

EDITORIAL

2012 is International Year of Cooperatives. Amid the economic crisis in Europe, it is highly revealing that the United Nations should have chosen to place the co-operative movement centre stage in the year that has just begun. This fact was emphasised by Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, the Qatari President of the UN General Assembly who told the Assembly that «Enterprises run on co-operative principles reduce poverty, create employment and promote social integration». He said this prior to introducing Pauline Green, President of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) who addressed the plenary assembly of the UN. Green reminded her audience that the 300 leading co-operatives in the world are engaged in the most competitive economic sectors in 25 countries, and that taken as a whole they amount to a volume equivalent to the world's ninth-largest economy. These sectors include health care, as has been repeatedly demonstrated on the pages of [Compartir].

It is highly significant that, weeks before the launch of International Year of Co-operatives, the most recent General Assembly of the International Co-operative Alliance was attended by a record number of delegates: more than 2000 representatives of co-operatives in 80 countries worldwide gathered in Mexico. If the only benefit which can possibly be derived from the economic crisis is in helping us separate the wheat from the chaff (economically and also morally), then the co-operative enterprise model emerges as one which could offer solutions for a more just and more dignified future for humanity.

At the start of the ICA assembly, the UN's Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, addressed co-operative members worldwide: the solidarity and values promoted by co-operatives foster global peace and well-being. Or to put it succinctly in the words of Juan Somavia, President of the International Labour Organization (ILO): «The evidence demonstrates that co-operatives are highly resistant to crises». Somavia also called on the international cooperative movement to provide an efficient enterprise development model, to commit to extending social protection and raise as far as possible the profile of its conception of a just economic system. The Espriu Foundation was there, showing the world the vitality and sound health care services offered by the doctor and patient co-operatives which form the basis of ASISA, Assistència Sanitària Col·legial and SCIAS.

The President of the world's co-operatives addressing the UN, and the Secretary General of the UN addressing the international assembly of co-operatives: a clear sign of the vital and necessary co-operation between states and the co-operative world. The Espriu Foundation itself promotes such dialogue in the field of health care. All these efforts intended to provide a response to the devastation of an economic crisis engendered by the model which has dominated recent decades, offering dignified, just and sustainable solutions from the perspective of the social economy..