

**Statement by Dr Sai Mauk Kham,
Vice President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar,
on the occasion of International Day of Cooperatives
(2nd July 2011)**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I must say, I am very pleased and honoured to have the opportunity to deliver a statement on this auspicious occasion and I would also like to extend a very warm welcome to all of you here today, in commemorating the International Day of Cooperatives.

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) was first established in 1895, to foster closer relations and also to boost economic cooperation among cooperative societies in the international arena. But the International Day of Cooperatives was held every year only after 1923. After decades of absence, the Central

Cooperative Society of Myanmar joined the International Cooperatives Alliance in 1993 to become a member of it.

In 1994, at the 49th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations proclaimed that, every year, the first Saturday of July, was to become the International Day of Cooperatives and since then, the cooperative societies around the world have been celebrating the Day on yearly basis.

And so, as a member of the Alliance, the Central Cooperative Society of Myanmar is now holding the commemorative ceremony to mark the International Day of Cooperatives and this year, its the 17th time.

Each year, the International Alliance sets a theme for this particular International Day, serving as a guidance for the families of the Cooperative Societies. For this year, the International Cooperative Alliance has set the theme as, "Youth : the Future of Cooperative Enterprise".

In addition to that, to honour the successful achievements of the cooperative movement worldwide, the United Nations had proclaimed the Year 2012, to be the International Year of

Cooperatives, with the theme “Cooperative Enterprises Build a better World”. Therefore, I would like to call on all responsible personnels, to organize, to educate and to train our future generation youths, so that they will be able to participate with zeal, in the development of the cooperative societies, in the years to come.

In our country, in order to address the economic hardship facing the farmers in 1904 and to lessen the trouble of borrowing with high interest from the money lenders, a credit cooperative society was first introduced in 1905 in Myinmu, Sagaing Region and finally only in 1992, the cooperatives law was promulgated to carry out businesses and economic opportunities more widely in accordance with the Market Economic System .

I would also like to emphasize one main task, in the development of cooperatives which is known as OER in short. Here, O stands for more organization of cooperative societies, E for more Education on the practice of cooperative works and R for to follow rules and regulation laid down by the State. Therefore, I would like to call upon all the members of the cooperative society to strive constantly for the success of implementing this afore-mentioned OER.

With a view of developing cooperative enterprises, here, we now have 10725 primary cooperative societies, 462 syndicates, 20 federation of syndicates and one Central Cooperative Society, altogether, 11208 societies have been formed in the states and the regions. These cooperatives are now engaged in production, services, trade and general business nationwide.

On this auspicious occasion, I would like to refer to the speech delivered by the President U Thein Sein on the 20 June 2011, in which the President has given guidance to cooperative societies. The President stated that cooperatives should be formed and organized from the bottom up, rather than of top down initiative. In addition, the President also emphasized that the region/state working committees are to organize the residents, to form cooperative societies with only trustworthy and reliable people, so that, the people of rural areas shall enjoy the fruits of development, and soon overcoming this poverty.

Now, the cooperative society is being regarded as an important factor in today's world economic and social development. A few weeks ago, the Government of the Republic of the Union of

Myanmar has formed the Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation Central Committee, with the President as Chairman, to carry out the task of the developing social and economic improvement of the poor in the country.

In accordance with the targets set by the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, the government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is giving high priority to poverty reduction and rural development scheme, to improve the livelihood of this 70 percent of the country's population who are residing in the rural areas.

According to the UNDP, the poverty rate in Myanmar has decreased a bit from 32% to 26% in recent years, though, we still have to work hard, if we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goal-1 by the year 2015.

In this regard, we strongly believe that the Cooperative movement in Myanmar has an important role to play in this rural development and poverty reduction programme and the following major tasks serving as a guidance to the work of the cooperative movements:

- Development of agricultural production sector

- Development of rural productivity and cottage industries
- Development of micro saving and credit enterprises
- Development of rural cooperative tasks.
- Development of rural socio-economy.
- Development of rural renewable energy.
- Environmental conservation.

In conclusion,

I would like to urge all members of cooperative societies to observe the following:-

1. As the rural development and poverty alleviation action plan is being implemented by the state, members of cooperative societies are to cooperate with perseverance and enthusiasm.
2. As the year 2012 is designated as the International Year of Cooperatives, with the theme, "Co-operative Enterprises build a better world", and with this year's theme, "Youth: future of Cooperative Enterprises", it is important to advise and call upon our youth to involve more in future cooperative activities .

3. While building a modern, developed and disciplined-flourishing state, citizens should join hands together with the government.
4. In order to carry out the work of law enforcement, to maintain peace and security and development works, members of the cooperative societies must also participate in unity with our people.

And finally,

5. I wish to urge all of you, to raise and keep the good image of cooperative societies that truly represents the values and disciplines of the cooperative system.

I thank you.