

**Conference “The social economy – Africa’s response to the global crisis”  
Johannesburg, 19-21 October 2009**

“Reorienting financial systems towards productive investment and enterprises (...)

*A key question is for countries to find the right stimuli for private and public enterprises, including social economy firms such as cooperatives and similar institutional forms, as well as for foreign capital and domestic savings, so as to promote entrepreneurship and initiative in enterprises within a sustainable development framework.” §151*

**“Tackling the global job crisis – Recovery through Decent Work policies” ILO Director  
General report (ILC 2009)**

ILO’s commitment to the advancement of the social economy is grounded in the conviction that “lasting peace can be achieved only if it is based upon social justice” (ILO Constitution) and that in a globalised world “productive, profitable and sustainable enterprises, together with a *strong social economy* and a viable public sector, are critical to sustainable economic development and employment opportunities” (ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalisation).

The ILO has been supporting the social economy through normative action such as the ILO Recommendation 193 on the promotion of cooperatives; through technical activities (advice on policy and law, access to finance, organizational development, capacity building, international networking, etc.) and in different settings (informal and formal economy, rural and urban communities, a variety of economic sectors and sub-sectors) working with people at the grassroots as well as with decision makers in Government. In addition, the ILO has been establishing strong international partnerships with global social economy stakeholders, such as the International Cooperative Alliance, the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives, the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor, and many others.).

The social economy cuts across all four dimensions of the Decent Work Agenda.

On the initiative of the ILO Regional Office for Africa and with the technical support by EMP/COOP and many other ILO technical units, a three-day conference has been scheduled for the period 19-21 October in Johannesburg under the theme “*The social economy – Africa’s response to the global crisis*”. This conference will bring together social economy promoters and stakeholders from Africa, government representatives from 15 African countries, employers’ and workers’ organisations, social economy organisations from other parts of the world, and ILO HQ units and field specialists.

The objective of the conference is to adopt an action programme aiming at mobilising the social economy in Africa in response to the crisis, at local, national and regional levels. Participants of the conference might consider initiating a process that might lead to an International Labour Conference (ILC) discussion on social economy. The ILC would be the most appropriate forum to develop a universally accepted definition of the social economy, which is currently missing.