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## International Labour Conference (89<sup>th</sup> Session)

### Statement of the International Co-operative Alliance Karl J. Fogelström, ICA Director-General

Honourable Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address you today on behalf of co-operative organizations in over 100 countries which are member of the International Co-operative Alliance.

As the representative organization of co-operatives worldwide, ICA knows that co-operatives can and do make a difference in promoting decent work. Today they provide approximately 100 million jobs worldwide and their potential for contributing to closing the employment gap is widely recognized. For instance, in many countries in Europe, the co-operative enterprise model has proven to be very successful in alleviating unemployment and in providing services in the vacuum created by a shrinking welfare state.

Co-operatives are a form of enterprise that put people first; they are member-owned; they are controlled under democratic principles; and they are competitive enterprises which are at least as efficient in their business operations and use of capital as others in the marketplace. Yet, they are not driven by profit, but rather by needs. Co-operatives help people meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and thus secure human dignity.

However, co-operatives will not be able to facilitate job creation, economic growth or social development nor in fact reduce the decent work deficit if they are treated as instruments of public policy. If they are to be successful, they require Governments to create an enabling environment for autonomous co-operatives to develop and grow.

It is for this reason that the International Co-operative Alliance welcomes ILO's initiative to revise its Recommendation no. 127 on the "Role of Cooperatives in the Economic and Social Development of Developing Countries".

It is our hope that the new instrument on co-operatives will provide a long-term policy reference framework for the Members of the ILO; be global in nature and scope; have the flexibility of addressing the needs of all types of co-operative organizations in all sectors of activity and, focus on ensuring that enabling conditions exist for co-operatives to function and thrive especially with regard to the role of the state.

We are confident that a new instrument that recognizes the co-operative values and principles, that ensures co-operative autonomy, that enables co-operative development through a level playing field, will enable people around the world to use the co-operative enterprise model to meet their needs.

ICA is committed to working with the ILO in strengthening the potential of co-operatives to contribute to making people's lives better. We look forward to collaborating with you to ensure that co-operatives can truly "take advantage of market dynamism to find ways to deliver social justice as well as economic benefits to all".

Thank you.