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Press Communiqué – for immediate release

EU Council supports greater role of cooperatives in development cooperation

On 23rd June European Foreign Affairs Council adopted conclusions on the role of the private sector in international development¹. The document follows the EU Commission's communication 'A stronger role of the private sector in achieving inclusive and sustainable growth in developing countries', released on 13th May 2014.

Cooperatives Europe welcomes the Council's call for "increased focus on support to micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, as well as to social enterprises and cooperatives, in both the formal and informal sectors". We also appreciate that the Council acknowledges the importance of inclusive business models, and "the need to place particular emphasis on women's and youth entrepreneurship and employment and their ability to access resources and participate in decision-making".

Cooperatives Europe shares the European Council's view that "financial inclusion and access to finance of the private sector in partner countries, including MSMEs, should be enhanced through the use of a broad spectrum of financial services and innovative financial instruments and mechanisms". We also support the Council's position that "investment, trade and business activities in and with partner countries should [...] promote decent work and sustainable development and contribute to the economic and social empowerment of youth and of the poorest and most vulnerable."

Klaus Niederländer, Director of Cooperatives Europe, commented: "We welcome the EU Foreign Affairs Council's endorsement of the role that private sector players such as cooperatives can play in achieving poverty reduction, sustainable development and inclusive growth. We will continue working with EU Institutions and partners on how cooperative enterprises can positively contribute to the EU's development goals".

¹ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/143347.pdf

Notes to the editors

Cooperatives Europe – the European region of the International Cooperative Alliance is the European cross-sectoral organization representing cooperative enterprises. On behalf of its 90 member organizations from 34 European countries across all business sectors it promotes the cooperative business model in Europe. Its members represent 123 million individual member cooperators owning 160,000 cooperative enterprises and providing jobs to 5.4 million European citizens.

Cooperatives in Development online platform is an interactive website showcasing the international development projects that European cooperative organisations are carrying out all over the world. The platform currently includes more than 400 projects, out of which almost 300 are ongoing. Visit the platform: <https://coopseurope.coop/development/>

A cooperative enterprise is a group of people acting together to meet the common needs and aspirations of its members, sharing ownership and making decisions democratically.

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