

CEBU DECLARATION

With a firm collective intent and resolve to advance the essence of cooperativism as the empowering path to make life better for our people, we, the national officials of the Cooperative Development Authority headed by the Chairman, Undersecretary Emmanuel M. Santiagué, Ph.D. together with all the CDA Regional Directors nation-wide and the Officer-Representatives of Cooperative Federations/Unions/Councils from all the regions of Mindanao and the Visayas, have come together in a 3-day Consultative Convergence to forge a strong cooperation and partnership.

We are aware of the prevailing conditions that have consigned our country to a life of poverty. According to the recent study of the Asian Development Bank, the Philippines has the most prevalent incidence of poverty in East Asia.

We firmly believe that cooperativism has become a countervailing force to address the following:

1. The SWS report has disclosed that poverty incidence has gone up to 51% which is more glaring in Mindanao whose six regions are suffering from high poverty gap ratios, a paradox in an island oozing with ecological resources;
2. We have to act now because time is of the essence. By 2015, there will be an unprecedented demand for food, water, electric power shelter, medicine for 96.3 million Filipinos;
3. We are now in the 11th year of the 21st century but we are not so certain anymore if we can reach the 22nd century as the Earth warms and the oceans rise. We must now contend with impending ecological disasters – earthquakes, tsunamis, super typhoons, droughts and floods. We have already lost our ecological integrity as well as food security;
4. While cooperatives' *raison d'etre* is to advance social justice, yet, social injustices now rule the land in many ways. It is evident in the life of our farmers who are tilling the land not their own, fettered to high-priced conventional farming technologies and forced to market their products at a very low price;
5. Social injustice looms in the non-recognition of so called Electric Cooperatives of the ownership of the ECs and their continued existence perpetuates social wrong and legal flaws;
6. Oppressive marketing system continues to roar its ugly head at the expense of the poor consumers because everything sold in this country from needle to tractor passes at least

5 to 7 layers so that a 20-peso medicine in India is sold in the Philippines at 130 pesos , a 200-peso bag of fertilizer at Ukraine is sold in Bukidnon at 2,000 pesos.

The present structural set-up anchored on dominant economic paradigm has given way to the massive exploitation of our natural resources that saw the decimation of our forest, agricultural and marine resources. It has caused so much pains and miseries to our people, many of whom are jumping in droves from a “sinking ship” to find jobs in foreign lands with so much social costs. There may be “changing of the guards,” but structures that perpetuate poverty have remained as formidable as ever.

Today, we serve notice to one and all that we have awakened and that we will work together to liberate our people from the shackles of poverty and powerlessness.

We firmly believe that by nature, nurture and by law, cooperatives exist for social transformation based on the principles of social justice, equity and sustainable development.

We have come together to debunk the lethal combination of poverty, hunger, corruption, violence, apathy and greed which has no match against the formidable alliance of an empowered people to advance good governance, democratic control, social justice, food security and ecological integrity.

WE FIRMLY COMMIT TO FORGE OUR ONENESS TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

On Policy Direction No. 1: On the strengthening and enhancing delivery mechanism of the Cooperative Development Authority

1. We will empower and capacitate our federations and unions to become dynamic and responsive partners of the CDA in the supervision and examination of primary cooperatives engaged in savings and credit services;
2. We will enjoin the primary cooperatives to become members of federations and unions to put into practice the principle of cooperation among cooperatives;
3. We will institutionalize the conduct of regular and continuing consultation and dialogue as manifestation of meaningful participation in popular democratic society;
4. We will intensify our advocacy for the return of the CDA to the fold of the Office of the President and eventually rally the legislators for the conversion of CDA into a full-fledged department to enable it to acquire needed facilities, hire personnel and harness logistics to deliver the needed services to the clients true to its mandate;

5. We will craft guidelines that will spell out the roles of unions vis-à-vis the federations in clear and categorical terms in the areas of training and education;
6. All told, we will work to empower CDA to become a more responsive, efficient and effective lead government regulatory and development agency for cooperatives.

On Policy Direction No. 2: On providing an enabling environment for the strengthening and development of cooperatives

1. We will harness collective efforts to strengthen the cooperatives among Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries and those in the agriculture sector which are the backbone of our food security;
2. We will evolve a core advocacy towards making cooperative as third sector of our economy and indispensable component of national development plans and programs;
3. We will pursue unrelenting efforts and unwavering campaign for amalgamation and merger to optimize the strength in numbers and maximize benefits of economies of scale;
4. We will work towards building a strong support structures and mechanism for consultation, policy advocacy and responsive feedback system thru efficient Cooperative Development Councils in all levels;
5. We will join efforts with other stakeholders in making a clarion call to Congress for amendment of RA 7160 making appointment of Cooperative Development Officers in the LGUs mandatory so that drumbeating of cooperative consciousness be felt in the grassroot level;
6. We will enhance linkaging and sustainable partnership with the business sector and hasten exchange of information and introducing products and services using state-of-the-art technology and internet;
7. We will endeavor to tap local tourism offices for promotion of coop products and services;
8. We will complete the guidelines on Electronic Financial Servicing for the savings and credit cooperatives to draw the cooperatives into the mainstream of financial system;
9. We will advance the financial education of the cooperative members so that they can enhance their capability to save;
10. All told, we firmly resolve to work for strong, sustainable and empowered cooperatives.

On Policy Direction No. 3: On ensuring local and global competitiveness of cooperatives

1. We will renew efforts in cooperative education to put emphasis on the values of savings over borrowings and transform members as entrepreneurs;
2. We will promote succession planning in cooperatives as a way of developing leaders;

3. We will harness internal and external financial resources for federations and unions for sustainable high impact promotion not only of products and services but the social marketing of cooperatives;
4. We will promote value-chain approach in cooperative system whereby the complementation of production, marketing and financial cooperative systems are established;
5. We will work on the standardization, connectivity, and integration of technology run by cooperative movement common brand for international competitiveness and Research & Development initiatives;
6. All told, we are determined to work for viable, competitive and sustainable cooperatives as engines of growth and development.

On Policy Direction No. 4: Promoting cooperativism as the vehicle for social transformation for the 4Ps (People, Planet, Prosperity and Peace)

1. We will make the improvement of quality of life of members as ultimate parameter or measure of success of cooperatives over other indicators;
2. Intensify advocacies for life preservation such as those provided in RA 9003, global warming, coastal clean-up, disaster management, etc.
3. Cooperative Unions to play an active role in the social transformation of 4P's.
 - Planet (Environment) – advocacy on proper waste disposal, solid waste management programs, involvement/immersion in government programs on environment, facilitate the provision of appropriate farming technology to cooperative-affiliates.
 - Prosperity – to provide capacity building activities of cooperatives on coop governance (including effective internal control system) making them competent in operating viable and sustainable economic enterprises.
 - Peace – union to establish linkage and coordination with NGOs/peace advocates; alleviating poverty in the community through advocacy and promotion of “big brother, helping small brother” concept; we will intensify our call for peace in Mindanao through cooperativism which cuts across creed, ideology, class, race, gender and sector as we underscore the truism that peace cannot be had through the firepower of guns that have made so many orphans and widows but can only be had through the strength of the human spirit building a society characterized by social justice, participation and democratic control.
4. Conduct of trainings on values formation, coop governance, advocate and exercise transparency, fairness and accountability in coop operations, empowering people by providing appropriate technology that would enhance individual skills, knowledge, and attitude of members of the cooperatives.

5. All told, we will advance a brand of cooperativism that is transformational as it is liberating and empowering, to effect paradigm shifts, i.e., debunk the growth-at-all-cost development strategies that are only successful in depleting our resource base and consigning our people to live in the slum areas and replace it with a sustainable kind of development where people and the environment are the priorities rather than profit and business.

On Policy Direction No. 5: Massive Expansion of Cooperative Membership

We will not only join the call but will leave no stone unturned to increase cooperative membership as we firmly believe that expanding membership means more people will participate and benefit in development processes. This is based on the truism that people's participation is the best guarantee of social justice and sustainability. Without enlightened people's participation through cooperativism, all the outpourings of development programs will just be palliatives and will not make a difference in making life better for our people.

With some 20 million people, as envisioned, who will practice and give high adherence to the time-honored and universally accepted cooperative principles of participation, cooperation and democratic control, people will be empowered to craft their own destiny and make cooperativism a way of life.

However, we truly believe that rectifying social flaws and dismantling oppressive structures are condition *sine qua non* to propel cooperative membership to greater heights in a highly stratified societal order where a few have much too much and the many who are poor have much too little.

We will therefore work for shifts in paradigms particularly in empowering our farmers to adopt sustainable agriculture and shun away from chemical-based farming promoted by conventional agriculture. We will make cooperativism as the empowering path of agrarian reform beneficiaries to liberate themselves from the shackles and bondage of tenancy and oppression. We will erase oppressive marketing layers, monopolies and cartels that have consigned our country to extreme poverty where the economy is controlled only by a few elite. We will promote rights-based management of utilities, be it water or electric power, which are essentials to life and must be under the control of the consumers through their cooperatives not of a greedy few whose gargantuan rakings have formed a strong cabal of vested interest.

All told, we firmly commit ourselves to work for a sustainable future where cooperativism will be a way of life, where human dignity is upheld, where ecological integrity is ensured and where food security is assured.

On this historical day of the 7th of May, 2011 in Cebu City, we, the leader-representatives of the Federations, Unions and Development Councils, hereby forged our

oneness with the Cooperative Development Authority with our firm resolve to end the poverty of our people through our strong abiding faith in the essence of cooperativism, in whose name and for whose cause, we now pledge our commitment as we sign this DECLARATION!