

11th Technical Committee of the Africa Ministerial Cooperative Conference (TCAMCCO)



CONTENT

Acknowledgement.....	3
Introduction	4
Objectives	4
Participants	5
Conference Structure	5
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS	5
Opening Ceremony	5
Panel Session 1: The Role of Cooperatives, Emerging Opportunities, And Strategic Partnerships Moderator.....	7
Panel Session 2: Digital Innovations for the Visibility and Development of Cooperatives	8
Session 1: Background Paper Presentation	10
Session 3: Partnerships in Digital Innovations for the Visibility and Development of Cooperatives.....	12
Panel 3: Access to Finance and Market Strategies to Boost Cooperative Visibility and Growth	12
Panel 4: Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Development Through Cooperative Enterprises: Challenges and Solutions.....	13
Panel 5: Youth Agora ‘Reinventing the Image of Cooperatives’	15
Session 3: Overview of Africa Development Initiatives and Projects – ICA-Africa	16
Presentation of Country Progress Reports by Registrars - Commissioners – Directors.....	17
Session 4: Africa Cooperative Model Law Dialogue	18
Session 5: Launch of the National Cooperative Gender Platform (NCGP)	19
Session 6: Launch of the International Year of Cooperatives 2025 in Africa	19
Field Visit to Cooperatives.....	19
Closing Remarks.....	21
Conclusion and Recommendations.....	21
Annex	23

Acknowledgement

International Cooperative Alliance – Africa (ICA - Africa), on behalf of its Board of Directors and the Management would like to thank the Kingdom of Morocco through the Ministry of Ministère du Tourisme, de l'Artisanat et de l'Économie Sociale et Solidaire and “Office du developpement et de la cooperation ICA – Africa members in Morocco for hosting the 11th Technical Committee for the Africa Ministerial Cooperative Conference (TCAMCCO).

We extend our deepest gratitude to all our distinguished speakers, panellists, paper presenters, session moderators and facilitators for their commendable work during the conference. Finally, we acknowledge the financial support from our sponsors that enabled us to carry out this event.

Sponsors

Co-Host



Thank you to our Sponsors



Introduction

The 11th edition of the Technical Committee of the African Ministerial Cooperative Conference (TCAMCCO) was held in Essaouira, Morocco, from May 20 to 22, 2025. This conference is part of the celebration of the 2025 International Year of Cooperatives (IYC2025), proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly under the theme "cooperatives build a better world", in recognition of the fundamental role played by cooperatives for sustainable and inclusive development in the world. The year 2025 is a pivotal year full of hope for Africa where cooperatives emerge as a strategic lever to drive a socio-economic transformation allowing Africans to aspire towards a better and promising future. The theme of the 11th TCAMCCO, **"Cooperatives Visibility for a Better Africa,"** was an opportunity to translate reflections into initiatives that would pave the way for concrete strategies and actions to make African cooperatives more visible, like the ones in other continents. Additionally, the conference aimed to pave way and prepare for the Africa Ministerial Cooperative Conference (AMCCO) scheduled in October 2025.

The 11th Technical Committee of the Africa Ministerial Cooperative Conference brought together government representatives, renowned actors, African cooperatives, academics as well as experts in the legal and financial framework who made it possible to structure the debates around major sessions and panels, each dealing with a central issue of cooperative development. The Africa Union through its Pan African Parliament also graced the occasion with an information session of the Africa Cooperative Model Law.

Objectives

The main objective of the 11th TCAMCCO:

- Translate policy commitments into measurable cooperative development actions.
- Strengthen enabling legal and policy frameworks for cooperatives across Africa.
- Facilitate partnerships between governments, cooperatives, the private sector, and development partners.
- Promote inclusive cooperative models for women, youth, and marginalized communities.
- Enhance access to finance and markets for cooperative enterprises.
- Drive adoption of climate-resilient practices and sustainable governance models.
- Launch regional platforms for cross-sectoral knowledge-sharing and innovation.

Participants

The 11th TCAMCCO was attended by more than 200 participants. The international participants were from Tanzania, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Liberia, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Mauritius, Botswana, Kenya, South Sudan, South Africa, Liberia, United Kingdom, Togo and the host Morocco.

Conference Structure

The TCAMCCO included a combination of presentations, panel discussions, and networking opportunities. It included:

- Main plenary session with keynote speakers,
- Panel discussions sessions focusing on specific topics,
- Video presentations,
- Networking,
- Exhibitions and
- Field visit.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Opening Ceremony

The opening session began with the screening of a video tracing the historical evolution of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) since its creation in 1884, highlighting its role as a global federator in promoting the cooperative model. Through its network of more than 100 member countries, the ICA helps disseminate cooperative principles and support the expansion of cooperative enterprises internationally.



Subsequently, Mr. Hassan CHOUIKH spoke on behalf of Mr. Lahcen ES-SAADY, Secretary of State for Crafts and the Social and Solidarity Economy, to address his words of welcome to the guests and participants, while reaffirming the strong political mobilization of the Kingdom of Morocco, under the enlightened vision of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God assist him, in favour of African cooperatives and their role in sustainable development and social justice.

In this context, he also highlighted the important role of the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH), which constitutes an essential lever for supporting local cooperatives

through the guidance, financing and structuring of solidarity economic projects. The INDH, as a flagship program for social development in Morocco, strengthens the anchoring of cooperatives in the territories, particularly those led by women and young people, and thus contributes to inclusive and equitable growth. Its action is fully in line with the Kingdom's ambition to make the social and solidarity economy a driver of sustainable transformation at the national and continental levels. Cooperatives, being a laboratory of social innovation, constitute a lever for local, sustainable and inclusive development in Africa and that the constant policy of the Kingdom's cooperation strategy with this continent is based on principles of solidarity, mutual respect, and South-South cooperation. The African cooperative model must be based on strategic partnerships that enable the transfer of successful expertise and their access to expanded markets on a global scale, which will have a positive impact on the economic and social conditions of African citizens and promote their prosperity.

In their respective speeches, the President of ICA-Africa High Chief Ayeola Oriyomi, the Director General of the Office for Development Cooperation (ODCO) Ms. Aicha ERRIFAAI and the Coordinator of the ICA-Africa office - Mr. Macloud Malonza expressed their pride in commemorating and enlisted success witnessed across the continent during this event the year 2025 as the International Year of Cooperatives and highlighted the central role of cooperatives, as social institutions, in sustainable development, while emphasizing their growing importance in South-South cooperation. The cooperative movement acting as an architect of resilience and social solidarity, is shaping the future of Africa. Despite their potential, cooperatives suffer from a lack of visibility, mainly due to the absence of data to quantify their impact, a weak digital presence and a deficit in resources to promote their activities and successes.

The speakers emphasized the urgent need to chart a new course to enable cooperatives to fully contribute to the economic and social growth of their territories and improve their visibility for political, economic and social benefits. Government recognition and support through the adoption of an effective legislative framework and the provision of financial support are essential to enable these cooperatives to attract investment opportunities at the national, continental and international levels and to facilitate their access to new markets to prosper the socio-economic fabric of all African regions. The achievement of these objectives is therefore dependent on action by all stakeholders to act in a concerted and concrete manner to amplify the stories, achievements and impact of cooperatives on the lives of millions of citizens in Africa.

They also noted that improving the visibility of cooperatives is an essential lever for attracting financing, promoting market access, developing high value-added projects in value chains, and obtaining increased government support, both locally and internationally. Digital transformation was identified as an essential condition for meeting current market demands.

Finally, the President of ICA-Africa reiterated the importance of keeping the Secretariat informed of the activities organized within the framework of the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC), in order to ensure better coordination and increased mobilization around these issues.

Panel Session 1: The Role of Cooperatives, Emerging Opportunities, And Strategic Partnerships Moderator



From left: Mrs. Bouchra Rahmouni, Mr. David Obonyo, Mr. George Musembi Mutiso, Mrs. Aicha Errifai, and Mr. Aziz Boucetta (Moderator) during the first panel discussion on the theme "Visibility of cooperatives: a lever for the future of Africa"

The debates and discussions of the first panel on the theme "Visibility of cooperatives: a lever for the future of Africa" were moderated by Mr. Aziz BOUCETTA and included the intervention of Mrs. Aicha ERRIFAI Director General of the Office for the Development of Cooperation (ODCO) Morocco, Mr. David OBONYO Commissioner for the Development of Cooperatives in Kenya, Mr. George Musembi Mutiso Director of Cooperatives of Nairobi County in Kenya and Mrs. Bouchra RAHMOUNI Director of Social Innovation LAB–UM6P Morocco. Discussions focused on the current situation regarding cooperatives on the continent, which lack visibility despite their decisive role in local development and the inclusive and solidarity economy. Thus, according to Ms. Aicha ERRIFAI, greater visibility would provide cooperatives with a means of accessing financing, rebalancing economic power relations, and defending the interests of producers and artisans. Mr. Mutiso and Mr. Obonyo then emphasized that the glaring lack of visibility of African cooperatives is due to a lack of good governance, leadership, robust accounting systems, financial insurance systems, and training. In Kenya, cooperatives benefit

from subsidies provided by the government, which has a ministry dedicated to supporting cooperatives, promoting better management. Visibility must be endogenous, inclusive, and rooted in the cooperatives' experiences and heritage.

One of the levers identified to improve this visibility is access to concrete data aligned with the reality on the ground without relying on imported models. The legal and institutional framework of cooperatives and cooperation among cooperatives at the local and regional levels were also highlighted by the discussants and proved important to ensure this visibility. The panelists emphasized the importance of collecting, centralizing, and disseminating information on African cooperatives in order to document good practices and highlight African successes in the cooperative field through its mother body; ICA-Africa.

Panel Session 2: Digital Innovations for the Visibility and Development of Cooperatives



Panelists during the second session, "Digital Innovations for the Visibility and Development of Cooperatives." From left: Mr. Terry Igharoro, Dr. Khadija Angade, Prof. Isaac Nyamongo, Dr. Francis Bwire, and Prof. Hicham Attouch.

The second panel discussion, on the theme "Digital Innovations for the Visibility and Development of Cooperatives" and moderated by Prof. Isaac Nyamongo, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education, Cooperative Development, Research and Innovation at the Cooperative University of Kenya, brought together several renowned speakers: Dr. Francis Bwire (Kaimosi Friends University Kenya, KAFU), Dr. Khadija Angade, Research Professor at the ENCG of Ibn Zohr University in Agadir, Mr. Terry Igharoro, Founder of AgriLabs, as well as Professor Hicham Attouch of Mohamed V University in Rabat. These experts unanimously emphasized the importance of promoting simple, accessible digital innovations adapted to the realities on the ground. They emphasized the need to develop user-friendly, intuitive software and digital systems that can be used by all cooperative members, including those who do not

have advanced technological expertise. For example, Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO), which provide financial services focused on raising funds and granting affordable credit to their members – who are both owners and managers – illustrate this need for adapted tools. Dr. Khadija Angade presented the "Kitcoop," a software package with fun features designed to facilitate cooperative management. This type of tool aims to encourage simple and sustainable adoption of digital solutions, adapted to the educational level of all cooperative stakeholders, a key factor in strengthening the visibility and performance of cooperatives.

Furthermore, the panel called for the development of clear digital strategies to strengthen the visibility of cooperatives. This includes in-depth training of members in digital innovation. Furthermore, emerging technologies such as blockchain, mentioned by the founder of the digital platform AgriLabs, are used to exchange data and their products at continental and international levels in a secure environment and to formalize the informal economy. These technologies are proving promising tools for improving operational efficiency, facilitating access to financing, and attracting young people to the cooperative model.

The panelists also emphasized the importance of conducting feasibility studies. These studies would help to better understand the specific needs of cooperatives, adapt digital tools to their operational environment, and avoid inappropriate or ineffective technological investments. An innovation is only valuable if it responds to a concrete reality on the ground and is adapted. Another crucial point addressed was data management. It is not enough to collect large quantities of data; their quality and traceability are also essential in order to better reflect the real impact of cooperatives on their members and their communities.

Finally, the integration of cooperative data into national dashboards was suggested as a means of official recognition. At the same time, it was recommended to highlight the successes of cooperatives through inspiring stories and content tailored to younger generations. Digital storytelling thus appears to be a strategic lever for anchoring cooperatives in modernity and strengthening their role in the sustainable development of the African continent.

Session 1: Background Paper Presentation



Professor Isaac Nyamongo, Chairman of the ICA-Africa Research Committee, presented the background paper focused on ways to strengthen the visibility of cooperatives in Africa. He emphasized that each region has specific strategies for managing cooperatives. He also recalled that a number of international recognitions and resolutions have acknowledged the essential role played by

cooperatives in the sustainable development of local communities and in the fight against poverty, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 and the African Union's Agenda 2063, particularly targeting increasing the productivity of sustainable cooperatives, the inclusion of women, capacity building through knowledge exchange and finally collaborative partnership. He particularly emphasized the integration of young people into cooperatives, through the establishment of online digital platforms, which is essential to keep up with technological developments and stimulate creativity and invention in all cooperative fields.

He highlighted the need for African cooperatives to adopt new technologies to access information, especially for those based in remote regions. The digitalization of their activities appears to be a condition for strengthening their transparency, improving their efficiency, and sharing their successes on a larger scale. By disseminating their success stories (digital storytelling) and governance models through digital platforms, cooperatives will be able to attract young people and increase the productivity of agricultural cooperatives, thus contributing to their influence on the international regional scene. The adoption of a model law as an advocacy for good practices will provide a conducive environment to guarantee the legal framework for these institutions, harmonize legislation, and standardize data collection at the continental level.



Ms. Aicha Errifaai spoke during a live discussion session to share her personal vision of cooperative development in Morocco and dream for Africa. She emphasized the importance of the economic empowerment of African women, which she considers a key lever for promoting social justice and combating informal employment. She noted that in Africa, more than 250,000 cooperatives are registered, serving more than 300 million members and beneficiaries. Agricultural cooperatives

alone represent 70% of this cooperative network, nearly 50% of which are led by women. This dynamic contributes to strengthening social cohesion and advancing participatory democracy on the continent.

According to Ms. Aicha Errifaai, African cooperatives face numerous structural challenges, including a legal framework inherited from old legislation, which does not correspond to current economic realities or the fundamental principles of the cooperative model. She emphasized that African countries often remain locked into these inadequate legislative frameworks, despite the existence of a model law on cooperatives developed by the African Union, which deserves to be adopted at the continental level.

Furthermore, access to financing is a major obstacle. Cooperatives are largely excluded from traditional financing channels, in particular due to the lack of sufficient guarantees and the persistent mistrust of financial institutions towards them. In this regard, a FAO report reveals that less than 10% of African cooperatives benefit from access to sustainable institutional financing. It also noted other critical issues, such as the lack of training, the delay in digitalization, as well as the inadequacy of dedicated infrastructure. These elements are essential to ensure generational renewal within cooperatives, increase their efficiency and strengthen their visibility.

Governance is also one of the major challenges facing cooperatives in Africa. In many countries, these structures suffer from a lack of transparency. This challenge limits their economic performance and weakens their legitimacy within local communities. More than 63,000 Moroccan cooperative structures benefit from a favorable institutional environment, recognizing their strategic role in economic growth. She discussed several initiatives deployed in Morocco to strengthen cooperative structures, including a recent project to digitize rural tourism cooperatives in the Casablanca-Settat region, emphasizing their importance in improving the visibility, management, and competitiveness of these structures. According to her, digital transformation is an essential lever for professionalizing cooperatives and strengthening their ability to integrate into broader value chains.

She also highlighted the strategic role of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which offers cooperatives the opportunity to access new markets across the continent. Combined with digitalization, the AfCFTA would strengthen African brand standards and common logistics systems.

Session 3: Partnerships in Digital Innovations for the Visibility and Development of Cooperatives

Two presentations were then screened. The first, presented by the Norwegian NGO funded by Norad and implementing cooperative development programmes in Africa; Norges Vel, highlighted its work with a tilapia fishing cooperative in Madagascar. The presentation highlighted the efforts made to improve the working conditions of cooperative members by promoting access to suitable equipment, training, and better economic opportunities. The second presentation, given by Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) expert Sara Vicari, provided a critical overview of the major challenges facing cooperatives on the continent, such as management weaknesses and poor internal governance. She particularly emphasized the inclusion of cooperative training in the curriculum, the urgent need to further empower women and youth, and, above all, the need to popularize storytelling to build trust in the cooperative movement in the region, based on an accessible online digital platform.

Panel 3: Access to Finance and Market Strategies to Boost Cooperative Visibility and Growth



Panelists discuss "Finance and Market Access Strategies to Support the Visibility and Development of Cooperatives." From left: Mr. Hatim Seffar, Ms. Mahjoubia Chkail, Dr. Adotey Bing-Pappoe, Dr. Goitom Gebremicael, and Mr. Aziz Boucetta.

The session dedicated to the theme "Finance and Market Access Strategies to Support the Visibility and Development of Cooperatives", moderated by Mr. Aziz Boucetta, brought together experts from various backgrounds, including Dr. Goitom Gebremicael (Amigos SACCO, Ethiopia), Dr. Adotey Bing-Pappoe of Cooperation Africa, Mr. Hatim Seffar (General Manager of JAIDA, Morocco) and Ms. Mahjoubia Chkail (Director of Local Product Marketing Development at the Agency for Agricultural Development, Morocco). The discussions highlighted a set of structural challenges hindering African cooperatives' access to finance and

integration into market circuits.

Among the constraints identified are the limited diffusion of the cooperative model in certain regions of the continent, as well as regulatory and organizational obstacles. The lack of reliable data to assess the financial performance of cooperatives was also identified as a major obstacle. This information deficit limits the ability of financial institutions to conduct rigorous risk analyses, a prerequisite for granting loans adapted to the specific characteristics of the cooperative sector.

Faced with this situation, the speakers emphasized the need to implement patient financing mechanisms. This type of financing, more flexible and long-term, would allow cooperatives to consolidate their activities and structure themselves sustainably without being subjected to immediate profitability pressure. It is an essential tool to support the development of cooperatives' skills and facilitate their inclusion in formal economic circuits.

Finally, it was recommended to develop integrated financing models, designed according to the specific needs of each cooperative sector. This type of tailor-made approach would make it possible to combine financing, technical support, and marketing assistance, while strengthening the visibility and competitiveness of cooperatives in national and continental markets.

Panel 4: Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Development Through Cooperative Enterprises: Challenges and Solutions



From left: Mr. Moshood Fatai, Dr. Soumia Omari, Prof. Kamau Ngamau and Mr. Mostaghfir during the panel discussion, "Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Development through Cooperative Enterprises: Challenges and Solutions."

During the session entitled “Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Development through Cooperative Enterprises: Challenges and Solutions” moderated by Professor Kamau Ngamau, Vice Chancellor of the Cooperative University of Kenya witnessed panellists Mr. Moshood Fatai, Founding Partner and Managing Director of Farwill Consult Ltd, Mr. MOSTAGHFIR, Member of the Board of Directors – COPAG Morocco and Dr. Soumia Omari, Lecturer-Researcher at ENCG – Hassan II University of Casablanca, concrete examples from Nigeria and Morocco were highlighted, the panelists shared case studies and testimonies illustrating the essential role of cooperatives in promoting economic development that is both sustainable and inclusive. The example of the Student Alumni Cooperative in Nigeria highlighted the potential of these structures to generate income and foster collective entrepreneurship among young graduates. In Morocco, women's argan cooperatives enable rural women to access income-generating activities while promoting a local product with high added value, thus contributing to the fight against poverty and the reduction of inequalities.

Cooperatives also play a major role in empowering marginalized groups, particularly women, youth, and people with disabilities. Morocco's argan cooperatives are a prime example: they provide women with access to training, financing, and business opportunities, while strengthening their status within society. This inclusive approach promotes equitable access to resources and stimulates active participation in local development.

From an employment perspective, cooperatives represent an important source of decent job creation. Thanks to a cooperative-based operating model, they often offer better working conditions and a fair sharing of profits. The case of COPAG in Morocco, the largest agricultural cooperative at the national and continental levels, illustrates this model well, despite the initial challenges related to financing and the fierce competitiveness of private agri-food companies: it has 25,000 members and produces 2 million litres of milk. It currently operates in the agri-food sector and redistributes profits in the form of dividends to its members, thus contributing to strengthening economic and social cohesion.

The speakers also praised the resilience of cooperatives in the face of economic crises. During the pandemic or in times of market fluctuations, cooperatives have been able to maintain a certain balance by relying on solidarity and the pooling of resources. However, several major challenges persist: endogenous, the lack of qualified leadership, weak professional management, and limited self-financing capacity; exogenous, constraints related to the regulatory framework, access to financing, insufficient infrastructure, and increased market

competition.

To overcome these challenges, the panellists made several key recommendations: strengthening strategic partnerships between cooperative development stakeholders, promoting a favourable environment for cooperatives, and developing appropriate financial instruments. It was also suggested that governance be improved by promoting transparency and professionalization of structures, and that digital visibility be leveraged through customized digital platforms that enable rapid communication, access to information for members, and better promotion of the successes of African cooperatives be enhanced.

Panel 5: Youth Agora ‘Reinventing the Image of Cooperatives’



From left: Ms. Imane Mekkaoui, Ms. Hilda Ojall, Ms. Salma Hachimi, and Mr. Erick M. Obongo engage during the final panel, “Youth Agora: Reinventing the Image of Cooperatives.”

The final panel was dedicated to the theme "Youth Agora "Reinventing the Image of Cooperatives" moderated by Mr. Erick M Obongo, Regional Youth Coordinator of ICA-Africa, featured contributions from Ms. Imane MEKKAOU, Executive Director - AMANE Foundation of CMGP, Ms. Hilda Ojall, Women's Representative in the Regional Board of the International Cooperative Alliance - Africa, Ms. Salma Hachimi, President of the Innovtention Cooperative, Morocco. The panel highlighted the main challenges facing young people in the cooperative sector in Africa, as revealed by a study conducted in 2021 by ICA-Africa with the support of the European Union. This survey highlighted major obstacles: persistent unemployment, lack of employment opportunities, gender inequalities, limited access to financing and low participation of young people in decision-making processes. These difficulties hinder the involvement of young people in cooperatives and limit their potential for innovation and social transformation.

To address these challenges, several solutions were proposed by the panellists. These include

implementing tailored educational programs, raising awareness to break with the traditional image of cooperatives as mere family projects and a model for the old, promoting their entrepreneurial and enterprise identity based on solidarity values. The creation of an African youth advocacy network, the establishment of partnerships at the local, national and regional, levels, and the development of inclusive programs for young people with disabilities or living in rural areas are also essential. Emphasis was placed on the importance of access to digital technologies, the provision of affordable financing, and the creation of an ecosystem adapted to the aspirations of young people. An inspiring example was presented: a cooperative founded by young Moroccan electrical engineering students, specializing in the reconditioning of batteries for use in solar energy, illustrating an innovative, ecological, and educational approach geared towards environmental sustainability one of the glaring challenges facing the world.

Finally, the panel emphasized the need to encourage young people to create cooperative startups integrating digital services and to foster their international outreach through strategic partnerships. Mr. Obongo noted that young people don't owe anyone apology and it must resolutely be recognized that equal playing field must be provided for youth to join cooperatives and foster their growth. This is fully in line with the vision of the African Union's Agenda 2063, which recognizes the central role of youth in the continent's development.

Session 3: Overview of Africa Development Initiatives and Projects – ICA-Africa

The third day of the conference began with a summary presentation of the scope of action of the International Cooperative Alliance – Africa Region (ICA-Africa), which brings together 22 member countries and collaborates with 44 partner organizations. ICA-Africa actively works to promote the cooperative identity, strengthen inter-cooperative cooperation, develop institutional capacities, and improve service provision. The results of a series of studies conducted in 18 countries highlighted the lack of appropriate legal frameworks, thus hindering cooperatives from fully integrating into a sustainable development approach. This diagnosis led ICA-Africa to develop a model law for Cooperatives, which is currently being adopted by the African Union, aimed at harmonizing the legal framework governing cooperatives across the continent. Data collection was also addressed by the speaker who highlighted that a map of cooperatives was carried out in partnership with the Korean Federation of Cooperatives through the "COOPSTAR" project which provided a work on the level of cooperatives in these countries.

Presentation of Country Progress Reports by Registrars - Commissioners – Directors



Next, government technocrats and representatives of cooperatives from various countries including Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Mauritius, Botswana, Kenya, South Sudan, Morocco, Liberia, and Togo—presented progress made in light of the 2022 Cairo Declaration of the Africa Ministerial Cooperative Conference. Areas discussed included capacity building, promoting sustainable cooperative models, and developing strong partnerships. Many presentations also highlighted efforts to promote the inclusion of women and youth through training programs, mentoring, and increased participation in cooperative governance.

However, despite these modest advances, several major challenges were identified by the participating countries. Climate change poses a growing threat to agricultural and rural activities, directly affecting cooperatives engaged in food production, livestock farming, and natural resource management. In addition, a lack of adequate financing, limited access to modern infrastructure, and insufficient technical and managerial training continue to hamper the full development of cooperative potential, particularly in rural areas. The challenge of generational renewal, due to the disinterest of some young people in traditional models of cooperation, was also mentioned.

In the face of these obstacles, the speakers called for the diversification of funding sources, the acceleration of digitalization, the development of training programs, and better regional and continental coordination. These recommendations aim to make cooperatives central players in inclusive and sustainable development in Africa.

Session 4: Africa Cooperative Model Law Dialogue



The representative of the Pan-African Parliament, Mr. Clement Mavungu, presented the Model Law. Cooperatives as an example of a legal framework that can serve as a reference for African countries. He explained that the process of formulating and the future prospects of this law propose guiding principles and standards that can harmonize and strengthen the cooperative sector across Africa. Although it is not yet binding legislation, this model provides a solid basis to inspire national reforms and support the development of an enabling environment for cooperatives.

The speaker also encouraged cooperative directors, registrars, commissioners, and other stakeholders to take advantage of it, in order to initiate the domestication and utilization strategy at the level of African countries. By disseminating and adapting this model to their respective contexts, African countries could gradually build a coherent legal framework, conducive to the flourishing of the cooperative movement on the continent.

During the 11th African Ministerial Conference on Cooperatives, a CARE Morocco participant emphasized the importance of acting at two levels: upstream, by integrating the cooperative format into university training, and downstream, via the AVEC (Village Savings and Credit Associations) model, which prepares future members through comprehensive support (financial education, entrepreneurship, literacy, etc.). The intervention also highlighted the need for tailored post-creation support, including skills sponsorship or student support for digitalization. Finally, she called for creating a space for dialogue between stakeholders and reaffirmed CARE Morocco's commitment to contributing to a concrete roadmap.

Session 5: Launch of the National Cooperative Gender Platform (NCGP)



Recognising that the key role of cooperatives as drivers for advancing gender equality and inclusion, the conference marked a significant milestone with the launch of the Framework for the Establishment of the National Cooperative Gender Platform (NCGP). While women across Africa play a central role in key cooperative sectors such as agriculture and finance, they

continue to face systemic barriers that limit their access to leadership and decision-making spaces, with representation often remaining below 30%.

The NCGP aims to address these disparities by providing a safe, structured, and inclusive space for women and gender advocates within the cooperative movement. The NCGP is expected to strengthen the cooperative movement's contribution to inclusive and sustainable development, empowering women to participate fully, lead and contribute to national and continental transformation.

Session 6: Launch of the International Year of Cooperatives 2025 in Africa



During the conference, the International Year of Cooperatives 2025 was officially launched in the Africa region with a bold call to action for greater cooperative visibility, collaboration, and collective impact throughout this milestone year. Cooperatives across Africa are now actively demonstrating how they contribute to sustainable development, inclusive growth,

and community resilience. The launch set the tone for a year-long mobilization to highlight cooperative success stories, strengthen partnerships, and showcase the sector's vital role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals across the continent.

Field Visit to Cooperatives

As part of the conference program, participants visited leading cooperatives in the Essaouira region. The tour began at the Complexe Intégré de l'Artisanat d'Essaouira, a hub designed to bring together artisans and showcase Moroccan craft heritage. Participants toured workshops where skilled craftspeople demonstrated their techniques

in pottery, woodwork, leather, textile, and jewelry. The complex serves as a marketplace and a training and innovation centre, helping local artisans particularly women and youth to access new markets and preserve their art for future generations.



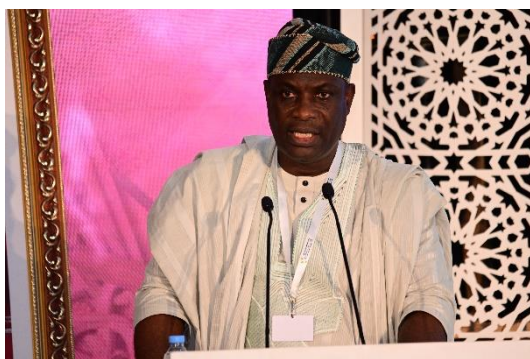
The participants also visited the Marjana Cooperative, known for its production and extraction of high-quality argan oil- a product deeply ingrained in Moroccan rural livelihoods and recognized for its culinary and cosmetic value. This all-women cooperative provided participants with a first-hand look at the intricate, labour-intensive process of creating argan oil, from hand-cracking the nuts to cold pressing the oil.



Lastly, the participants toured the Haik Cooperative, which specializes in the production of wool, cotton, and textile products.



Closing Remarks



ICA-Africa President, High Chief Ayeola Oriyomi, once again spoke to warmly welcome the Kingdom of Morocco for the quality of the welcome extended to participants and the hospitality it demonstrated throughout the event. On this occasion, he noted the importance of cooperatives in the socio-economic fabric of African countries, as essential actors in the

promotion of social justice. These structures play a decisive role in the fight against poverty, the reduction of inequalities, and the prevention of exclusion. They have also demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of health crises and the effects of climate change.

Millions of Africans today depend on cooperatives to meet basic needs such as livelihoods, food security, healthcare, housing, financing, and education. This economic model, based on solidarity and shared responsibility, deserves to be fully recognized as a strategic lever for unlocking the continent's potential. Rooted in African philosophy, cooperatives embody a collective vision of development. However, their impact remains limited by infrastructure deficits, insufficient access to financing, and a lack of appropriate investment.

According to the President of ICA-Africa, the commemoration of the International Year of Cooperatives must be seized as an opportunity for collective mobilization in favour of the transformation of Africa's development. In this regard, a solemn appeal is made to all stakeholders: governments, cooperative leaders, development partners, women, and youth to integrate cooperatives into national development plans. It is also a matter of ensuring adequate financial support, promoting gender equality, strengthening youth empowerment, and ensuring respect for the principles of transparency, integrity, and unity that underpin cooperative action.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the 11th technical committee of the African Ministerial Conference on Cooperatives held in the city of Essaouira offered a strategic framework for dialogue between decision-makers, experts, academics and field actors to make cooperatives a driver of social and economic transformation in Africa, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 (SDG 2030) and the African Union's Agenda 2063. The recommendations raised during all the discussion and debate sessions mainly relate to better integration of the cooperative model into public policies, strengthening skills in the digital ecosystem, and creating secure online platforms for sharing data that can be easily used by all member

countries and all ICA-Africa structures. The main focus is on the inclusion of youth and women through incentive programs, the creation of an African cooperative movement network, and expanded access to financing through the granting of loans with affordable interest. It is up to everyone to translate all these reflections into tangible actions capable of making this concrete visibility on the ground for a better Africa, allowing Africans to aspire to a promising future.

The conference participants provided following recommendations

- Strengthen the strategic partnership of cooperative development stakeholders
- Promote enabling environment for cooperatives growth and sustainable development
- Design cooperative centric financial instruments and products
- Promote transparency in cooperative leadership
- It was recommended to foster professional management in cooperative movement and create customized digital platforms for effective delivery, timely information to coop members.
- Design avenues for youth participation is crucial for social inclusion, therefore, it was recommended to invest in youth empowerment, design services and products that attract youth interests and amplifying their voices and nurturing the leadership potential
- It was recommended to enhance cooperative visibility via availability, accessibility of cooperative data from grassroot level and promotion of information and technology and user-friendly digital tool to ease cooperative business operations and leverage on existing social media to share success stories, lesson learnt and impact.
- It was recommended to develop or upgrade cooperative management system at the national level for easy availability and accessibility of cooperative data and evidence-based decision making and advocacy.
- Cooperative policies need to be reviewed to meet the needs of the cooperative movement given new developments
- The participants call for Extra effort to promote and mainstream social inclusion in cooperative movement in Africa (the focus should be on gender, youth and other underprivileged groups – people with disabilities among others)
- ICA-Africa should promote the collaboration on cooperative development partnerships between countries, development organizations hence foster knowledge sharing, experiences, best practices and lessons for sustainable growth of cooperative development in Africa.
- ICA-Africa in collaboration with PAP should encourage Cooperative directors, registrars, commissioners and relevant stakeholders to pioneer the domestication and use of the model law of cooperatives in Africa.

Annex

- I. Photos : <https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjCfPEk>
- II. ICA-Africa Framework for the Establishment of National Cooperative Gender Platforms (NCGP) - <http://bit.ly/4nX0s1g>



This activity was co-funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the International Cooperative Alliance-Africa and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.