

KINGDOM OF MOROCCO



Ministry of Tourism, Air Transport,
Handicrafts and the Social Economy

State Secretary for Handicrafts and the Social Economy



**International Co-operative
Alliance – Africa**
A Region of the International
Co-operative Alliance

مكتب تنمية التعاون
0400 | 1X1 | 86600
Office du Développement de la Coopération



Africa Co-operative Ministerial Conference

Theme: *“Propelling Co-operatives in Africa to End Poverty”*

24 May 2017

**Farah Hotel
Casablanca, Morocco**

End of Meeting Communiqué

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 1-DAY AFRICA CO-OPERATIVE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE, ORGANISED BY THE ALLIANCE AFRICA, AND THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO UNDER THE HIGH PATRONAGE OF HIS MAJESTY KING MOHAMED VI AND IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM, AIR TRANSPORT, HANDICRAFT AND SOCIAL ECONOMY, ON THE OVERALL THEME: “**PROPELLING CO-OPERATIVES IN AFRICA TO END POVERTY**”, HELD ON 24 MAY, 2017 AT THE FARAH HOTEL IN CASABLANCA, MOROCCO.

INTRODUCTION

The theme of this conference, *Propelling Co-operatives in Africa to End Poverty*, is a culmination of a series of discussions had since 2014, and more specifically the profound one of 2016 which holistically focused on Co-operatives in Africa Embracing Sustainable Development Goals. The idea was to unpack on a more general level, and raise awareness on what the SDGs are, and how co-operatives should wholly embrace these Goals and work, together with other stakeholders, towards achieving them. It has indeed been duly acknowledged in several strategic documents, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Financing for Development (FfD) Action Agenda that co-operative will play a significant role in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development goals.

The main objective of this conference was to bring together government officials and co-operative leaders to deliberate on how they can best address the first global goal, which calls for an end to poverty in all its manifestations by 2030. SDG 1 also aims to ensure social protection for the poor and vulnerable, increase access to basic services and support people harmed by climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters. This would be through repositioning co-operatives in Africa to interact with and take advantage of strategic partnerships in existence.

The conference was enriched by a background paper which demonstrated the link between the co-operative model and delivery of the SDGs, which opened up the discussions through a thought provoking high level debate on the ACP-EU Post Cotonou Agreement, Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), and climate change adaptation and mitigation, all of which aim to address poverty in Africa by reducing vulnerability to trade and income deficits as well as the adverse effects of climate change.

An exchange of experiences from the consumer sector and the Latin America Region, as well as from the host country, Morocco inspired participants to explore the numerous options available in their contexts.

The conference drew Ministers from Co-operative Development Ministries from Morocco, Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe; the Permanent Secretary from Lesotho, as well as 295 participants from, Morocco, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Argentina, Belgium, Bulgaria, Japan, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

During the course of our deliberations, we the participants at the conference noted that:

Background Paper on SDGs and Co-operatives

- Co-operatives are recognised as key players in meeting the SDGs, but there are no indicators to measure progress. Co-operatives need to not only sit at the table where decisions are made, but must also articulate the need for the work of co-operatives to be deliberately measured with regard to progress made in relation to implementation of SDGs.
- Need for statistics to show co-operative registration and measure how the sector is doing in relation to progress against the SDGs.
- International Labour Conference is on 03 June. African governments will talk about their priorities, but unfortunately we do not hear from African countries speaking about support needed by co-operatives in development
- Training and capacity building to strengthen apex organisation to enhance financial literacy and management of co-operatives in general is planned, but will first be piloted in Zambia before being rolled out to other countries.
- There is need for bigger programmes and projects to help catapult innovation, engage youth and get involved in new sectors such as renewable energy, engage youth and women as well as with worker and consumer cooperatives. The ILO is ready to work together with cooperatives and respective governments to ensure successful implementation of the SDGs, particularly on the Goals that are most relevant to the cooperative movement.

On ACP-EU Post Cotonou, Economic Partnership Agreements and Climate Change

- Generally, nations in Africa are supportive of the pillars of the Post Cotonou Agreement, the EPAs and the needs for climate change mitigating solutions. However, not all countries in Africa have signed on to the EPAs although the Post Cotonou Agreement and the EPAs are instruments that are useful and can help in alleviation of poverty. It is important for the co-operative movement in Africa holds our governments accountable and ask to be involved as cooperatives because cooperatives are key players in trade and development. Co-operators need to identify specific chapters that need to be revised and ensure that the revisions are included and implemented.
- Zimbabwe was the first country in Africa to establish a ministry of Co-operatives, and Hon. Nyoni was the first ever Minister of the same. Other countries have copied the same models.
- A lot of work needs to be done by Africans on development to lift our economic and social situation.

- SADC counties, including Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Botswana and others have embraced the Post Cotonou Agreement and have benefited from development cooperation in terms of infrastructure development that have eased the movement of people, goods and services within and across national boundaries. This has facilitated increased trade and enhanced regional integration that improved the nations' bargaining power since they are trading as a regional bloc. The SADC countries are also benefiting from the EPAs as trade barriers are removed. The Post Cotonou Agreements will continue to have a positive impacts on the co-operative movement in Africa at large if true partnership in terms of development trade and finance are maintained and devalued to benefit all parties.
- It was critical that the Ministries of Trade and Industry and that of Co-operative Development work together to ensure fair trade negotiations, market access, assurance of quality, adherence, to standards and bulking up produce so as to benefit the wider community for ending poverty.
- Access to finance through SACCOs has proven successful in Zimbabwe. SACCOs are recognised as a means of making finance accessible to the unbanked thereby mopping up excess liquidity that causes run away inflation.
- Zimbabwe has began programmes aimed at improving access to finance in order to make finance accessible to cooperatives and SMEs.
- Co-operatives work with values that are based on solidarity that are aligned to african values, and international experiences like this and the COP 22 help the Moroccan Co-operative sector to learn and grow, and in this regard, the Cooperation Department is planning to launch the participative finding that will be helpful to the social economy - incentive for young entrepreneurs to join cooperatives
- The new European Consensus on Development now recognises co-operatives as a key development actors in eliminating poverty and building prosperity, and also in partnership as both private sector actors as well as part of civil society.
- Cooperatives strengthen and nurture democracy - members own the cooperative and are this able to participate in the decision making processes - good cooperatives attract more members
- We Effect works towards having 50-50 gender parity in participation in cooperatives in decision making - so far there is 34% participation of women in management boards in Cooperatives in Africa.
- In relation to climate change, knowledge and resources are needed for farmers to know how to adapt to climate change. There is need for agricultural cooperatives to advocate for increased extension services to enhance knowledge on climate change mitigation measures, and also to link farmer cooperatives to financial cooperatives so as to bridge the gap between the two and mitigate climate change.
- The negative effects of climate change (the severe droughts and floods) have caused food shortages, and has particularly negatively affected the rural poor who depend on agriculture for their food and income security. However mitigation measures being rolled out in the SADC countries include rain water storage and harvesting, promoting the use of organic fertilisers, exploring the use of renewable energy such as solar and bio gas, rolling out drought resistant crop varieties, and focus on improving value chains in agricultural production.
- Morocco too has made efforts to mitigate climate change at all levels, and indeed hosted the COP22 where the emphasis was on the protection of nature and traditional assets / resources, including handicrafts and traditional medicinal plants that are all vulnerable to climate change.

On Co-operative Experiences from the Consumer Sector and the Latin America Region

- COOPERAR, the umbrella co-operative in Argentina has been in existence since 1926 and has a membership of over 10 million people.
- There is great potential for public service cooperatives that take into consideration the strength of users' participation, and aim to produce products that respond to people's needs
- Workers co-operatives are enterprises that are managed by workers, working conditions are democratically defined - an excellent tool for protection of worker rights, such as the Red Graphic Cooperative, which is worker managed and have been able to successfully improve their competitiveness.
- They are a valuable answer to the crisis and are appropriate for utilisation of new technologies
- Recovery companies - workers that have been abandoned or fraudulently let go have been received through worker co-operatives and revived
- Programmers' cooperatives and recyclers' cooperatives are all examples of innovative cooperatives where the movement has successfully explored, and dignified the work of its members
- Consumer co-operatives - satisfying consumer needs through retail - case of Coop Denmark, who have a turn over of 7 billion USD and operate retail stores in a variety of outlets.
- Under their Savannah branch 2014 - 2016, Coop Denmark worked with Kenya, Ghana and Namibia and raised awareness of African production and fair-trade issues. After 2016, Coop Denmark began to work with African producers on making shelf ready products - the whole supply chain would be in Africa thus providing employment and provided accountability across the entire supply chain.
- Africa Coffee Roasters, a company registered in Kenya produced shelf-ready coffee for co-operative retailers in Denmark. It employs unto 3500 people.
- They source coffee from farmer co-operatives in Kenya, Tanzania, DR Congo, Uganda, Ethiopia, Burundi, Rwanda - coffee is purchased directly from farmers and farmers are paid immediately they provide the coffee beans worth unto 20million USD. Farmers are paid unto 10% more than others - premium rates.

On Co-operative Experiences from Morocco

- The national initiative for human development launched in 2005 by His Royal Majesty the King of Morocco Mohamed VI - a new approach that is participatory in nature.
- Public institution that looks after the vulnerable in society in Morocco.
- The Moroccan crafts industry is based on territory and knowhow of the crafts men and women in a particular territory.
- The branding of these products is a mobilisation factor, a flag bearers of a territory that allows cooperatives to preserve this knowledge, and is also an important means of fighting fake goods.
- The branding / labels is a marketing tool at regional, national and international levels, safeguards consumers and helps maintain high international standards of products.
- There is current international conversations about preserving indigenous knowledge and cooperatives have a major role to play in this regard.
- The promotion of homegrown products is supported by the ministry and cooperatives in this sector continue to grow and thrive

- Credit Agricole has managed to provide financing to agricultural cooperatives and the agro industry in through the Department of Cooperation in Morocco.
- A bank that has become a development bank by segmenting the market into different products in order to develop appropriate financing products for each.

RESOLUTIONS

In the light of the observations made during the conference, we the participants:

ACKNOWLEDGING the positive milestones achieved in policy and legal instruments integrating trade, cooperative development and contributing to poverty alleviation;

AWARE of the low representation of ravaging effects on climate change on food security and on the vicious cycle of poverty;

RECOGNISING the socio-cultural, economic and technological facilities that promote co-operative development;

ACKNOWLEDGING the vast potential of engaging in consumer co-operatives, worker co-operatives, financing for agricultural co-operatives;

COMMITTED to co-operation among co-operatives which calls on all co-operators to support each other;

HONOURING the efforts made by governments, civil society and development partners in training, implementing and promoting programmes aimed at poverty alleviation;

COMMITTED to encouraging all stakeholders to redouble their efforts to work towards realizing the Sustainable Development Goal 1: “To eliminate extreme poverty in all its forms”, as well as the Africa Agenda 2063 that calls for “A Prosperous Africa Based on Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development”;

EXERCISING our sovereign and inalienable right to participate in lawful influencing of policy-making processes:

DO HEREBY:

- Call upon our governments to go beyond policy making and ensure enforcement of EPAs in order to support co-operative development in Africa;
- Call upon governments to redouble their efforts in rapidly rolling out climate mitigation measures to all rural based agricultural co-operatives in order to boost food production and reduce food losses;
- Call upon governments to provide a legal and policy environment that will allow African co-operators to explore new co-operative sectors such as public service, consumer and worker co-operatives;
- Call upon all co-operators present to get involved and engage in conversations around the Post Cotonou Agreement and the EPAs and ensure that the interests of the co-operative movement are secured in terms of pricing, market access, financing, capacity building and terms of trade;

- Call upon Apexes to ensure that their members are exposed to best practices, lessons and new innovations so that the movement remain relevant and economically sound;

This communiqué was issued by We, the undersigned, on behalf of all the participants, representing co-operators from across the Africa region, at the Alliance Africa Consultative Meeting on 24 May 2017 at the Farrah Hotel, Casablanca, Morocco.