditions for trade activities to happen, will help the movement to resiliently respond to the rapid changing of the environment.

22. Once again, I would like to record my gratitude to the organizers for inviting me to this auspicious event. I am happy to welcome collaborations with cooperatives in the Asia Pacific to explore possible partnerships as I believe cooperatives are not only able to eradicate poverty and dignify people's lives, but cooperatives will also bring prosperity to the community, people and country as a whole.

With that, I thank you.

## MOROCCO

Your Excellencies,  
Esteemed guests,

Over the past two decades, Morocco has undergone a transformative journey, propelled by the visionary leadership of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, who has been leading our growth across all sectors, including the vital realm of Social and Solidarity Economy.

His Majesty's words, "No social development is possible in the absence of economic growth," underscore the importance of building an economy that merges economic efficiency with social solidarity, as articulated in His Majesty's speech on July 30, 2000.

Over the years, Morocco's Social and Solidarity Economy has gained prominence, emerging as a distinct sector alongside the public and private sectors. The country's new development model, established in 2021, even elevated the SSE as a key pillar of development, social advancement, and wealth generation.

Among SSE models, the cooperative stands out for its ability to provide concrete solutions for financial inclusion, particularly for youth, women, and minorities. Our work with women cooperatives serves as a clear illustration of the cooperative model's efficacy. In Morocco, the government program has made economic empowerment of women one of its priorities. Our objective is to increase the women's labor force participation rate to over 30% by 2026. Cooperatives emerge as an important instrument in achieving this ambitious goal, with significant investments directed towards both mixed and exclusively women-led cooperatives. The results are indeed remarkable. Currently, there are 54,000 cooperatives in Morocco, employing 723,000 individuals. The number of women-led cooperatives has grown to 7,300, a figure that is constantly growing.

Furthermore, the cooperative sector plays a crucial role in achieving sustainable development. It actually contributes to:

- SDG1 - Eradicate poverty: 13.110 women from rural area organized into cooperatives and have lucrative activities;
- SDG2 - Zero Hunger: more than 31.000 cooperatives are operating in agriculture, sea fishing and foodstuffs;
- SDG3 - Good health and well-being: Individual have access to social protection when organizing into cooperatives;
- SDG4 - quality education: More than 700 cooperatives, including 4,300 recently graduated youths, are actively addressing illiteracy, particularly in rural areas.
- SDG5 - gender equality: Out of 723,000 cooperative members, 34% are women. A figure we are constantly trying to increase;
- SDG6 - clean water and sanitation: 163 cooperatives operate in water pumping;
- SDG7- clean and affordable energy: 31 cooperatives operate in renewable energy;
- SDG8 - Decent work and economic growth: in addition to cooperative members, the cooperative sector employs more than 120.000 individuals and contributes of 2% to GDP;
- SDG 10 – Reduce inequalities: Additionally, organizing into cooperatives not only promotes the social and economic inclusion of women, youth, and people with special needs but also enables a fair distribution of profits.

- SDG 11- sustainable cities and communities: 1273 housing cooperatives ensure a decent housing for the population;
- SDG12- Responsible consumption and production: Most of Moroccan cooperatives work on the development and the promotion of local products;
- SDG 13- Climate change: In Morocco, there are 575 forest cooperatives and 97 mining cooperatives that employ best practices to protect the environment. Additionally, there are XX waste recycling cooperatives.

The current momentum of the SSE is the culmination of years of initiatives, including the Royal Initiative for Human Development, the launch of the Green Morocco Plan in 2008, and the Green Generation Plan in 2020. Regulatory actions, such as the implementation of laws (111-14) and (112.12), have streamlined the establishment and monitoring of cooperatives, while tax incentives and access to public procurement further supported their growth.

Plus, we have a dedicated governmental agency, the Office of Cooperative Development, that plays a vital role in promoting and developing the cooperative sector.

Looking ahead, we have big ambitions for the sector. We are currently working on a framework law to redefine the scope of SSE. The development of a framework law dedicated to SSE in Morocco is an important step that signals the collective desire to further energize and develop this economy and recognize this sector as an important component of the national economy. Through this law, we aim to substantially scale up the SSE's contribution to the national economy, with specific targets set for 2035, including increasing its contribution to GDP from 2% to 8% and creating 50,000 new jobs annually.

We also recognize the importance of international cooperation and exchange of best practices to strengthen the cooperative ecosystem. By implementing resolutions from the 12th Africa Ministerial Cooperative Conference, held in Cairo in October 2022, we aim to foster cooperation among cooperatives, enhance market access, promote inclusive participation, and facilitate research, innovation, and access to finance.

In conclusion, we remain open to all initiatives aimed at cultivating a new generation cooperative model that champions innovation and improves the lives of families. Let us join forces to forge a brighter future for the cooperative sector.

Thank you.

## **NEPAL**

Respected Chairperson,

Distinguished delegates,

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to participate in the Ministerial Conference dedicated to building positive synergy in government-cooperatives relations towards impacting socio-economic development in the region of the world featured with multi-faceted diversity. In this opportune event, I express my heartfelt thanks with due appreciation to the esteemed institutions taking responsibility of organizing such a conference of strategic value. I also like to recall the Joint Declaration of the 6th Asia-Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference organized in Kathmandu, Nepal in 2002, which made Kathmandu Declaration that adopted

strategizing policy and legislative reforms for cooperatives in the new Millennium. I wholeheartedly congratulate the Government of Jordan and the organizing institutions on this auspicious occasion.

I am very much inspired by the theme of the Conference integrating collaborative partnerships between the government and the cooperatives for reinforcing sustainable development and inclusive growth through a development-resilient cooperative system in the region of Asia Pacific and Middle East and North Africa Region. As a quadrennial event, this is a gathering providing a platform for cooperatives and governments to review the dynamics of cooperatives and discuss on emerging issues towards setting the common agenda for multi-dimensional collaboration in the days ahead. One inspiring theme of the Conference that impressed me is gaining ability and willingness to create a sustained and enabling policy and regulatory environment for impacting conducive development of cooperatives.

On behalf of the Government of Nepal, I express my heartfelt appreciative for organizing such an important Conference. I regard this high-level event as the platform of experience sharing for meaningful change in reinventing the dynamics of government-cooperatives collaboration and partnerships in the best interest of the society.

Respected Chairperson,

Cooperative is a great and potential strength in all of Nepal's social and economic development paradigms. Substantial role has been played by cooperatives in Nepal in building healthy, equitable and sustainable communities by advancing the efforts through appropriate policy, structures and programmes at federal, provincial and local levels. 31373 primary cooperatives. One third population of Nepal are directly involved in the sector with 56 percent women participation. Accordingly, significant number of people are directly and indirectly being benefited from cooperative network, participated by the wider sections of professional societies with substantive contribution in agricultural economy, employment generation, social advancement, enhanced industrial investment and business development through community resource mobilization. Time has come to build cooperative societies as model of self-reliance, sustainable development and inclusion in the best interest of the poor, marginalized and downtrodden communities.

In recognition to an instrumental role played by the cooperative movement in transforming peoples' quality of living and substantive contribution to the national development, the Federal Democratic Constitution of Nepal has valued and recognized the significance of cooperatives as one of the strategic pillars of political economy with impression to socialism-oriented economic system. The Government of Nepal, through the planned development efforts, has given top priority to cooperatives-led economy by enhancing collaborative partnerships between the government and the cooperative society for resilience building, driving Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and reinforcing inclusive economic development of the country. Cooperatives are playing vital role in implementing SDG in Nepal. I was deliberately informed that the apex organization of cooperatives in Nepal, National Cooperative Federation of Nepal successfully conducted third national cooperative congress with the theme "Self-Regulation and Governance for coop Sustainability". I am very much elated to acknowledge you that from the third cooperative congress, NCF has passed the Coop Vision 2030 in line with global goals focusing on amalgamation process for sustainable cooperative business.

In persuasion to marking collaborative development of the cooperative sector, the Government of Nepal has initiated reforming the policy and regulatory regimes with paradigm shifts to incorporate the changing dynamics of the cooperative system. Reform initiatives in the cooperative sector of Nepal has integrated various approaches, including, promotion of cooperative values, principles and culture through education-information-communication strategies; making cooperatives capable of contributing to social and economic development; strengthening cooperative governance; driving the cooperatives towards production and business orientation; and enhancing meaningful collaboration and partnerships between the partners of cooperative development. For this, the government is in the process of formulating a new “National Cooperative Policy” with meaningful participation of the principal stakeholders of the cooperative society.

I am also concerned on the contemporary cooperatives issues in Nepal. Cooperatives are grown numerically rather than qualitatively. Still the cooperatives sector has work with the governance issues, lack of professionalism and development of product and service value chain through cooperatives .

Respected Chairperson and Distinguished Delegates,

I express my best wishes to every success of the Conference that will serve as the virtuous platform for a collaborative cooperative system in both the grounds, country-specific and region-effective.

Better understanding and cooperation, between the government and the cooperative movement will be further strengthened, in respect of the values and principles, to drive cooperative movements in line with effective resilience, reinforced collaboration, sustainable development and inclusive economy.

My delegation will actively participate in the deliberations of the Conference with sharing of cooperative insights, experiences and reflections in building environment for creating an effective regional space and look forward to reinventing the collaborative cooperative system. Thank you all with best of successes.

## **PALESTINE**

His Excellency, Mr. Khaled Alhuneafat/ Minister of Agriculture, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Mr. Abdel Fattah Al-Shalabi/Director General of Jordan Cooperative Corporation,

His Excellency Mr. Ariel Guarco/President of the International Cooperative Alliance,

Mr. Jeroen Douglas/Director General of the International Cooperative Alliance,

Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer/Regional Director, International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, we express our great thanks and gratitude to you all for your sincere efforts in organizing this important forum which aims to strengthening the partnership between cooperatives and government institutions, in order to improve the enabling environment for cooperatives and unleash their potential, leading to their effective and full participation in achieving socio-economic and sustainable development.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thanks to their cooperative identity, which is based on cooperative values and principles, cooperatives seek to achieve sustainable development, as the ideas and concepts of sustainable development are “inscribed in the DNA of cooperatives,” according to the words of the International Cooperative Alliance. In fact, cooperatives can strike a balance between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development by balancing between achieving material returns, prioritizing the welfare of people over gaining profits, and caring for the good and well-being of their communities.

It goes without saying that the SDGs cover all aspects of economic activity (agriculture, industry, housing, health, education, production, consumption, etc.), and address all major global concerns (poverty, equality, employment, gender, climate change, peace, etc.). By virtue of their strong presence and participation in the aforementioned economic sectors, cooperatives contribute to achieving all sustainable development goals, through the various roles they play, such as providing decent work opportunities, eliminating poverty and hunger, providing education, social protection, health care, financial services, and affordable housing, promoting gender equality, as well as other roles that contribute to the human development and empowerment of the people in general, and vulnerable, poor and marginalized groups in particular.

As the annual United Nations 2023 reports on progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals indicate, halfway to 2030 the promise of achieving these goals is in peril, due to many detrimental factors including the Covid-19 pandemic, wars, conflicts, and climate change, the unsustainable production and consumption patterns, and the neoliberal capitalist ideology that governs production and economic relations. An assessment of nearly 140 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals’ targets, for which trend data are available, showed that nearly “half of these targets are moderately or severely off track; and over 30 per cent have either seen no movement or regressed below the 2015 baseline”. Therefore, it became very necessary to sound the alarm, which prompted the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres, to say that “unless we act now, the 2030 Agenda will become an epitaph for a world that might have been”.

To respond to these warnings, and in order to contribute to correcting the path towards achieving sustainable development, all forms of support must be provided to social and solidarity economy enterprises, especially cooperatives. In this context, much literature, instructions and recommendations have been issued by the International Cooperative Alliance and the United Nations that aim to creating a conducive environment that enables cooperatives to thrive and play a major role in achieving sustainable development, such as ILO Recommendation No. 193 of 2002 regarding the promotion of cooperatives, and United Nations Resolution No. 281/A/RES/77/ of 2023 entitled “Promoting the social and solidarity

economy for sustainable development,” and United Nations Resolution No. 76/135 entitled “Cooperatives in Social Development,” and the International Labor Organization resolution issued by its 110th Conference on Decent Work, Social and Solidarity Economy. All these documents outline the broad policies that governments can work on to improve the enabling environment for cooperatives. For example, Recommendation No. 193 urges governments, cooperatives, and various stakeholders to implement its provisions which constitute a framework for policies targeting the cooperative sector, stressing that this can only be achieved through the combined efforts of various stakeholders. The Recommendation focused on establishing institutional and legal frameworks that are friendly to cooperatives and based on the cooperative principles and values, and that can contribute to the development of cooperatives and unleashing their potential and capabilities to achieve socio-economic development.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In addition to the aforementioned global challenges that hinder the efforts to achieve sustainable development, we, in Palestine face a greater fundamental challenge represented by the ongoing Israeli settler colonialism. Therefore, sustainable development in Palestine has a special concept due to the protracted Israeli occupation, which renders the debate about sustainable development in Palestine rather irrelevant in the context of the brutal measures and practices carried out by this occupation. These measures take their ugliest horrific form in the ongoing genocide and ethnic cleansing in the Gaza Strip, as well as the continued perpetuation and deepening of colonization and apartheid in the West Bank. It is a very bitter reality that in the twenty-first century, an era in which the basic human rights guaranteed by international conventions, such as the right to life, education, movement, work, health, and food, have all become for granted, there is still a people on this planet who is deprived of these basic rights, and even stripped of their humanity by a brutal fascist occupation that controls every aspect of the economic and social life, making the realization of sustainable development an impossible task. This occupation controls most of the Palestinian lands, the sources and supplies of water, electricity, and communications, and movement through land, sea, and air. It also continues to deprive the Palestinians of any kind of sovereignty and authority through its invasion of various regions and city centres in the West Bank, destroying infrastructure, and committing the most heinous crimes by killing innocent children and women, carrying out daily arrests, and subjecting detainees to extremely brutal detention conditions, confiscating the funds collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, as well as restricting the movement between the Palestinian cities and communities by deepening the apartheid system represented in erecting barriers and closing the entrances to villages and cities through a system of ugly gates designed to abuse and humiliate the Palestinians and turn their lives into hell, in an attempt to force them to leave their homeland and ethnically cleanse them and replace them with alien colonizers. This occupation would not have continued committing all these violations had it not been always assured of impunity due to the deep imbalance in the global so-called rule-based order. It is ironic that such order allows an occupying power to violate all its rules and perpetrate the most heinous crimes against another people without the least accountability, relying on the unconditional military and diplomatic support by the colonial powers, led by the United States of America. In a nutshell, we, the Palestinians, must first be liberated from this occupation so that we can pursue sustainable development. Hence, we appeal to you to amplify your efforts to exert pressure on the world powers in order to force the Israeli occupation to succumb to the international

legitimacy and grant the right to self-determination to the Palestinian people so that they can establish their sovereign Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As part of the Palestinian social and economic fabric, Palestinian cooperatives in Palestine in general, and in the Gaza Strip in particular, have sustained a fatal blow due to the ongoing genocide. The human and material resources and assets of the cooperatives have been severely destroyed by the barbaric Israeli bombing. Although we do not yet have an accurate account of cooperative losses because the massacre is still ongoing, and because of the life-threatening conditions that do not allow for field surveys of cooperatives, not to mention the lack of Internet and even mobile phone connection in the Gaza Strip in most cases, the initial estimates we obtained indicate that these losses are enormous and unprecedented.

Cooperatives in the Gaza Strip were considered among the largest and leading cooperatives in Palestine, as some of them represented real success stories by providing a source of livelihood for their members who do not have any other means to support their poor families given the scarcity of job opportunities due to the ongoing inhumane Israeli siege imposed for many years. Therefore, cooperatives in the Gaza Strip are considered the only means for many marginalized groups, including farmers and women, to secure the minimum standards of living. However, most of the cooperatives in the Gaza Strip are now in dire need for urgent humanitarian support, and when the Israeli slaughter stops, these cooperatives will need development support to rebuild them. Therefore, we hope that you will work in accordance with the principles of cooperation and solidarity and place the support of the Gaza Strip cooperatives at the top of your priorities.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In light of the restrictions and obstacles imposed by the Israeli occupation, Palestine continues to work in a complex and fragile context in order to improve the enabling environment for cooperatives, driven by its deep conviction in the role of cooperatives in improving the socio-economic conditions of the Palestinian people, especially the poor and marginalized. Palestine has come a long way in implementing the recommendations contained in the above-mentioned international documents. At the legislative level, a new Law on Cooperation was issued in 2017, which was described by the International Cooperative Alliance as one of the “inspirational” laws. The adoption of this law was the culmination of the combined efforts of many partners to improve the enabling environment for cooperatives. Pursuant to this law, the Cooperative Work Agency (CWA) was established as the body responsible for regulating and promoting the development of the cooperative sector. This has constituted a major leap in strengthening the governance of this sector, as the CWA contributes to strengthening the partnership between actors in the cooperation sector through its participatory governance. In fact, it includes in its board representatives of the cooperative movement, in addition to the most important relevant governmental and private institutions, which allows these actors to participate in the decision-making process by participating in drawing up the sector’s strategies policies and plans and setting its priorities.

Also in this context, a number of bylaws and regulations of this Law were approved, which contribute to organizing and facilitating work. In 2023, the Regulation of Fees collected by the

CWA for its services was amended by cancelling some fees and reducing others with the aim of reducing the financial burdens on cooperatives. Also in this framework, the CWA and its partners are combining their efforts to amend the law and make it more friendly to cooperatives, and complete all its explanatory regulations, as well as continuing the work towards to activate tax and customs policies that are friendly to cooperatives.

Moreover, to strengthen the partnership with various actors in the cooperative sector, the CWA is making continuous efforts, in close partnership with the Palestinian cooperative movement, and with technical support from the International Labor Organization, to institutionalize two important bodies to support the cooperative movement, namely the Cooperative Development Institute (CDI) and the Cooperative Development Fund (CDF). The mission of the CDI will focus on the development of cooperatives through the provision of capacity building and training in many areas including cooperative good governance, social and cooperative entrepreneurship, cooperative administrative and financial aspects, project management, marketing, and dealing with technology and digitization, as well as the promotion of the cooperative business model. As for the CDF, it will provide financial and business development services to cooperatives, which will contribute to solving the problems of lack of tailored funding and weakness of business-related skills that cooperatives suffer from. In this context, we look forward to building close cooperation and to exchange experiences with our brothers in Jordan, as they are currently embarking on the establishment of similar institutions, in order to improve the enabling environment for cooperatives. We are also open to learning and benefiting from all international and Arab experiences and good practices in order to build an active and sustainable cooperative sector.

The CWA also puts in constant efforts to raise the awareness of cooperative model in the Palestinian society in general and among the cooperatives in particular, with aim to promote the cooperative model which is based on the cooperative values and principle. In this context, the CWA's employees provide awareness-raising and counselling to existing cooperatives to boost their cooperative identity, and disseminate the cooperative culture among society, especially the vulnerable and marginalized groups as well as university graduates and NEETs, to motivate them to form cooperatives or join the existing ones, so that they can solve the problems they cannot solve individually and improve their socio-economic situation. Such activities are implemented through media campaigns in the traditional and social media platforms, or face to face by organizing field visits to community groups, schools, universities, etc., as well as organizing workshops and other awareness-raising events. In this context, the CWA plans, in the next few years, to introduce an educational content on cooperative work into school and university curricula, through cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and some universities with whom memorandums of understanding have been concluded for this purpose.

On the other hand, with the aim of strengthening the institutional environment supportive of cooperatives, the CWA embarks on institutionalizing and strengthening the relationship with the partners and actors in the cooperative sector. This is being done through participatory planning for the sector and, concluding MoUs with actors, holding coordination meetings, and establishing coordination frameworks. Also, within this framework, the CWA invites and involves the actors in the sector in the strategic planning process that results in the preparation of medium-term strategies for the sector. Furthermore, the CWA is currently preparing to setup a forum for the social and solidarity economy in Palestine, which includes various actors in the

sector, including national and international governmental and non-governmental organizations. Such forum will allow all relevant stakeholders, regardless of their roles (monitoring, supervisory, implementing, funding, educational, and marketing, etc) to sit around the same table to harmonize their efforts aimed at supporting and developing the sector.

The CWA is also about to finish building up a computerized system for cooperatives. This system will facilitate and streamline the services provided to cooperatives and stakeholders, and will constitute a reliable source of up-to-date data and reports about the cooperative sector. Such data will contribute to improving the planning for the sector, monitoring the progress in the sector, and addressing the existing and emerging challenges on an ongoing basis. Moreover, this system will provide updated information to stakeholders including cooperators, researchers and interested parties.

In order to support the products of cooperatives, the CWA led an effort that ultimately resulted in the Council of Ministers issuing a decision to give priority to the products of cooperatives in public procurement contracts. This decision represents a good opportunity for cooperatives to solve a large part of their marketing problems. To allow an optimal benefit for cooperatives from this opportunity, the CWA is working with partners to implement specific interventions aimed at building the capabilities of cooperatives related to marketing and management in order to improve their products in terms of both quantity and quality.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the end of our statement, we hope that you will all make every effort to help us overcome the effects of the disaster that our country, Palestine, is suffering from due to the Israeli occupation, the last and most heinous occupation in history. Despite the harsh conditions under which we live and work, we are determined to remain steadfast and resilient, build our nation and institutions, and support our cooperative sector, through which many of our socio-economic problems, such as unemployment, poverty and marginalization, can be solved.

We wish that this conference will be a great success and come up with recommendations that contribute to strengthening partnerships between governments and cooperatives, to achieve our common goal of enhancing the contribution of cooperatives to achieving sustainable development.

Assalamo Alaikom Wa Rahmatullah

Thank you

## **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the Minister for Agriculture and Chairman of Jordan Cooperative Corporation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Honourable Khaled al – Huneifat for inviting me as the minister responsible for cooperatives in Papua New Guinea to attend this 11<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Cooperative Ministers Conference. I also thank the ICA-AP and the Jordan Cooperative Corporation for hosting this conference.

I acknowledge the presence of fellow ministers responsible for cooperatives and delegates from the Asia Pacific, Middle East and North Africa region and representatives from the international agencies and donors.

This is the first time Papua New Guinea is attending this conference since we joined the international cooperative alliance in 2015.

The concept of cooperative was introduced into Papua New Guinea in 1947 by the colonial administration of Australia to encourage the local people to participate in income generating small business activities to improve and sustain their livelihoods.

During the initial stages the cooperative movement mainly consisted of simple village trade stores. Under government encouragement and guidance the cooperative movement quickly spread. The area of activity became more diversified, from consumer to marketing of primary produce, especially, coffee, cocoa and copra.

Few years before PNG became independent in 1975 the legislation governing the cooperatives was repealed and replaced by the companies act and cooperatives were required to convert to cooperative companies and operate under the provisions of the companies act which did not work well for cooperatives as the companies act deviated from the principles and values of cooperatives. This led to the downfall of cooperatives.

The government on realizing the positive impact of cooperatives re - introduced the legislation governing cooperatives (the cooperative societies act) in 1985 and in 2000 established the office of the cooperative societies under the ministry of commerce and industry to revive the cooperative movement and regulate their operations.

Registration of new cooperatives commenced in 2003. Since then the government through the ministry of commerce and industry has undertaken the following initiatives and actions to promote and facilitate the development of cooperatives.

- established the registration system for incorporation of cooperatives as legal entities.
- established regional cooperative centers in the 4 regions of the country to provide services to cooperatives
- provided grants and seed capital to cooperatives
- provided training to the cooperatives
- the current prime minister on taking office in 2019 urged the people of PNG to “take back PNG through agriculture”. That gave prominence to develop the agriculture sector through cooperatives
- the government’s approval of the micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) policy in 2022 which identifies cooperatives as one of the ideal vehicles to create wealth and employment for its citizens and contribute to the overall development of the country.
- the government has been allocating funds to selected commercial banks since 2021 to be loaned out at concessional rates for development and promotion of micro, small and medium enterprises including cooperatives.
- a national cooperative development policy is currently been developed and should be in place for implementation by the end of this year. This policy aims to create an enabling environment for cooperatives to thrive. Through this policy, the government aims to improve its facilitative function with clear policy directions and institutional arrangements to maintain good governance practices, promote, facilitate, support and

monitor growth of the cooperatives sector as a strong contributor to the country's GDP and improved quality of life for the people.

Currently there are around twelve thousand (12,000) registered cooperatives in Papua New Guinea with membership of around four hundred thousand (400,000 persons). Almost seventy (70) percent of these cooperatives are involved in the agriculture sector including livestock. Others are involved in fisheries, retailing, tourism, transport, handicrafts etc.

Thrift and financial services cooperatives are active and popular in PNG but are administered and regulated by the Central Bank of PNG.

Cooperatives in PNG are not yet well developed. They are more concentrated at the primary level involved in micro business activities, especially in the agriculture sector within their localities.

In 2004, the government identified cooperatives as the best vehicle to implement its rural development, people empowerment and poverty alleviation strategies.

The PNG government's plans to further improve and develop the partnership arrangements with the cooperatives are all included in the national cooperative development policy. These briefly are:

- develop comprehensive policy and regulatory frameworks to improve, promote and facilitate the growth and development of cooperatives in a more transparent and coherent way.
- establish efficient management and administrative system of the office of cooperatives to support the development, expansion and growth of cooperatives.
- provide education, training and extension services for cooperatives.
- introduce other types of cooperatives
- improve access to finance and credit for cooperatives.
- consider tax concessions for cooperatives
- provide market access and information facilities for cooperatives.
- strengthen collaborative, networking and partnership arrangements between all key government stakeholders to support growth and development of cooperatives.
- develop sector specific policies for cooperatives in various sectors to enable effective development.

Our government is also faced with challenges and issues affecting the development of cooperatives. These are mainly related to policy and regulatory frameworks, information technology and capacity building.

We will surely need the assistance of our fellow ica member countries especially from the asia pacific region and the international agencies and donors to address those challenges and issues.

The PNG government's vision is to see the cooperative sector participate equally in the socio – economic development of the country by contributing 10 percent to the GDP by 2027.

The PNG government is also considerate of achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through cooperatives.

Cooperatives worldwide are guided by the same values, principles and the cooperative identity. Such forums like this gives us the opportunity to share experiences and ideas and come up with appropriate strategies to further improve the cooperative movement in our respective countries and on the global scene.

Thank you.

## **PHILLIPPINES**

As we convene for the 11<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference, it is imperative for us to highlight the importance of the cooperative movement in shaping the international community. The directives from the Philippine government outline the critical steps needed to bolster agricultural cooperatives and ensure food security for both present and future generations. These include identifying necessary resources and strategies, strengthening the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), emphasizing the use of science in sustainable production, and accelerating clustering and consolidation efforts in farming, fisheries, and livestock management.

The CDA has taken initiatives to further maximize the potential of agricultural cooperatives. This initiative involves the integration of smart farming techniques and farm mapping, along with enhancing supply and value chain management. With these initiatives, we aim to further integrate Philippine cooperatives with modern best practices within the agricultural cluster.

The Authority also introduced merger and consolidation of micro and small cooperatives, aiming to avoid the cancellation, dissolution, and delisting of cooperatives in the Philippines, majority of which belong to the agriculture cluster. Such merging and consolidation of these entities can leverage their resources to attain economies of scale. This consolidation enables them to foster efficiency and reduces promotional costs, ultimately bolstering the sustainability and competitiveness of agricultural cooperatives in the Philippines.

The Authority also taps other government agencies that could bolster the sustainability and capacity of Cooperatives. Such linkages open avenues for cooperatives to access resources such as funding, technical assistance, training programs, mechanization, and infrastructure support. With the expansion of networks, cooperatives can leverage partnerships with government agencies to advocate for favorable policies and regulations that promote their interests and facilitate their growth and sustainability.

In order to introduce cooperatives into international market, we launched the CDA Global Coop-Biz. The Authority's program that brings Cooperative global opportunities. Under this program, Coop-Biz was born. With the launch of Coop-Biz, the premier cooperative -platform showcasing products from cooperatives worldwide, we're revolutionizing how cooperative goods reach international consumers. This innovative e-commerce platform, provided by the CDA for free, offers cooperatives the opportunity to showcase and sell their products globally and to various regions, free of charge. Beyond commerce, CDA Global is committed to fostering mutual learning between Philippine cooperatives and their counterparts in other countries, facilitating a dynamic exchange of cooperative knowledge and practices for mutual benefit.

The Cooperative Development Authority in the Philippines goes beyond implementing government directives; it actively involves cooperatives in policymaking, through consultative bodies like the National Alliance of Cooperatives and the National Cooperative Development Council that contribute to policy direction and development. This inclusive approach ensures that policies consider the diverse needs of cooperatives, fostering ownership and accountability within the sector. In this assembly, I implore all delegations present to be innovative, share our ideas, and to be able to forge ahead the cooperative sector, so that we can achieve the expansion of the cooperative movement, not only within the Asia-Pacific region, but also globally. Thank you, and I hope that this conference will bring the best of us, to prosper within the cooperative spirit. Maraming salamat!

## **SAUDI ARABIA**

Your Excellency Khaled Mousa Alhuneafat, Minister of Agriculture of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Excellencies, Heads of government Delegations, Representatives of International Organizations, Distinguished guests

To begin with, we extend our congratulations to Your Excellency and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for chairing this significant conference, the 11th Asia-Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference. We appreciate the efforts invested in facilitating this gathering, and we are looking forward to contributing to its success.

Saudi Arabia believes that cooperatives are a fundamental catalyst that enables many of the objectives stated in the Kingdom's Vision 2030. Historically, Saudi Arabia has had a long tradition of cooperatives across all its regions, especially in agriculture and consumer sectors. Despite the fact that cooperatives have existed for a very long time, there are many situations for which they provide modern and innovative solutions, and help address our 21st century challenges.

One such area is the future of work and the growing role of freelancers. As we speak, Saudi Arabia has issued more than 2.4 million of freelance licenses, and foresees a significant growth in this field, with its young population and new expectations of the youth talent. Cooperatives are well adapted in helping structure these communities, and create synergies across its members.

Another area of interest is the economic empowerment of socially vulnerable groups, artisans, productive families and residents of remote areas. On this front, we have been working closely with a set of public and private sector partners on the establishment of cooperatives that are focused on creating employment as well as production opportunities for target segments. One example of those cooperatives include empowering people with disabilities, among other profiles, to work in coffeeshops. This cooperative focuses on identifying the right candidates and enrolling them in a holistic training program that covers technical areas, such as the barista role, as well as the required soft skills to deal with customers. Then, it deploys those candidates across a chain of coop-owned and partner-owned coffeeshops. Another example includes establishing a worker-owned cooperatives that empower interested social security beneficiaries in producing fabric related products such as uniforms through a flexible business

model that addresses their specific needs and constraints. For instance, the current model allows for a hybrid approach that includes factory-based as well as home-based production. In order to accelerate the growth and impact of cooperatives, the Kingdom has been working on a number of initiatives over the last few years.

- In 2021, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development Established a General Directorate for Cooperative Societies to oversee and drive the cooperative movement growth

- Since then, the ministry was active in creating multiple partnerships with key public sector and private sector entities to provide required enablers for the cooperative movement in the Kingdom

- In addition, there are ongoing efforts to upgrade our legal framework and regulations with our Cooperative Law going through a major overhaul to address existing concerns and unlock future opportunities in this field

- We expect this year to mark an important milestone in our transformation journey as our national cooperative strategy was approved in January 2024 which sets ambitious targets and outlines our roadmap to unlocking the potential of this promising field

We would like to conclude by stressing that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is keen on working closely with regional and international partners at multiple levels to harness the transformative potential of cooperatives. As such, we are excited to participate in this important event and we are looking forward to contributing to its success.

Thank you, your Excellency the President and distinguished guests, and We hope that the work of this conference will be crowned with success.

## **THAILAND**

Your Excellencies,

Thailand, as a member of ICA, has realized the importance of the Cooperative System in fostering greater sustainable food systems and developing the quality of life of farmers. We acknowledge the urgency of transforming its agricultural and food systems including the need for resilience in the midst of the changing circumstances, whether it be, food insecurity, climate change, poverty, limitation of opportunities for market access, inequality, economic recession, and the problem of environmental degradation.

Thailand would like to take this opportunity to support mutual collaboration in the strong development of the alliance between the government and cooperative sectors for enhancing joint action which will lead to achieving sustainable development of the inclusive economy, society, culture, and environment inclusion with people and cooperative members-centric at the heart of policy determination and joint operations.

Fellow Colleagues,

I would like to reaffirm Thailand's commitment to continuing to develop food systems by executing the Bio-Circular- Green Economy Strategic or BCG Model which is a holistic economic model towards sustainable development which emphasizes the application of technology and innovation for the purpose of uplifting competitiveness in 3 dimensions, namely the Bio Economy, Circular Economy, and Green Economy.

For the cooperative sector, the current government's policy has focused on "market-led, innovation-driven and income- growth of cooperative members" by using cooperatives as the main organizations for the development of the quality of life of farmers and economic mobilization as well as being the core of linkage between farmers and consumers. The government has a policy with an aim to develop cooperatives to have the high potential competitiveness by supporting the accessibility of cooperatives to production resources such as land, water resources, capital, technology and innovation, modern machinery and equipment used for the improvement of the production and processing, products value-added, and expanding the distribution channels of products as well as improving the bargaining power of farmers in selling their products at a reasonable and fair price.

In order to create members' trust in cooperative business operations as well as creating trust of partners who are cooperative's buyers, processors, market channels, and consumers, the most important thing to achieve the purpose of creating this trust is to establish collaboration among public sector, cooperative sector, private sector, and people sector.

The Cooperative Promotion Department, or CPD, under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand, has a crucial role in enhancing the potential of cooperatives' competitiveness, creating trust in business operations for cooperatives' prosperity, and providing welfare to members for better livelihoods resulting in the sustainable strengthened community.

The Cooperative Promotion Department has determined the strategies for cooperative development in 6 aspects namely,

- 1) Enhancing the potential of cooperatives in management towards becoming high-performance organizations with technology and innovation;
- 2) Promoting cooperatives to drive their organizations and business operations by using technology and information;
- 3) Improving the potential and performance of business operations in line with the cooperative's types and its business;
- 4) Establishing network linkage and collaboration on businesses and society for sustainable growth;
- 5) Enhancing good governance in cooperatives and;
- 6) Restructure the organization together with the roles and responsibilities of the cooperative societies and the government sector in response to rapid change and building resiliency.

And more importantly, in order to support cooperatives and members to adapt to the rapid changes and recovery after the COVID-19 epidemic, and emerging infectious diseases, the Cooperative Promotion Department has formulated important policies to enhance the potential of cooperatives and their members such as farmers' debt suspension along with increasing income, reducing production costs, promoting agricultural product processing, developing product identity with the support of necessary machineries and equipment, linking the whole food chain from production, collecting, processing, and marketing which aims to increase cooperative members' income.

Presently, financial cooperatives in Thailand have expanded their financial transactions in the form of savings deposits and increasing member shareholdings continually. As a result, the operations of Thrift and Credit Cooperatives and Credit Union Cooperatives have total assets

of more than 3.4trillion baht, average growth rate of 7.4% derived from the increased member deposits and share capital. This growth plays a crucial role in a country's economic driving as a whole picture.

Consequently, the Cabinet has approved guidelines for reforming the management and supervision system of Thrift and Credit Cooperatives and Credit Union Cooperatives, leading to the issuance of the Ministerial Regulation on Operation and Supervision of Thrift and Credit Cooperatives and Credit Union Cooperatives, 2021, to regulate and supervise the financial operations of Thrift and Credit Cooperatives and Credit Union Cooperatives which comprises of determination of the cooperative's size, authority and duties of the board of directors, qualifications and other prohibited characteristics of the board of directors and managers, maintenance of reserve fund of the Cooperative Federation, Supervision on Good Governance of Cooperatives, and Accounting and reporting of information, which are the measures to regulate and supervise the operations of financial cooperatives in order for protecting the interests of cooperative members and avoiding possible impacts on the general public and the country's economic system.

In addition, the Cooperative Promotion Department has encouraged cooperatives to embrace innovation and modern technology in their operations to increase the efficiency of business operations and member services along with creating more transparency in the cooperatives which are inspected by cooperative members. In particular, the large-scale cooperatives with working capital more than 100 million baht are required the online applications to service members in order to monitor their accounts and the cooperative's status. Moreover, Cooperative Promotion Department also has a policy to establish quality cooperatives by merging small cooperatives to be large cooperatives which more potential, as well as promote expansion of existing cooperatives, developing personnel and cooperative extension officers' knowledge and skills for better performances in the work field, raising and strengthening the good governance for uplifting cooperative members' livelihoods.

I am very pleased that this conference is a platform for the government and the cooperative sectors to exchange information on cooperative development policies as well as discuss guidelines for collaborative development in the future. I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers of the conference, namely, the Jordanian Ministry of Agriculture, the Jordanian Cooperative Corporation: JCC, and the International Cooperative Alliance for Asia and the Pacific: ICA-AP for conducting a fruitful discussion in a warm and cordial atmosphere conference. I am convinced that this conference will provide a foundation for future collaborative partnerships to collectively build a more peaceful, prosperous, and livable world in all regions together.

Thank you very much.

### **UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

May the peace, blessings, and mercy of God be upon you

Cooperatives play a major role in developing the economic, social and cultural aspects of their members and providing for their needs. Cooperatives also have an important contribution to

supporting low-income people and increasing their role in participating in development and achieving the desired social dimension. The United Nations has placed cooperatives among the group of economic factors effective in achieving a more diverse and sustainable future. Therefore, many countries of the world have resorted to applying multiple policies to consolidate the cooperative model in advancing economic and social development, as the successive economic, social, political and cultural changes at the international, regional and local levels have demonstrated the extent to which societies need the presence of strong cooperative entities aimed at creating a balance between economic sectors. Then there was the need to strengthen and support cooperative work and spread cooperative awareness of its importance and role.

This requires that governments establish supportive policies and a legal framework consistent with the nature and functions of cooperatives, aiming to enable cooperatives to perform their role in serving and developing society as non-governmental organizations that represent one of the distinct types of ownership, and are integrated with the state's trends in achieving economic stability.

Dear brothers

The cooperative sector in the United Arab Emirates currently consists of 42 cooperative societies, 50% of which work in the consumer field and about 33% in the field of fishermen's services, in addition to (2) specific unions, and the remaining types represent the remaining percentage and work in various sectors such as the service sector. Which includes 4 cooperatives, and one cooperative for each of the housing, transportation rental, crafts, and agriculture sectors, and the cooperatives currently provide more than 13,500 job opportunities. In recent years, the UAE has adopted a new perspective for developing the cooperative sector, believing in its role as a major contributor to the sustainable economic and social development of the country. We are working to provide policies that guarantee the comprehensive performance of this vital sector, achieving further empowerment of the cooperative model and increasing its contribution to the gross domestic product of the state, and to support the diversification, competitiveness and sustainability of the national economy, in line with the goals of the UAE Centennial 2071.

From this standpoint, the state issued Federal Decree Law No. (6) of 2022 regarding cooperatives, which aims to develop the cooperative sector to new levels. In light of the new law, the Ministry of Economy adopts two main goals, which are: increasing the percentage of cooperatives' contribution to the non-oil gross domestic product to 5% by 2031, compared to the current contribution rate that does not exceed 1%, and increasing the contributing members in cooperative societies to about 500,000 contributing members, up from 100,000 members currently.

Gentlemen, the new law contributes to creating a qualitative shift in the cooperative sector to build a pioneering cooperative experience that keeps pace with the best global experiences in this regard, by motivating community members to establish cooperatives in new sectors in the country and diversifying their activities to include many types, including consumer cooperatives, production cooperatives, employee cooperatives and owners. Professions, community cooperatives, service cooperatives, including financial and health cooperatives, digital cooperatives, platform cooperatives, and any other types that are approved later.

The new cooperative law represents a turning point in the governance of the cooperative sector, as the Ministry of Economy worked to develop the articles of the law with a proactive and flexible approach that anticipates future trends, and was based on comparative studies that included developed countries in the cooperative sector, to ensure coming up with updated and integrated legislation that follows best practices and is compatible with the requirements. The business environment in the country during the next stage.

The new law also contributes to completing the legal and institutional frameworks of the legislative system for cooperatives in the country, ensuring their sustainability and maximizing their ability to develop and develop, in accordance with the goals of the UAE Centennial 2071. The law opens new and broad horizons for all segments of society to participate in cooperative work, build a new generation of pioneers in the cooperative sector, support the provision of more job opportunities in this vital sector, and encourage the spread of innovative cooperative culture in society, by allowing non-citizens to membership in cooperative societies in the country. With the exception of typical consumer cooperatives whose membership is limited to UAE citizens.

Under the new law, cooperatives in the UAE will have more space to diversify their activities and expand in the country's markets, while providing full protection for the rights of members, and supporting the establishment of pioneering Emirati cooperatives in new sectors, most notably the new economy sectors, in addition to the fields of health, education, tourism, financial services, and others. It is another vital priority sector in the country.

In conclusion, we can only reiterate that cooperatives have a unique opportunity to make an economic, social and cultural impact, in addition to the increasing global quest to produce new types of businesses that have a stable and successful character alongside other social and solidarity economy institutions, as economic alternatives. In many sectors, in response to challenges, ensuring a sustainable future and high flexibility to continue.

Thank you very much, and may God's peace, mercy, and blessings be upon you.

#### 4. PROFILE OF KEY DIGNITARIES AND SPEAKERS



**H.E. Khaled Mousa Shehadeh Alhuneafat, Minister of Agriculture, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**

The Jordanian Minister of Agriculture, Eng. Khaled Alhuneafat, has implemented a comprehensive development plan to advance the agricultural sector, achieving economic, agricultural, social, and environmental development across all governorates through various programs. He has held several positions, such as Minister of Agriculture in various governments, Minister of State Affairs, and Mayor of Tafila for nearly ten years and many others. He holds a Fellowship in Municipal Function Leadership from the University of Washington in the United States (2013) and a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering (1995). He was a member of the Executive and Advisory Council of Tafila Governorate, the University Council of Tafila Technical University, an elected member of the Regional and Local Euro-Mediterranean Association, president and member of several charitable and cooperative societies in Tafila, and was a member of the Executive Council of Arab Ministers at the Arab Center for Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD/Egypt). He was elected for two consecutive terms as President of the International Olive Council for the years 2022-2023 and is the Chairman of the Food Security Council in Jordan and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the ACC, NARC, and JCC (2021-present). His efforts were recognized by His Majesty King Abdullah II, who honored him with the Third Class Medal of Excellence for his contributions to development projects in Tafila.



**Dr. Ariel Guarco, President, International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)**

Mr. Ariel Guarco is the president of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and has served as a member of ICA's Global Board since 2013. A passionate cooperative leader, he has led the development of the cooperative movement process in his country, Argentina and he has also built strong bonds with the rest of the cooperative movement in the American continent and worldwide. Mr. Guarco has served as the Deputy Vice President of Cooperatives of the Americas since 2014, and has served as the President of the Federation of Electric and Public Services Cooperatives of the Province of Buenos Aires (FEDECOBA) since 2008. He also serves as the President of the Cooperative Confederation of the Argentine Republic. Mr. Guarco is the author of the book "The Argentine Cooperative Movement – A Hopeful Look into the Future".



**Mr. Abdelfattah M.Q. Al-Shalabi, Director General, Jordan Cooperative Corporation (JCC)**

Mr. Abdelfattah M. Q. Al-Shalabi has been serving as the Director General of the Jordan Cooperative Corporation (JCC) since 2021. He has actively contributed to the preparation and launch of the National Strategy for the Cooperative Movement (2021-2025). His extensive experience includes representing Jordan at various Arab and international conferences and Ministerial meetings. He brings expertise in financial management, accounting systems, and cooperative policy development. He is deeply engaged in promoting the role of Jordanian women and youth in cooperatives, as well as enhancing the agricultural sector's credit tools and mechanisms. Additionally, Mr. Al-Shalabi holds significant memberships, serving as Vice Chairman of the JCC Board of Directors, Vice Chairman of the Arab Cooperative Union (ACU) in Cairo, and holding board positions at the Economic and Social Council of Jordan (ESC), Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC), National Agricultural Research Center (NARC), and the International Cooperative Fisheries Organization (ICFO). He holds a Master's degree in Banking and Financing for Development from the University of Bergamo in Italy (1998) and a Bachelor's degree in Accounting from Yarmouk University in Jordan (1988).



**Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav, President, International Cooperative Alliance – Asia and Pacific (ICA-AP)**

Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav, a Member of the Upper House of the Indian Parliament (Rajya Sabha), is the Chairman of Krishak Bharti Cooperative Ltd. (KRIBHCO), India and all its subsidiaries. Previously, he was the President of the National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI). He was the Vice Chairperson of ICA-AP from 2010-2021. He serves on the Boards of the International Raiffeisen Union (IRU), Germany and in India, the National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India (NCCF), National Agriculture Cooperative Marketing Federation (NAFED), National Federation of Urban Coop Banks & Credit Societies (NAFCUB), National Federation of State Coop Banks (NAFSCOB) among others. Dr. Yadav holds M.Sc, B.Ed, L.L.B and PhD degrees.



**Dr. Manoj Nardeosingh, Secretary General, African-Asian Rural Development Organization**

His Excellency Dr. Manoj Nardeosingh hails from Mauritius and took over the charge of the office of the AARDO Secretary-General in September 2019. Before this, H.E. served AARDO as Assistant Secretary-General from 14 February 2014 to 02 September 2019. Before joining the AARDO Headquarters in New Delhi, India, he worked with the Government of Mauritius in various positions such as Economist, Researcher, Educationist and Proponent of the cooperative movement in the country. He

was Secretary for Cooperative Development, Ministry of Business, Enterprises and Cooperatives, Government of the Republic of Mauritius. He worked as Senior Cooperative Development Officer from 2003 to 2005; as Acting Secretary for Cooperative Development from 1995 to 2000; and as Cooperative Development Officer from 1992 to 1995 in the Ministry of Commerce and Cooperatives. In 1991, he was also an Economist in the Ministry of Economic Planning and Regional Cooperation and has also been a professor of Economics in the college. H.E. Dr. Manoj Nardeosingh holds a Master of Science in Economics from Moldavian State University (Ex USSR) and a Ph.D. from Finance Academy, Moscow, Russian Federation.



**Dr. Abdul Hakim Elwaer, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative, FAO Near East and North Africa**

Dr. Elwaer joined the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on 5 April 2021 as Assistant-Director General & Regional Representative of the Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa. Before joining FAO, he served as Adviser to the President on Global Advocacy and Partnerships at the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where he also served as the IsDB Spokesperson and Director of Cooperation, Partnerships, Regional Integration and Resource Mobilization. He was further appointed IsDB’s Sherpa at G20 and Head of Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs). Earlier, he was the Director for Human Resources, Science and Technology and Director for Administration and Human Resources Management in the African Union where he supervised and managed the establishment of several African unique initiatives and institutions. He also served as Secretary of the Environmental General Authority (Minister of Environment) of the Government of Libya in Tripoli and was elected President of the African Ministerial Congress on Environment (AMCEN). He holds a Ph.D. in Environmental Chemistry from the University of Sheffield in the United Kingdom, a PG Diploma in Organizational Leadership from the Gestalt Centre of Organizations and Systems Development in the United States, and a Bachelor’s degree in Environmental Engineering and Science Technology from the University of Sabha in Libya.



**Dr. Nizar Haddad, Director General, National Agricultural Research Center (NARC), Jordan**

As the Director General of the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) in Jordan, Dr. Nizar Haddad has been leading the transformation of the agricultural sector in the region through innovation, digitalization, and smart solutions. With over 20 years of experience in scientific research and management, he has established the first agricultural innovation and entrepreneurship incubator in the region, launched the pioneering e-NARC

	<p>platform, and initiated the ground-breaking National Seed Bank project.</p> <p>He is also an Innovation Associate at the GIMI Institute and a certified assessor for the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), with a strong track record of excellence and recognition. He has received 11 national and international awards, including the prestigious Ideal Civil Service Award in 2010, and published 17 books and over 100 scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals. Passionate about sharing knowledge and contributing to economic modernization, he is actively involved in various committees and forums. His academic background includes a PhD, MSc, and BSc in Agricultural Engineering, a second Master's in Management and Strategic Studies, and a Higher Diploma in National Resource Management.</p>
	<p><b>Dr. Yashvantha Dongre, Chairperson, ICA-AP Committee on Cooperative Research (Online)</b></p> <p>Dr. Yashvantha Dongre serves as the Vice-Chancellor of Chanakya University, India. Currently he is a Visiting Professor in the College of Policy Science, Ritsumeikan University in Osaka, Japan. He has authored and edited several books and papers on cooperatives in the Asia-Pacific region, more recently “Waking the Asian Pacific Cooperative Potential” published by Elsevier, and “Cooperatives and Social Innovation in Asia and the Pacific” published by Springer. He also serves as Honorary Chair of Social Business Academic Network (India chapter) which was initiated by Nobel laureate Prof. Muhammed Yunus.</p>
	<p><b>Dr. Samir Barhoumeh, Research Consultant, ICA-AP</b></p> <p>With over 20 years of experience in international organizations, Dr. Samir Barhoumeh has successfully managed and contributed to diverse projects with recognized entities such as UNRWA, NEF, IYF, GIZ, EU, Dutch, and USAID. His professional expertise lies in effective project management involving budget oversight, staff leadership, and the execution of impact marketing campaigns. He has made significant contributions to education in Jordan, initiated entrepreneurial projects, and established business incubators. His extensive experience includes robust engagement with both the public and private sectors, focusing on youth education for employment, job placement, and the creation of new business opportunities and relationships. Notably, he has led the institutional strengthening component at the USAID-WIT project, strengthening public-private dialogue and enforcing relevant regulations. Presently, he holds a leadership position at Advance Consulting as Deputy Regional Director.</p> <p>Academically, he holds a Ph.D. in Business Administration and a master's degree in financial and banking Management. His credentials include international certificates in Making Markets</p>

	<p>Work, M4P (MSD), PMD, PMP, and certification in Advocacy and policy. He is also a certified trainer from ILO in MyCoop and possess expertise in the broader business and management field.</p>
	<p><b>H.E. Mr. Manoa Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications, Fiji</b></p> <p>Hon. Manoa Kamikamica is a Proud Fijian with over 33 years of experience in the field of Finance, Aviation, Banking and Manufacturing at a senior executive level. A Chartered Accountant by profession, he is the first indigenous Fijian to become a member of the Australian Institute of Chartered Accountants and is a member in Australia &amp; New Zealand and Fiji. He was the CFO and General Manager for the Lyndhurst Group of Companies and has served in senior roles with ANZ in Tonga, Fiji and Papua New Guinea. He has worked for Fiji Airways for over 13 years as General Manager of Finance and General Manager of Strategic Planning. He holds a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of NSW in Australia.</p>
	<p><b>H.E. Mr. Balaram Adhikari, Minister of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation, Nepal</b></p> <p>Mr. Balaram Adhikari is a Nepalese politician, belonging to the CPN (UML), currently serving as a member of the 2nd Federal Parliament of Nepal. In the 2022 Nepalese general election, he won the election from Kapilvastu constituency. He currently serve as Minister of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation since 6 March 2024.</p>
	<p><b>H.E. Dr. Abass Al-haj Hassan, Minister of Agriculture, Lebanon</b></p> <p>Dr. Abbas Al-Haj Hassan is a Lebanese political scientist and journalist. Since September 2021, he has been Minister of Agriculture in the Najib Miqati government. He earned a Master's degree in International Relations and Diplomacy in 2005 and continued his studies in France, earning another Master's degree in 2006 and a preparatory one in 2007 University diploma to obtain a Doctorate on the water crisis in Lebanon and Israeli ambitions in this area. He received his Doctorate in Political Science and International Relations in 2013. He has also worked as a journalist for many television channels including the news channel France 24.</p>



**Mr. Michael Pilbrow, Special Adviser, Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals, Australia**

Mr. Michael Pilbrow is Special Adviser to the Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals (BCCM). He is a former diplomat who represented Australia in Southeast Asia in the early 2000s. Now, he is the Chairman of the award-winning consultancy business, Strategic Development Group, which provides strategy, management and evaluation services in Australia and globally. He also has 20 years' experience in cooperative development, having co-founded cooperatives in health and sport, and advised consumer and producer groups in establishing and managing cooperatives across Australia. In 2018, he was inducted into the Honour Roll of the BCCM.



**Mr. Hani Farhan Alodainat, Director of the Cooperative Training Center, JCC**

Mr. Hani Farhan Alodainat is a seasoned professional in the cooperative sector, currently serving as the Director of the Cooperative Training Center at the Jordan Cooperative Corporation (JCC). His extensive experience includes overseeing the Balqa and Tafilah governorate Cooperation Directorate and coordinating the National Strategy Project for the Cooperative Movement (2021-2025). Additionally, Mr. Alodainat has played a pivotal role in enhancing cooperative productivity through his coordination efforts within the JCC. As a renowned trainer, he has imparted valuable knowledge through international programs such as "Think Coop & Start Coop" and "MY COOP." Mr. Alodainat actively collaborates with supporting bodies by conducting specialized training courses in cooperative work. His dedication to the cooperative movement in Jordan is further exemplified by his contributions of numerous working papers addressing its advancement.



**Mr. P. Santosh Kumar, Director of Legislation, ICA**

Mr. P. Santosh Kumar serves as Director of Legislation at the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) where he provides comparative analyses of cooperative laws and legal services to member organizations. He advocates to assert the distinctness of cooperatives through legislation, regulation, and public policy and supports the work of the ICA Cooperative Law Committee. Previously, he worked at the ICA Asia and Pacific office where he coordinated regional committees on cooperative law, policy, youth, cooperatives in educational institutions, and regional and national meetings on cooperative development. He holds a master's degree in international trade law from the University of Turin, Italy, postgraduate diplomas in International Trade and Business Law and International Law & Diplomacy, and an undergraduate law degree from Amity Law School in New Delhi, India. He is a lawyer admitted to the Bar Council of Delhi in India.



**Mr. Kenki Maeda, General Manager, Japan Cooperative Alliance**

Mr. Kenki Maeda is a General Manager in the Department for Cooperation among Cooperatives at Japan Cooperative Alliance (JCA). Previously he worked in the Cooperative Research Department at JC-Soken (Japan Cooperative General Research Institute). He has also served in JA-Zenchu (Central Union of Agricultural Cooperatives). Kenki received a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics from University of Tokyo.



**H.E. Eng. Sultan bin Jorais AlJorais, Deputy Minister for Social Security and Empowerment, Saudi Arabia**

Experienced Director Of Shared Services with a demonstrated history of working in the start-up organizations. Skilled in IT Service Management, IT Strategy, Data Center, Management, and Network Design. Strong information technology professional with a Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.) focused in Business/Commerce, General from University of Leicester.



**H.E. Mr. Pankaj Kumar Bansal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Cooperation, India**

Mr. Pankaj Kumar Bansal is a 1997-batch IAS officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre. He is also the Managing Director of National Cooperative Development Corporation, India. He is also the Chairman of one of the leading national level cooperatives floated recently namely, NCEL- National Cooperative Exports Limited.



**H.E. Mr. V. N. Vasavan, Minister for Ports & Cooperation, Government of Kerala, India**

Mr. V.N. Vasavan is an Indian politician and the current Minister for Ports and Cooperation , Government of Kerala, India. He is also the Member of Legislative Assembly from Ettumanoor assembly constituency of the Communist Party of India (CPIM) for Kottayam district in Kerala. He entered politics through student federation and became a member of the CPIM in 1974, elected as a District Committee Member in 1991, as District Secretariat Member in 1997 and as Kottayam District Secretary in the district conference held at Ettumanoor on 18 January 2015. He was a member of Pampady Grampanchayath and served as the President of Pampady Housing Cooperative Society, President of Kottayam District Cooperative Bank, Director of State Cooperative Bank, General Secretary of Kerala Private Hospital Employees Federation, Syndicate Member Sree Shankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady and District President of CITU, Kottayam.



**Ms. Om Devi Malla, Chairperson, National Cooperative Federation of Nepal**

Ms. Om Devi Malla, is the Chairperson of the National Cooperative Federation (NCF) of Nepal. Previously, she has served as the Senior Vice-Chairperson at NCF, Nepal. She began her career with cooperatives in 1997 and has progressively risen the ranks and served as a Member of Parliament. She played a constructive role in the making of the Constitution in 2015 and the inclusion of cooperatives. Ms. Malla has been providing special attention to women's leadership development and inclusion in the cooperative sector. She was elected to the position of Global board member of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) in 2017. She holds a master's degree in Sociology from Tribhuvan University Nepal.



**Mr. Bilal Omer, Chairman, Cooperative Work Authority, Ministry of Labour, Palestine**

Mr. Bilal Omer is the current Head of the Cooperative Work Agency (CWA), bringing extensive experience in social protection, social dialogue, and the preservation of union freedoms. He has held significant roles including Assistant Undersecretary for Labor Departments Affairs and Director General of Work Relations within the Ministry of Labor. Additionally, he has served as the President of the Palestinian Federation of Workers in Tulkarem and is a longstanding member of the Board of Directors at the Social Security Corporation. His skills encompass strategic planning, decision-making, visionary thinking, and emotional intelligence.



**Ms. Aicha Errifaai, General Director of the Office of Cooperation Development, Morocco**

Ms. Aicha Errifaai is the General Director of the Office of Cooperation Development in Morocco, a position she has held since July 2023. Previously, she worked for the Ministry of Economy and Finance for over eight years, where she served as the Head of the Energy, Mines, and Handicrafts Service within the Budget Directorate from August 2022 to July 2023 and as a State Engineer in the Budget Directorate from March 2015 to August 2022.



**Yang Berhormat Datuk Ewon Benedick, Minister of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives, Malaysia**

Datuk Ewon Benedick is a Member of Parliament for Penampang since November 2022 and a Member of the Sabah State Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Kadamaian since May 2018. Prior to that, he served as the State Minister of Rural Development of Sabah in the Sabah Heritage Party (WARISAN) administration. He is presently the youngest member of Anwar Ibrahim's Cabinet. He began his career as Research Executive at Institute for Indigenous Economic Progress Sabah while continuously developing and advancing strong ties with his grassroots

	<p>communities. He holds a Bachelor's in Computer Science (Software Development) from the University Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UteM).</p>
	<p><b>Ms. Rasha Bassam Karkouki, Assistant Minister of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection, Syria</b></p> <p>Ms. Rasha Bassam Karkouki is the Assistant Minister of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection in Syria. In her capacity, she focuses on regulating internal trade practices and safeguarding consumer rights. She plays a pivotal role in maintaining market stability and enhancing consumer trust in Syria's trade system.</p>
	<p><b>H.E. Abdulaziz Almutairi, Deputy Minister of Social Affairs for the Cooperative Sector and External Relations Department, Kuwait</b></p> <p>H.E. Abdulaziz Almutairi serves as the Deputy Minister of Social Affairs for the Cooperative Sector and External Relations Department in Kuwait. In this role, he oversees the development and regulation of cooperative societies, fostering external relations to promote the cooperative sector.</p>
	<p><b>Mr. Jeroen Douglas, Director General, ICA</b></p> <p>A Dutch national, Mr. Jeroen Douglas joined the ICA as its Director General in 2024. Previously, he served as the Executive Director of Solidaridad, an international civil society organisation, from 2019 to 2023, which he joined in 1992 as a Campaign Officer. In 2009, he became Director for Solidaridad in Latin America and managed finance, governance, partnerships, advocacy and fundraising in the region. In 2016, he was appointed Solidaridad's Strategy Director and drove the development of the network's 2016-2020 strategy, being responsible for network-wide policy and related programme implementations. He has a background in theology and cultural anthropology.</p>
	<p><b>Ms. Simel Esim, Head - Cooperative Unit, International Labor Organization</b></p> <p>Ms. Simel Esim, a Turkish-American economist, has led the ILO's portfolio on cooperatives and the wider social and solidarity economy (SSE) since 2012. She is the first woman to be appointed as the head of ILO's Cooperatives Unit (COOP) since 1920. In 2022, she served as lead technical expert for the ILO's Office report on decent work and the SSE. Previously, she led the ILO Regional Office for Arab States' portfolio on gender equality and women workers' rights. Before joining the ILO in 2004, Ms Esim worked for the World Bank, Development Alternatives, Inc. and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). She has been a member of Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) since its founding in 1997</p>

	<p>and currently serves on its Board. She holds a PhD in Economics from the American University in Washington, DC, an MA in International Economics and Middle East Studies from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in Bologna, Italy and Washington, DC, and a BA in Political Science from the Boğaziçi University in Istanbul.</p>
	<p><b>Ms. Chitose Arai, Chairperson, ICA-AP Committee on Women</b></p> <p>Ms. Chitose Arai is the Vice President of the Japanese Consumers' Cooperative Union (JCCU), which is a national federation of consumer cooperatives with 30 million individual members. She also serves as the President of Coop Mirai, the largest consumer coop in Japan. She was a board member of Saitama Coop from 2005 to 2013. In 2013 when Saitama Coop merged with Coop Tokyo and Chiba Coop to become Coop Mirai, she was elected as a board member of Coop Mirai. At the ICA level, she served as the Vice President of the ICA-AP and the Acting Chairperson of the ICA-AP Women's Committee.</p>
	<p><b>Atty. Dulce Bustamante, Chairperson, ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation</b></p> <p>Atty. Dulce Bustamante was elected as the Chairperson of the ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation (ICYC) in November 2023. Previously, she has served as the Vice-Chairperson of ICYC. She also serves as the Chairperson of the Young Entrepreneurs Service (YES) Cooperative in the Philippines. A trained attorney, she works as the Senior Partner with the Evidente Abunales Ramos Bustamante &amp; Delmo Law Offices and as the City Government Dept. Head for the Imus City Legal Office. She has received a bachelor's degree in Law from San Beda College Alabang – School Of Law and has graduated with a BSBA in Management Accounting from De La Salle University – Dasmariñas.</p>
	<p><b>Mr. Wisit Srisuwan, Director-General of the Cooperative Promotion Department, Thailand</b></p> <p>Mr. Wisit Srisuwan has served as the Director General of the Cooperative Promotion Department (CPD), Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Royal Thai Government since 2021. He holds two Bachelor's degrees in Agricultural Technology (Cooperative Economics) from Maejo University and in Political Science from Sukhothaimathirath Open University. He obtained a Master's in Political Science from Ramkhamheang University. Thailand's Maejo University has presented an Honorary Doctoral Degree in Digital Economics and Cooperatives to him in recognition of his contributions in promoting cooperatives and economics as well as his accomplishments in cooperatives development. He also serves on the boards of directors at the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC) and the Dairy Farming Promotion Organization of Thailand (DPO).</p>



**Mr. Hiroshi Ono, Director, Office of Consumer Cooperative Societies, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan**

Mr. Hiroshi Ono is the Director of the Office of Consumer Cooperative Societies within the Community Welfare and Services Division at the Social Welfare and War Victims' Relief Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in Japan. He began his career at the Ministry of Health and Welfare in April 1993. Over the years, he has held various positions, leading up to his current role, which he assumed in April 2024. His extensive experience in the ministry underlines his dedication to public welfare and cooperative societies.

## 5. LIST OF INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS

	<b>Names</b>	<b>Designation/ Affiliation</b>	<b>Country</b>
<b>Government Representatives</b>			
1	H.E. Mr. Manoa Kamikamica	Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications	Fiji
2	Mr. Faizal Khan	Director and Registrar of Cooperatives, Ministry of Trade, Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises	Fiji
3	H.E. Mr. VN Vasavan	Minister for Cooperation and Ports, Government of Kerala	India
4	Ms. Mini Antony IAS	Secretary (Cooperation), Government of Kerala	India
5	Mr. Pankaj Kumar Bansal	Additional Secretary, Ministry of Cooperation	India
6	Mr. HIROSHI ONO	Director, Office of Consumers' Cooperative Societies, Community Welfare and Services Division, Social Welfare and War Victims' Relief Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare	Japan
7	Ms. CHI HARU KASAI	Unit Chief, Social Welfare and War Victims' Relief Bureau, Community Welfare and Services Division, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare	Japan
8	H.E. Yang Berhormat Datuk Ewon Benedick	Minister of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives	Malaysia
9	Dr. Rizoh Bosorang	Special Duties Officer, Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives	Malaysia
10	Hon. Mr. Balaram Adhikari	Minister of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation	Nepal
11	Mr. Gokarna Mani Duwadee	Secretary, Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation	Nepal
12	Mr. Krishna Prasad Sapkota	Joint Secretary, Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation	Nepal
13	Mr. Wisit Srisuwan	Director-General, Cooperative Promotion Department	Thailand
14	MISS JEDSADAPORN SATHAPATYANON	Director, Foreign Relations Group, Planning Division, Cooperative Promotion Department	Thailand
15	MISS PATIMA CHAIBOONTAN	Foreign Relations Officer, Cooperative Promotion Department	Thailand
16	MR. WEERAPHONG AREEROB	Cooperative Technical Officer, Cooperative Promotion Department	Thailand
17	MR. ICHAYA UDOMKITJAMLERD	Cooperative Technical Officer, Cooperative Promotion Department	Thailand
18	Dr. Mervat Abdel Salam Abdel Majeed Sabreen	Assistant Minister of Social Solidarity for Protection and Social Safety Networks	Egypt
19	Mr. Abdulaziz S.R.N. Almutairi	Deputy Minister of Social Affairs for the Cooperative Sector and External Relations Department	Kuwait
20	Mr. Ahmad Al Enezi	Cooperative Department, Ministry of Social Affairs	Kuwait
21	Mr. Taleeah Al Shatti	Head, International Affairs, Ministry of Social Affairs	Kuwait

22	Ms. Aicha Errifaai	Director General, Cooperation Development Office	Morocco
23	Ms. IMANE ELOMRI	Ministry of Tourism, Handicrafts, Social and Solidarity Economy	Morocco
24	Mr. Bilal Omer	Chairman, Cooperative Work Authority, Ministry of Labour	Palestine
25	H.E. Eng. Sultan bin Jorais AlJorais	Deputy Minister for Social Security and Empowerment	Saudi Arabia
26	Mr. Maan Alangiri	Director General – Cooperative Associations, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development	Saudi Arabia
27	Dr. Addulaziz Aldahoum	Director of Partnerships and Empowerment – Cooperative Associations, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development	Saudi Arabia
28	Ms. Hala Alqwiee	International Relations Specialist, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development	Saudi Arabia
29	Mr. HASSAN BIN AYISH ALOTAIBI	Director of Deputy Minister for Social Security and Empowerment Office	Saudi Arabia
30	Mr. Ahmed Shareef	Head of Department, Supervision and Control of Cooperatives, Ministry of Economy	UAE
31	H.E.WAFAA ALKELANI	Minister of Social Affairs	Libya
32	Dr. Abass Al haj Hassan	Minister of Agriculture	Lebanon
33	Ms. Gloria Abouzeid	Ministry of Agriculture	Lebanon
34	Dr. Salem Darweesh	Consultant	Lebanon
35	Anas Mohammed Kasem Aldabash	Assistant Minister of Social Affairs and Labor	Syria
36	Ms. Rasha Bassam Karkouki	Assistant Minister of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection	Syria
<b>International Agencies, ICA Members etc.</b>			
37	Dr. Manoj Nardeosingh	Secretary General, African-Asian Rural Development Organization	Mauritius
38	Dr. Simel Esim	Head, Cooperative, Social and Solidarity Economy Unit, International Labour Organisation	Turkey
39	Mr. Rayann Koudaih	Cooperative Technical Officer, International Labour Organisation	Jordan
40	Mr. Abdulhakim Elwaer	Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative, FAO Near East and North Africa	Libya
41	Mr. Michael Pilbrow	Director and Chairman, Strategic Development Group and International Relations, Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals	Australia
42	Dr. Ahmed Abed Aldaher Othman	President, Arab Cooperative Union and African Cooperative Union	Egypt
43	Mr. Hamdi Ahmed Ali	Secretary General, Arab Cooperative Union	Egypt
44	Eng Osama Mohammed Ahmed Husein	Chairman of the Board of Directors, Central Cooperative Union	Egypt
45	Eng Hesham Mohammed Abed Algaffar	Director General, Arab Cooperative Union	Egypt
46	Hafez Sayed	Arab Cooperative Union	Egypt

47	Ms. Man Wang	Program Officer, All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives	China
48	Mr. Shan Cong	Director General, International Cooperation Department, All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives	China
49	Mr. Ze Wen Su	Vice-President, All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives	China
50	Dr. TP Sethumadhavan	Professor, Transdisciplinary University	India
51	Mr. Subrahmanyam Bhima	Managing Director/ CEO, National Federation of State Cooperative Banks Ltd.	India
52	Mr. Santosh Shukla	Joint General Manager, Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited	India
53	Ms. Savitri Singh	Deputy Chief Executive, National Cooperative Union Of India	India
54	Mr. Alireza Banaeifar	Deputy of International Affairs, Iran Chamber Of Cooperatives	Iran
55	Mr. Kenki Maeda	General Manager, Japan Cooperative Alliance	Japan
56	Ms. Natsuki Kurihara	Staff, Japanese Consumers' Cooperative Union	Japan
57	Mr. Haruyoshi Amano	Acting Manager, IR Department, Japanese Consumers' Cooperative Union	Japan
58	Ms. Chitose Arai	Vice-President, Japanese Consumers' Cooperative Union	Japan
59	Mr. Fumiaki Koike	Staff, Japanese Consumers' Cooperative Union	Japan
60	Ms. Atsuko Makino	Interpreter	Japan
61	Ms. Keiko Shinozaki	Interpreter	Japan
62	Ms. Kazuko Yoshida Ingham	Interpreter	Japan
63	Mr. Osamu Nakano	Chairperson, CICOPA Asia and Pacific	Japan
64	Mr. Anupam Upadhyay	Deputy Chief (Instrumentation), Jordan India Fertilizer Company LLC	Jordan
65	Mr. Mohammad Al Hjouj	Chief Manager (Environment & Safety), Jordan India Fertilizer Company LLC	Jordan
66	Mr. Sanjeev Saxena	Chief Manager (HR), Jordan India Fertilizer Company LLC	Jordan
67	Mr. Jaemin Park	General Manager, National Agricultural Cooperative Federation	Korea, the Republic of
68	Mr. Jinhyung Lee	Junior Manager, National Agricultural Cooperative Federation	Korea, the Republic of
69	Mr. Sung Ho Kim	Director, Korean Federation of Community Credit Coops	Korea, the Republic of
70	Mr. Heejun Yoon	Senior Staff, Korean Federation of Community Credit Coops	Korea, the Republic of
71	Mr. Rozdeen Mohd Jaafar	Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Management), Malaysia Cooperative Societies Commission	Malaysia
72	Mr. Rusli Jaafar	Chief Executive Officer, Malaysia Cooperative Societies Commission	Malaysia
73	Mr. Zaib Mat Yunus	Deputy Director General, Cooperative Institute of Malaysia	Malaysia
74	Mr. MOHAMAD RASYDI BIN ABD RASHID	Director of Finance and Account, Cooperative Institute of Malaysia	Malaysia
75	Mr. Mohd Ali Mansor	Executive Director, Cooperative Institute of Malaysia	Malaysia

76	Ms. Nor Lela Abdul Ghani	Manager, Malaysian National Cooperative Movement	Malaysia
77	Ms. Noor Azlinn Zahariman	Manager, Malaysian National Cooperative Movement	Malaysia
78	Mr. Azizul Alias	Undersecretary Cooperative Development, Ministry of Entrepreneur and Cooperative Development	Malaysia
79	Mr. Abdullah Jusoh	Group CEO, Malaysian National Cooperative Movement	Malaysia
80	Ms. Roaini Hashim	Spouse to Mr. Abdullah Jusoh	Malaysia
81	Dr. Zurita Mohd Salleh	Director, Centre of International, Cooperative Institute of Malaysia	Malaysia
82	Ms. Shellynn E Lo	Private Secretary to the Minister, Ministry of Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development	Malaysia
83	Mr. Norihan Jalal	Chairman, Malaysia Cooperative Societies Commission	Malaysia
84	HE Mohamad Nasri Abdul Rahman	Ambassador, Embassy of Malaysia in Jordan	Malaysia
85	Ms Wan Faizatul Afzan Ismayatim	Councillor, Embassy of Malaysia in Jordan	Malaysia
86	Mr. Min Raj Kadel	Immediate Past Chairman, National Cooperative Federation	Nepal
87	Ms. Om Devi Malla	Chairperson, National Cooperative Federation	Nepal
88	Mr. Chandra Prasad Dhakal	Chairman, Nepal Federation of Savings and Credit Cooperative Unions Ltd	Nepal
89	Mr. Izzaldin Abutaha	Secretary General, General Cooperative Union	Palestine
90	Younis Sbeih	National Cooperative Coordinator, International Labor Organization	Palestine
91	Ashraf Awer	Member, Cooperative Work Agency	Palestine
92	Ayman Alhih	President, Consumer Cooperative Union	Palestine
93	Haneen Reyad	Executive Manager - Gaza Office, General Cooperative Union	Palestine
94	Iyad Hamdan	Chairman, Sanad cooperative	Palestine
95	Mohammed Aljed	Treasurer, Sanad Association	Palestine
96	Ayyoub Al Ayyouby	Head, Administration Council, Union of Housing Cooperatives	Palestine
97	Jamal Hammad	General Secretary, Peasants Union	Palestine
98	Akram AlTaher	General Manager, Economic & Social Development Center of Palestine	Palestine
99	Jamal Mubaslat	Deputy General Manager, Economic & Social Development Center of Palestine	Palestine
100	Imad Dawas	Manager, Cooperative Work Agency	Palestine
101	Raed Odeh	Chairman of Board, Palestinian Agricultural Cooperatives Union	Palestine
102	Mr. Ibrahim Mahmoud Aqabneh	Mr. Ibrahim Mahmoud Aqabneh	Palestine
103	Mr. Mohamed Salah	Secretary of the Federation	Palestine
104	Mr. Gilbert Llanto	Chairman, ACDI Multipurpose Cooperative	Philippines
105	Ms. Maria Corazon Montallana	Chairperson, National Confederation of Cooperatives	Philippines
106	Ms. Dulce Bustamante	Chairperson, ICA-AP Committee on Youth Cooperation	Philippines

107	Mr. Chaminda Prasanga Gunasekara	Chairman, Matara District Cooperative Hospital Society Ltd, Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka
108	Mr. Senaviratna Maduwilla Gamarachchige Silva	Secretary, Chief Executive Officer, Matara District Cooperative Hospital Society Ltd, Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka
109	Mr. Asanka Thilakarathna	Chief Executive Officer, National Cooperative Council of Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka
110	Mr. Sarath Weerasiri	Chairman, National Cooperative Council of Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka
111	Ms. Fakhwan Khwanmuang	Interpreter, Cooperative League of Thailand	Thailand
112	Mr. Poramate Intarachumnum	Chairman, Cooperative League of Thailand	Thailand
113	Yahiya Yahiya Al bekary	Consultant in Cooperatives	Saudi Arabia
114	Mr. Hussain Ali Al radadi	Consultant in Cooperatives	Saudi Arabia
115	Mr. Badah Alsahli	Director General, Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies and Media Advisor, Arab Cooperative Union	Kuwait
116	Mr. Mosab Al mulla	President, Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies and Vice-President, Arab Cooperative Union	Kuwait
<b>ICA Group</b>			
117	Mr. Ariel Guarco	President, International Cooperative Alliance	Argentina
118	Dr. Chandrapal Singh Yadav	President, International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific	India
119	Mr. Jeroen Douglas	Director General, International Cooperative Alliance	Netherlands
120	Mr. Balu Iyer	Regional Director, International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific	United States
121	Mr. P. Santosh Kumar	Director of Legislation, International Cooperative Alliance	India
122	Mr. Mohit Dave	Head - Partnerships & Resource Mobilization, International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific	India
123	Ms. Shivali Sarna	Lead - Communication & Membership Development, International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific	India
124	Ms. Simren Singh	Lead - Gender & Education, International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific	India
125	Ms. Monalisa Kashyap	Program Coordination and Advocacy Officer, International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific	India

