



MUNUM XXXI Sample Position Paper

Jane Smith, Central High School
Bahamas

International Labor Organization: Promotion of Cooperatives to Drive Job Growth

Cooperatives have a rich and old history in the Bahamas. Indeed, cooperatives are very beneficial to the economic growth of a nation that does not have an abundance of resources or land, such as the Bahamas. The first cooperatives legislation to be enacted in the Bahamas was called the Cooperative Societies Act of 1974. Formed alongside the act, with the goal of helping to administer it, was the Department of Cooperative Development. The department is responsible for the “promotion, formation, registration, regulation, and control of cooperative societies” One of the first groups to be registered with the department was the National Women’s Co-operative Society Limited. This cooperative aimed to provide housing for its members. The cooperative movement found its roots with former Minister of Finance, Carlton Francis. He saw cooperatives as a way to help farmers and fishermen. Over the years, the cooperatives in the Bahamas have grown. Indeed, among the different cooperatives in the Bahamas they control over \$250 million dollars in assets.

Cooperatives are needed especially for people who don’t have access to large institutions. As a result, in the Bahamas cooperatives are mostly used in the form of credit unions, allowing people to borrow money for big or small projects. Another great place cooperatives have been used is in the field of agriculture. Cooperatives in this field are highly valuable because agriculture is a dying industry in the Bahamas. However, with the use of cooperatives agriculture has slowly become more profitable and reputable. The main perk of cooperatives in terms of agriculture is the reduced production costs and increased distribution levels.

One of the first solutions I would implement for promoting cooperatives is to increase the use of technology. UN experts have continually cited the information and communications technologies as a primary reason for the success of cooperative. A farmer in Kenya could be a part of the same co-op as a farmer in Egypt. Additionally, technology evens the playing field and allows cooperatives to compete with bigger organizations because they can now broadcast and connect with potential clients all over the world. Cooperatives are most effective in rural areas in which private companies are unwilling to invest in due to a perceived low return on investment. However, the main drawback to increasing the use of technology is that the areas where co-ops are most needed are often the areas that suffer from lack of infrastructure. Thus, these potential co-op areas must be industrialized and modernized before this begins.

The Bahamas calls on the countries to invest in their rural areas and began a modernization process. If a country is lacking in funds, we urge that the World Bank offers the country a loan with a very low interest rate so that the country has the financial capital to increase use of technology. Moreover, we encourage the committee to sponsor more conferences detailing how technology can be used to improve cooperative growths.

In addition to promoting technology, we should create more resources and opportunities for those wish to start cooperatives. Right now, starting a cooperative alone is very difficult. The Bahamas believes that we should urge nations to include classes in secondary education systems on how to start cooperatives. Each nation should create co-op centers akin to job centers that will match people who wish to start a co-op in the same field or industry.

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