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Interregional Symposium on the Role
of the Industrial Co-operative Movement
in Economic and Industrial Development

Moscow, 11-15 June 1990

REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Interregional Symposium on the Role of the Industrial Co-operative Movement in Economic and Industrial Development was held in Moscow, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, from 11 to 15 June 1990. The Symposium was attended by representatives from 13 developing countries and from the host country, and by international and national observers. A list of participants has been issued as a separate document (ID/WG.498/52/Rev.1(SPEC.)).

2. The objectives of the Symposium were as follows:

(a) To provide a forum for the discussion of issues concerning the role to be played by co-operatives in introducing greater flexibility and adaptability into the structure of the economy and in improving industrial efficiency;

(b) To identify modes of international economic co-operation likely to enhance the role of co-operatives in the industrial development process.

I. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

3. The Symposium was informally opened on Sunday, 10 June 1990, by Academician L. I. Abalkin, Deputy Chairman, Council of Ministers of the USSR and Chairman, State Commission of the Council of Ministers of the USSR for Economic Reform.
4. The discussion at the informal opening centred on Government policies regarding economic reform, focusing on the role of co-operatives in economic and industrial development. Specific questions raised from the floor were answered by the Deputy Prime Minister of the USSR, including issues such as the new law on co-operatives, the new foreign investment law and the impact of the new economic reform measures on the overall economy of the USSR. In that connection, it was stated that the UNIDO outputs of phase I of the project had already been taken into consideration by the Soviet authorities and were reflected in recently adopted laws regarding industrial co-operatives and their development.
5. The Symposium opened under the chairmanship of A. Orlov, Deputy Chairman, State Commission of the Council of Ministers of the USSR for Economic Reform; L. Faoro, Deputy Director-General of UNIDO, was Co-Chairman; W. Kamel, Chief, Section for Integrated Industrial Projects, Department of Industrial Operations, UNIDO, acted as Secretary to the Symposium. M. S. Foda, Egypt, was rapporteur of the plenary session.
6. The provisional agenda was adopted with minor modification (annex I).

II. REPORT OF THE DISCUSSION

7. The Co-Chairman thanked the Government of the USSR for hosting the Symposium and for the steps the USSR was taking to restructure the economy in a manner conducive to the development of industrial co-operatives. He praised the courageous steps the Government was taking in adopting the new economic reform measures. He then made a presentation on privatization, as an introduction to the role of the co-operatives in general and in the USSR in particular. He highlighted the role that UNIDO could play in the privatization programmes to be adopted in different countries, mentioning that such assistance could only be rendered upon the request of the Governments concerned.
8. Academician V. A. Tikhonov, All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences and President of the Joint Co-operative Union of the USSR, spoke on the problems of the current economic structure and the conditions necessary for the transition of the Soviet economy to a free market economy. He answered questions from participants dealing with issues concerning co-operatives in the USSR, such as taxation, labour, supply of raw materials, quality control, foreign exchange dealings, banking and finance.
9. The Honorary President of the International Co-operative Alliance congratulated both the Government of the USSR and UNIDO for organizing such a symposium. He welcomed the openness with which senior Soviet officials had addressed problems and issues related to the development of the co-operative movement in the USSR. It was stressed during the discussion that prevailing conditions necessitated a transition to a free market economy; a view that was shared by all participants.
10. The economic and legal issues concerning co-operatives were considered together with the problems of external economic relations, social security for the members of co-operatives, the necessity of uniting co-operatives into unions and associations for the protection of their own interests, and influencing public opinion in favour of the co-operative movement.
11. Special attention was paid to analysing the role of the industrial co-operatives in transferring the economy to market relations, to developing entrepreneurship and setting up free economic zones.
12. It was noted with satisfaction that the changes currently taking place in the Soviet economy facilitated further development of the co-operative movement, increasing its significance in involving the general population more actively in the economic development of the country. It was also noted that industrial co-operatives producing goods and services in the USSR were substantially different than the co-operatives in other countries.

13. Y. N. Khachaturov, Deputy Head of Division, State Commission of the Council of Ministers of the USSR for Economic Reform, gave an overview of recent developments of the co-operatives in the USSR, including such elements as the structure, dynamics and regulation of co-operative activities.

14. A discussion followed on a wide range of subjects related to the co-operative movement in the USSR and participating developing countries and its role in furthering the economic and industrial development in those countries.

III. REPORT ON THE PRESENTATION OF CASE STUDIES ON THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT AND ITS PROSPECTIVE DEVELOPMENT IN THE USSR, TUNISIA AND EGYPT

15. UNIDO consultants made presentations on case studies and general issues to bring the participants up to date on the developments that had taken place since the studies had been made. The outcome and results of each study were then discussed in a question and answer session. (See annex II for the list of documents prepared for the Symposium.)

16. The Director of the UNIDO Centre for International Industrial Co-operation in Moscow made a short presentation on the mandates, experience and expertise of UNIDO and its capabilities to mobilize resources for the benefit of industrial projects. He also pointed out other areas where the UNIDO Centre could be helpful, such as technology transfer to and from the USSR, and an exchange of experts between countries. He mentioned that regular seminars were held at the Centre, and that its staff were in a position to assist foreign investors to explore investment opportunities in the USSR and to introduce them to their Soviet counterparts as well as to provide information on legislation on the establishment of a joint venture.

17. The Chairman stressed the importance of the Symposium as a forum in which to exchange ideas and experiences about the co-operative movement in different countries and the privatization issue. He praised the role of the co-operative movement in the USSR, but indicated that the outcome had been less than hoped for (contributing only 1.5 per cent to the gross national product).

18. The Chairman stated that as a direct result of the present economic reform, which involved a transition to the market economy, almost 30 laws were being amended or introduced in the USSR, such as the laws on anti-monopoly, joint stock companies and foreign exchange. He added that the USSR was currently looking mainly to building up its human resources, especially in management. A few thousand Soviet managers had been trained, or would be receiving training in the near future under special bilateral agreements with France, Germany, Federal Republic of, Sweden and the United States of America.

IV. SUMMARIES OF THE REPORTS OF THE WORKING GROUPS

A. Working Group I: Industrial Co-operatives and Society

Chairman: H. Edwards
Co-Chairwoman: T. Y. Abova

19. The Working Group focused on the role of industrial co-operatives in society, economic and legal aspects of adjustment of the co-operative sector and public attitudes towards co-operatives. Diverse opinions were expressed on the activities and tasks facing co-operatives in various countries, and the democratic principles upon which co-operatives were established in those countries were explored.

20. The Working Group concluded that the co-operative movement under various economic conditions could serve different purposes. The participants agreed unanimously that the industrial co-operative movement might represent an early stage in privatizing the economy. However, the role of the co-operative movement in each country would be determined by economic conditions and policies and by the forms of non-State enterprises that were permitted.

21. Particular attention was focused on various aspects of co-operative development in the USSR, where the movement was the only real alternative to State ownership that facilitates the processes of "destatization" of the Soviet economy. It was pointed out that the co-operative movement in the USSR was not homogeneous and that many co-operatives were engaged in "pure" enterprising. Consequently, those co-operatives could become stock ownership companies or limited partnerships.

22. It was stated that the dynamics of the co-operative development movement might involve transforming co-operatives into private enterprises, stock companies and limited partnerships, as well as forming new types of industrial co-operatives.

23. Features of co-operative activity that would be required during the course of restructuring the economy and in support of economic growth were discussed such as the potential for generating employment. The Working Group agreed that co-operatives might have a role to play in providing new jobs. The experiences of a developing country in that respect were given.

24. The different approaches to handling the economic and legal aspects of co-ordinating and controlling co-operative activities in various countries were discussed. While some participants called for complete freedom to be given to co-operatives, others emphasized the significance of and need for State control of raw materials and supplies and the pricing of products at the early stage of co-operative and private sector development.

25. The participants agreed that State control of co-operatives in the USSR should be limited, not imposing strong prohibitions, but instead showing moderation and encouragement. The legal aspects of controlling co-operatives should be given a great deal of attention because, in certain cases, legislation was vague and provided opportunities for unequal treatment and abuse of co-operatives at the local level. In general, legislation should be clear, administered uniformly and provide for equal treatment of all enterprises.

B. Working Group II: Industrial Co-operatives - Internal Relations and Structure

Chairman: D. Plionis

Co-Chairman: T. Kuznetsova

26. The Working Group considered three aspects of the internal relations and structure of industrial co-operatives: the first dealing with ownership and membership; the second with membership pay and productivity; and the third with the co-operative structure.

27. The discussion focused on whether ownership of assets by the co-operative was essential or whether leasing was an acceptable alternative and, if so, under what conditions. The consensus was that while ownership of assets was highly desirable, leasing would retain a good deal of importance, and that long-term leasing was important to encourage re-investment. The Group discussed the hiring of non-members as contract labour and agreed that all restrictions should be relaxed.

28. Differing views were expressed on membership pay, co-operative productivity and the attitudes of workers. The issue of the distribution of co-operative revenues led to a wide-ranging discussion on the effect of tax policy on investment and re-investment, and member income. Some participants from developing countries gave presentations on the experience in their countries. The consensus was that stability of taxes and proper incentives must be promoted and maintained to encourage investment.

29. The issue of co-operative structure, in particular the functions of the Chief Executive, were discussed. The consensus was that a co-operative governance law should be elaborated to define operational and organizational principles for co-operatives.

C. Working Group III: Economics of Industrial Co-operative Activities

Chairman: P. H. Elicker

Co-Chairman: E. Y. Lerner

30. A number of participants who were members of co-operatives showed interest in expanding foreign economic relations and joint ventures. They had prepared papers that were presented and discussed. The ensuing discussion centred on the need for joint-venture partners to have equal opportunity and equal protection to offer to potential foreign partners.

31. The financial and credit system was considered and it was felt to be at the heart of a conversion to a market economy. Among the aspects the separation of the banking system into the overall control segment (Government - Central Bank) and customer-servicing and lending institutions (commercial banks), and the need for freedom and flexibility of operation for the latter. One of the basic needs to be corrected was the weakness of the private (i.e. co-operative) banking system compared to the rest of the commercial banking system, which was still owned by the Government.

32. Taxation was perhaps the subject of greatest interest. The three main concerns expressed by the participants were as follows: (a) the possibility, ever present, that the Government might, through taxation, deal the co-operative movement a mortal blow; (b) indications in numerous recent Government amendments and exceptions to the basic tax system that the Government is inclined to constantly tinker with the tax system when tax stability was what was needed; and (c) the fear of discriminatory treatment relative to the State-owned sector when what was needed was a "level playing field" of operation together with the stronger State-owned enterprises.

33. There was considerable discussion of the Government's apparent intended switch from a value-added tax to a tax on profit. Sentiment was divided on the merits of each, but there was general concern as to the additional difficulties that might be introduced by such a fundamental change in taxes at a time when the co-operative movement itself was in flux.

D. Working Group IV: Social Defence of Co-operative Members, Co-operative Alliances and Associations

Chairman: V. Vekshin

Co-Chairman: R. Campbell

34. Working Group IV was concerned with the protection of the rights and the guaranteeing of social protection for co-operatives and co-operative members. In many cases co-operatives had suffered from arbitrary and illegal treatment by local authorities in ways that violated the laws governing co-operatives. Many ideas were expressed on how co-operatives and their members might be assisted to understand their rights and defend them. There was a need for a mechanism to achieve that goal. It was felt that it would be useful to enlist the experience and expertise of other co-operatives in order to prevent violations of legal norms.

35. The need to provide social insurance and pension payments for co-operative members and employees was also discussed. Those forms of social protection had usually been provided through the official trade unions but the co-operatives felt that those unions had been an unsatisfactory agency in that function and felt that it was necessary to create their own trade unions and their own system for financing and administering pensions, workers' compensation and sick leave.

36. Problems with regard to access to medical care for co-operative members were discussed, and proposals were made for creating within the co-operative sector its own systems for medical aspects of social security for its participants.

37. The functioning of such systems in other countries was reported on and the participants agreed that they could learn from the experience of those countries.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

38. On the basis of the joint work carried out by the participants, the Symposium adopted the following recommendations:

1. Efforts should be made to create a favourable environment for the co-operative movement conducive to establishing effective foreign relations and joint ventures. Such efforts should include a programme for the promotion of joint ventures, providing for convertibility, reasonable tax incentives, adequate credit and banking facilities, rational and justifiable levels of taxation, and equal treatment under the law for co-operatives and other enterprises. Insurance services for co-operative activities that include commercial risk, credits etc. should be provided through joint stock or co-operative companies to be established for that purpose.

2. Careful consideration should be given to establishing a stable taxation system, which could be on a basis of value added (revenue less material) or profit before tax, or both. In the case of the USSR, the newly proposed taxation system should decrease the actual tax burden of co-operatives.

3. A law should be enacted that would ensure the protection of foreign investments, and other measures should be taken to facilitate financial transactions and encourage business development. These measures should include such issues as currency conversion, provisions for large-scale bartering and protection against arbitrary ceilings on interest rates. Banking joint ventures should be promoted. In the case of co-operative banks it is strongly recommended that such banks have access to and use of any foreign exchange they may generate.

4. In countries where co-operatives play a role in providing new jobs, programmes should be elaborated for supporting co-operative forms of employment in the regions with high manpower potential as one of the most effective ways of providing employment for a population with excessive manpower.

5. Laws concerning co-operatives should be enacted in order to establish a sound basis for the operation of co-operatives as independent economic and juridical entities able to act, within the context of an effective market system, for the benefit of their members and the society in which they operate. To achieve this, a co-operative: (a) must have a juridical existence granting it the rights usual to a natural person operating in a market economy; (b) must be free from interference based upon laws not intended to govern co-operatives, and interference by, government authorities, both local and national, acting without clear juridical authority; (c) must be free from unpredictable or unnecessary changes in the law governing co-operatives, or the superseding of such law by executive or administrative decree. In particular, but without limiting its rights, a co-operative should have the right: (a) to contract with third parties to sell or purchase goods upon terms freely agreed to by the parties; (b) to employ persons upon terms freely agreed to; (c) to accept invested capital in the form of permanent equity investment, debt or other form, upon such terms as the co-operative and the investor shall freely agree to; (d) to be taxed only in a non-discriminatory manner and as defined by the law governing co-operatives; (e) to govern the relationship of its members as well as its internal administration and governance, by such rules as are freely agreed to by its founding members and by future members; and (f) to exist until terminated in accordance with its internal regulations. Laws governing State and other entities and organs should be amended to permit them to enter into relationships and transactions with co-operatives permitted by the law governing co-operatives.

6. Governments should eliminate double standards, conflicting laws, policies and administrative procedures with respect to the establishment, operations and management of State enterprises and co-operatives. Laws should apply equally to all forms of enterprises and should be administered in a uniform manner thereby eliminating arbitrary and discriminatory decision-making that would affect co-operatives.

7. Rules setting forth principles for co-operative by-laws should be developed regarding delineation of authority within the co-operative, checks and balances, accountability, financial reporting, and other operational and governance issues.

8. Co-operative associations should endeavour to provide a range of technical services and other support activities to member co-operatives in order to facilitate their growth and development.

9. Co-operatives should recognize that they have a responsibility to protect and preserve the natural environment and to provide a healthy and safe work-place in the locations where they operate.

10. Governments and co-operatives have a joint responsibility to undertake measures for improving the public image of the co-operative sector; therefore, Governments should educate the public regarding the positive role and contributions of co-operatives in the country's economic and social life, and co-operatives have a duty to promote lawful and ethical behaviour within their ranks. Co-operatives should also consider engaging in socially desirable objectives such as community development projects and social welfare activities.

11. Governments should develop social-security schemes for co-operatives as well as for other forms of private business. Such schemes should set forth minimum requirements designed to provide a safety net for co-operative members. Co-operatives should consider voluntary programmes designed to supplement government mandated social security schemes.

12. UNIDO was invited to assist in the development and training of necessary cadres of the co-operative sector in the USSR, particularly in the area of management, finance and marketing. The proposal on the establishment of an international centre for management was put forward by representatives of the USSR with a specific request to UNIDO to extend its technical support for setting up such a centre, which would be hosted by the USSR Government. It was envisaged that such a centre would offer its training services to participants from co-operatives and small enterprises both from developing countries and the USSR itself. The cost of the proposed centre could be covered by contributions allocated by the Government of the USSR and its co-operative associations, as well as from other contributors from interested Governments and non-governmental organizations.

13. UNIDO should provide Governments of developing countries as well as the USSR with the advisory services of international experts in the area of industrial co-operatives in fields related to legislation, finance, information systems and technology transfer. In the case of the USSR, the services would be provided on a 100 per cent cost-sharing basis by the Government or requested co-operative organization.

14. In view of the leading role UNIDO has taken in assisting Governments, at their request, in their efforts in the area of privatization, it was emphasized that the importance of such assistance should be extended to other interested Governments. Within this context UNIDO is invited to continue to provide necessary advisory services to the Government of the USSR. The services would include the design and implementation of a privatization programme for industrial plants and other related organizations.

15. An examination should be made of the possibilities of using a number of co-operative enterprises and other similar organizations as a base on which to try out UNIDO programmes to develop a methodology for the introduction of a market economy structure within the USSR. Expenditures would be incurred by the requesting organization.

16. When privatizing State industrial and other enterprises, it is recommended that Governments of concerned countries should transform them not only into joint stock companies but also into co-operatives.

17. UNIDO was invited to continue further diagnostic studies of problems related to the development of the industrial co-operative movement and to provide a wide-ranging exchange of information on industrial co-operatives and small-scale enterprises in different countries. To this effect, it would be worthwhile to hold similar symposia on a regular basis, the next one being held in 12 to 18 months time. Such symposia could serve as a forum for co-operatives to establish contacts with foreign partners. For this purpose, it would be useful to hold meetings between representatives of Soviet co-operatives and interested foreign business circles.

Annex I

AGENDA

- (a) Opening of the Symposium
- (b) Election of officers of the bureau
- (c) Adoption of the agenda
- (d) Case studies on the co-operative movement and its prospective development in the USSR
- (e) Privatization in developing countries: case studies in Tunisia and Egypt
- (f) Working groups

Working Group I: Industrial Co-operatives and Society

Working Group II: Industrial Co-operatives - Internal Relations and Structure

Working Group III: Economics of Industrial Co-operative Activities

Working Group IV: Social Defence of Co-operative Members, Co-operative Alliances and Associations

- (g) Conclusions and recommendations
- (h) Adoption of report
- (i) Closing of the Symposium

Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

ID/WG.498/1 (SPEC.)	Soviet Co-operatives: A Force for Major Economic Development
ID/WG.498/2 (SPEC.)	The Moscow Low Voltage Equipment Plant: A Case Study of a Production Co-operative
ID/WG.498/3 (SPEC.)	Construction Co-operatives in the Komi ASSR: A Case Study
ID/WG.498/4 (SPEC.)	Report on the Co-operative "Start": A Case Study
ID/WG.498/5 (SPEC.)	Report on the Co-operative "Maiak": A Case Study
ID/WG.498/6 (SPEC.)	Co-operative Banks in the Soviet Union and Alma Ata Central Co-operative Bank: A Case Study
ID/WG.498/7 (SPEC.)	Industrial Co-operatives and Society, Inside Relations and Structure of Industrial Co-operatives and Economics of Industrial Co-operative Activities
ID/WG.498/8 (SPEC.)	The Principal Bank for Development and Agricultural Credit (PBDAC), Arab Republic of Egypt: A Case Study
ID/WG.498/9 (SPEC.)	Starting up a Privatization Programme: The Tunisian Case
ID/WG.498/10 (SPEC.)	Co-operative Movement and the Informational Activity of the Communicator
ID/WG.498/11 (SPEC.)	Socio-geographical Peculiarities of the Development of the Co-operative Movement in the Southern Republics of the USSR (The Case of the Georgian SSR)
ID/WG.498/12 (SPEC.)	Some Results of the Application of the Law of State Enterprise and the Law on Co-operative Societies in the USSR
ID/WG.498/13 (SPEC.)	On the Results of the Economic Activities of Production Co-operatives in the Estonian SSR
ID/WG.498/14 (SPEC.)	An Historical Outline of the Co-operative Movement in the USSR
ID/WG.498/15 (SPEC.)	Soviet Co-operatives: Strategy and Tactics of Development
ID/WG.498/16 (SPEC.)	Restoration of Co-operative and Individual Property of the Means of Production as a Factor of Harmonization of the Economic Development
ID/WG.498/17 (SPEC.)	A State Enterprise and Co-operatives
ID/WG.498/18 (SPEC.)	Specifics of the Development of New Co-operatives Within the System of Centrosoyuz
ID/WG.498/19 (SPEC.)	Co-operatives Under the Conditions of the New Taxation Policy
ID/WG.498/20 (SPEC.)	On the Issue of Financing and Crediting of Production Co-operatives

- ID/WG.498/21 (SPEC.) Prospects of Individual Enterprises in the USSR
- ID/WG.498/22 (SPEC.) Ways of Selling Output of Production Co-operatives: Possible Choice
- ID/WG.498/23 (SPEC.) Co-operatives' Taxation System and Public Interests
- ID/WG.498/24 (SPEC.) Leningrad Co-operative Societies: Impartial Reality and Its Reflection in the Mirror of Public Consciousness
- ID/WG.498/25 (SPEC.) Some Difficulties in the Development of Co-operatives
- ID/WG.498/26 (SPEC.) Co-operators in the Context of Opinions on Social Justice
- ID/WG.498/27 (SPEC.) How They Become Co-operators
- ID/WG.498/28 (SPEC.) The Social Function of Co-operatives in the Present System of Economic Relations of the USSR
- ID/WG.498/29 (SPEC.) Co-operatives and Trade Unions
- ID/WG.498/30 (SPEC.) Turning to Market: Co-operatives and Business-making in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
- ID/WG.498/31 (SPEC.) Co-operative Prices and Unbalanced Consumer Market
- ID/WG.498/32 (SPEC.) Some Social Contradictions in the Attitude of the Population Towards the Co-operative Movement
- ID/WG.498/33 (SPEC.) Economic Reforms in the USSR as seen by the Workers of Co-operative and State Enterprises
- ID/WG.498/34 (SPEC.) The Co-operative Policy: Results, Contradictions and Directions of Optimization
- ID/WG.498/35 (SPEC.) Living Standards and Co-operatives: Stereotypes and Factors of Social Consciousness
- ID/WG.498/36 (SPEC.) Co-operation in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: Dynamics, Structure and Control of Co-operative Activity
- ID/WG.498/37 (SPEC.) Population's Opinion of Development of Co-operative and Individual Labour Activity
- ID/WG.498/38 (SPEC.) Production Co-operatives and Culture of Highly Organized Relations
- ID/WG.498/39 (SPEC.) Co-operative Movement and the Social Problems of Economic Reform
- ID/WG.498/40 (SPEC.) Business Activity of Co-operatives and Sharing Dividends
- ID/WG.498/41 (SPEC.) Selective Survey of Co-operatives: Characteristics of the Main Financial-Economic Indices of the Activity of Co-operatives
- ID/WG.498/42 (SPEC.) Co-operation and Joint Ventures
- ID/WG.498/43 (SPEC.) Models of Including Co-operatives into the System of National Economic Relations: Experience, Problems and Social Consequences
- ID/WG.498/44 (SPEC.) Co-operation and Lease: Comparative Analysis of the Social Effectiveness

ID/WG.498/45 (SPEC.)	Tendencies in the Development of the Industrial Co-operative Movement
ID/WG.498/46 (SPEC.)	The Problem of Racket: Co-operator's Opinion
ID/WG.498/47 (SPEC.)	Problems of Bringing Together Managing Conditions of Small Enterprises Based on Various Forms of Property
ID/WG.498/48 (SPEC.)	State Regulation of Industrial Co-operatives
ID/WG.498/49 (SPEC.)	The Urban Population's Attitude Towards Co-operativism
ID/WG.498/50 (SPEC.)	New Prospects in Co-operative Management Training
ID/WG.498/51 (SPEC.)	External Economic Relations of Production Co-operatives in the USSR: Current Status and Prospects
ID/WG.498/52/ Rev.1 (SPEC.)	List of Participants