

*Summit's Young Leaders issue declaration at the 2014
International Summit of Cooperatives*

09 OCT 2014

Co-operate to Transform Society.

We, young co-operative leaders and members, believe in the co-operative principles and cooperative values. We believe that the co-operative movement must be at the center of creating a more sustainable and equal economy. **This economy should be built around principles of democracy, social justice and solidarity.**

Our vision and expectation of the global cooperative movement is for it to transform an economy based on the individual accumulation of wealth and power into a system that serves the collective wellbeing of people and our planet through redistribution of resources and common ownership. We believe that there is an alternative to the capitalist economy. The cooperative movement needs to be at the forefront of creating this. This means not emulating its institutions, looking to its leadership and theory for guidance, or staffing the management teams of our co-operatives with subscribers to neoliberal philosophy.

We suggest that we will only be successful in creating a more just and sustainable economy by bringing the perspective and leadership of people most impacted by economic recession, climate change, and political instability to the heart of our decision-making structures. This necessitates a movement that works from the bottom up not the top down, where a diversity of voices are valued and heard, a movement that it is fully participatory and democratic. **It is important our conferences and events / bring cooperative values into practice.**

Our experience at the Summit has demonstrated to us the strength of the cooperative movement, the scalability and resiliency of the cooperative model, and has provided us the opportunity to work with cooperativists from around the world to collaborate and increase the integrity and impact of our collective work. However, our visions and expectations for the cooperative movement, economy, and community should be further represented in this event.

As we believe that this perspective is not only that of cooperative youth, but is shared more broadly with others present here and within the larger cooperative movement, we suggest the following:

- **Diversity:** Future panelists at movement events need to be representative of those most impacted by the success or failure of our cooperative work: youth, women, citizens of island nations, people of color, residents of the global South, the LGBTQ community, un- and under-employed, and other marginalized peoples. Their participation should be supported and prioritized.
- **Participation:** Future movement events need to utilize more accessible and participatory formats. In addition to expert presentations, this could include open space formats, peer to peer sharing of best practice and experiences, critical dialogue among participants and opportunities for identity and affinity groups to convene in an ad hoc fashion.

- **Values:** Center the ethos and philosophy of cooperation in our movement spaces by orienting conversations around our principles and values, rather than comparisons with outside systems.

More broadly, large cooperative institutions and businesses should strengthen their inter- and intra- generational solidarity and cooperation by **committing funding, knowledge and resources to youth and other marginalized people**. This could occur in a number of ways:

1. Specifically and immediately, we call on members of the international cooperative movement to support the ICA Youth Network to realize the development of an online platform to facilitate the strengthening of relationships and sharing of knowledge between co-operative youth across the world.
2. Commit to allocating resources to support young people to start and develop new and innovative co-operative businesses, not just develop young leaders within existing coops.
3. To make a concerted effort to create free, accessible and useful resources and portfolios of knowledge for new and young people engaging in the co-operative movement to benefit and learn from.

We thank you for listening to our voice and hope you will join us in making this vision a reality. We know that similar sentiments were shared by youth during the 2012 Summit, as well as in other national and regional spaces. We aim for these recommendations continue on this dialogue to strengthen our movement. For our part, we commit to continuing our organizing work as international cooperative youth through the ICA cooperative youth network, and we will continue to communicate with you, the broader cooperative movement, about our evolving visions and work. In cooperation!