

ROUND TABLE 1 – II WORLD SOCIAL SUMMIT

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE ALLIANCE

DR. ARIEL ENRIQUE GUARCO - PRESIDENT

I bring greetings on behalf of more than one billion cooperators around the world, represented by the International Cooperative Alliance. It is a great pleasure to share this panel with you, to contribute our perspective on social development, and to reflect together on a sustainable future.

First, when we speak of eradicating poverty, we are referring to a truly monumental task. More than one billion of our brothers and sisters live in this condition, which means not only having fewer resources than are needed to buy food and other essentials, but also, for many of them, surviving in extremely precarious housing conditions that directly affect their health and life expectancy.

In many cases, this precariousness is intertwined with violence, forced displacement, and greater exposure to natural disasters.

It pains us to say it, but poverty also brings death.

Reversing this situation does not depend solely on our ability to assist those in need; it requires an accurate diagnosis of what has caused — and continues to cause — it.

It will be of little use to meet again in ten years celebrating the role of cooperatives in promoting inclusion if the dominant paradigm continues to produce more excluded people.

We agree that decent work is the best vehicle to rebuild the social and productive fabric that has been torn apart in so many parts of our planet.

However, only a productive economy rooted in local communities, based on principles and values, and oriented toward the common good can guarantee that.

Cooperatives have them in their DNA. Far from being companies that occasionally practice social responsibility, they are social responsibility made enterprise.

Indeed, we are not merely ambulances picking up the wounded left behind by other systems.

The greatest virtue of the cooperative model is not only its capacity to include those who have been marginalized, but its ability to ensure that they are no longer produced in the first place.

We firmly believe in a new global economy that enables every community to develop autonomously and democratically, cooperating with other communities — as the definitive path toward a just, sustainable, and peaceful world.