

Joint Statement made by the ILO, on behalf of the CSEND-ILO-ICA group during the Closing Plenary Session of the Fifth Global Review of Aid for Trade: “Reducing Trade Costs for Inclusive, Sustainable Growth”

2nd July 2015, Geneva, WTO Headquarters

Promoting Cooperative-to-cooperative trade for sustainable development

“HE Excellency Ambassador Juan Esteban Aguerre Martinez, Chair of the WTO Committee on Trade and Development and Ambassador of Paraguay.

I am speaking on behalf of the members of Side Event Nr. 21 – Joint CSEND-ILO-ICA panel on- “Promoting Cooperative to Cooperative Trade for Sustainable Development” which took place yesterday afternoon.

Cooperative enterprises are major players in the global economy. According to the most recent figures of the International Co-operative Alliance, the 300 largest cooperatives in the world have a Combined turnover of US\$2.2 trillion in 2014. Some 250 million people are employed or earn their living through cooperative enterprises.

Cooperatives are economically viable organisations and at the same time provide opportunities for inclusive growth for many segments of society often in need of support. Case in point here are e.g. youth at risk of unemployment, women facing discrimination and other ethnic or religious minorities facing exclusion.

Besides the inclusiveness of cooperatives, they also offer more equitable opportunities to the small farmers, craftsmen and traders to achieve some economy of scale in order to access credits, technology and market opportunities.

By September of this year, the MDGs will be replaced by the SDGs with a far reaching scope consisting of sustainable economic, social and environmental development.

Cooperatives show evidence of having been successfully engaged in all of the three SDGs for many years already. What cooperatives have on offer is a solid economic foundation complemented with proven inclusive, participatory and transparent social citizenship.

However, what is unfortunately missing, are data tracking the contribution of cooperatives to international trade. We need to include cooperative enterprises in the mainstream of trade statistics at the WTO to be able to better understand and document the difference they make.

A precedent already exists namely the “State Trading Enterprises”, governed by Article XVII: 1(a) and followed by the Working Party on State Trading Enterprises (STE).

The international trading community needs urgently a “Cooperative Trading Enterprises” Article and related statistical categories and data collection and dissemination power at the level of the WTO secretariat.

Sustained development of cooperatives in LDCs, LLDCs and low-income DCs requires substantial capacity building. We urge development partners to contribute the needed financial and technical resources to ensure sustained growth of cooperatives which in turn will have positive impacts in terms of economic growth, employment and implementation of the SDGs.

We thank you dear Ambassador and Chairman for giving our request your fullest attention and support.”

CSEND (ECOSOC accredited)

Prof Raymond Saner, Ph.D.
Prof Lichia Yiu, Ed.D.
Co-Founders, CSEND, Geneva

ILO

Mrs Simel Esim, Ph.D.
Manager, Cooperative Unit
ILO, Geneva

ICA

Mr. Rodrigo Gouveia
Policy Director
ICA- Washington DC



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**International
Co-operative Alliance**
Committee on
Co-operative Research

