What have Cooperatives got to do with the Post-2015 Development Framework and Sustainable Development Goals?

What is the Post 2015 Development Framework About?
In 2000, the UN launched the current development agenda, centered on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Year 2015 was set as the target to achieve the eight goals in the areas of poverty alleviation, education, gender equality and empowerment of women, child and maternal health, environmental sustainability, reducing HIV/AIDS and communicable diseases, and building a global partnership for development.

In 2013, the challenges to achieving the MDGs remain substantial despite considerable improvements around many of the goals in quite a few countries. At the same time discussions on what follows the MDGs is gaining momentum. The UN Conference on Sustainable Development, “Rio +20” has started a process for designing sustainable development goals which will build upon the MDGs.

In follow up to Rio+20, the UN General Assembly established an Open Working Group (OWG) to prepare a proposal on Sustainable Development Goals for consideration during the 68th session of its General Assembly, starting in September 2013. In May 2013, a High Level Panel (HLP) appointed by UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon published its report on its vision and recommendations for a post 2015 development agenda. The ILO is actively involved in the new global partnership to meet common economic, socio-cultural and environmental needs for the post-2015 International Development framework.

What about Cooperatives and Sustainable Development Goals?
Cooperatives are instrumental in providing opportunities for productive employment as well as offering services such as health care, education, credit, improved infrastructure and sustainable energy. Cooperative enterprises are guided by values of social dialogue and democracy, and they are often rooted in local communities, making them a sustainable option for achieving development.

Rio 20+ has recognized the actual and potential role of cooperatives to achieving sustainable development, reducing poverty and creating employment. But the HLP report has not had any real emphasis on cooperatives, nor has the cooperative movement been involved in the process despite its strength of more than one billion strong members from around the world.

In order to bring in cooperatives voice into the process of the post-2015 development agenda, the International Labour Organization’s Co-operatives Unit, in collaboration with the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and other partners has launched an initiative on the contribution of cooperatives to sustainable development.

As part of this initiative a background study is being drafted to be presented in policy roundtables, conferences and seminars in 2013-14. The study will be informed by a survey and in-depth interviews with representatives of the cooperative movement from around the world to gather information on how cooperatives have contributed to Sustainable Development and their potential to contribute to the achievement of the proposed Universal Goals.