



International Labour Organization

Berkeley Model United Nations



LXII
SIXTY-THIRD SESSION

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Delegates,

Welcome to the International Labour Organization! For this year's conference, our committee will be looking at two critical issues affecting millions of people around the globe today: Promotion of Cooperatives to Drive Job Growth and Maintaining the Rights of Farm Workers. The first topic was inspired by the extraordinary city of Berkeley (cooperatives are a frequent site around town), while the second topic, maintaining farmers' rights, has been, continues to be and will be of paramount importance for decades to come. Our goal for this year's Berkeley Model United Nations Conference is to introduce delegates to the proceedings of an actual International Labour Organization committee session, work with delegates to achieve a further and more nuanced understanding of two specific global issues, and of course, have a fun three-day, debate-filled Model UN extravaganza with all of you awesome people!

How We Envision Committee to Run: The actual International Labour Organization consists of representatives from governments, industry and employees. For our committee, all delegations will be representing governments, but depending on the government's stance (pro-employers, pro-workers, pro-both or neither), we expect delegates to advocate on behalf of national employers and/or civilians as well, in addition to representing their countries.

More info: If you have any questions regarding BMUN ILO or either of the two topics, feel free to send us an e-mail at sdaulat@bmun.org. In addition to these topic synopses, we will also be launching a blog in January with more information about our topics and committee procedure. And now, for a more formal introduction:

Hello delegates! My name is Shilpa Daulat and I am beyond excited to be your head chair for BMUN 63. The International Labour Organization is a new committee in BMUN this year, and my vice chairs and I have been hard at work preparing an exceptional three-day weekend for you all. A little bit about me: I originally hail from the great city of Las Vegas, NV, but after 3+ years in Berkeley, I am not quite sure where my allegiances lie as California is truly an inspirational place. I am a senior Public Health major with a minor in Spanish, and I hope to work in occupational and environmental health post-graduation and later attend medical school. I really love Spanish literature, Parks and Rec, Rafael Nadal, languages and, you guessed it, learning about labour rights. Again, if you have any questions, send me an e-mail (listed above); I can't wait to see you all in February!

Hi delegates, my name is Nikhil Agarwal and it is my honor to serve as the vice chair for the International Labor Organization in the 63rd session of BMUN. I was born and raised on a tiny island in the Caribbean called Curaçao and I moved here to attend Berkeley. I am now a fourth-year Molecular and Cell Biology major with an emphasis in Neurobiology. After I graduate in the spring, I will be taking a year off after which I hope to go to medical school. Apart from BMUN, I am involved in Greek life, sports medicine, and research on high blood pressure in specific communities. In my free time, I enjoy watching TV, engaging in any sort of physical activity, eating, and finally, something which I do not get to do too much of, sleeping. Living in Berkeley over the past four years has made the topics we will be discussing extremely pertinent to my life and I am so excited to hear your insight into these issues at our conference. While



Shilpa is the best person to contact if you have questions regarding the topics, don't hesitate to send me an email as well at nagarwal@bmun.org.

Hello delegates. My name is Efe Atli and I am absolutely thrilled to serve as your vice-chair for the International Labor Organization! A little about me. I was born in Istanbul, Turkey but moved at a young age to Orange County in Southern California. Since high school, I've been fascinated with innovative approaches to development, poverty, and business. At UC Berkeley, I am currently in my junior year studying Rhetoric and Philosophy with an emphasis on Political Philosophy. I have written for both the Daily Californian and the Berkeley Political Review and in addition to BMUN, I am also a member of Berkeley Finance Club. I've also had internships with the G-20 Conference, and the Prime Ministry of the Republic of Turkey. My passions include yoga, electronic music production, photography, and competitive cycling. I see myself working somewhere in the intersection between governments, business, and academia. Please feel free to email me about anything at all (eatli@bmun.org)! I'm happy and excited to answer questions or to discuss our committee with you. Still, I'm even more excited to see you all at conference in the spring!

Hello. I am Se Yeon Kim, and I'm honored to serve my first year in BMUN as a vice chair for the International Labor Organization this year. I was born in Seoul, South Korea but moved to Los Angeles when I was 9 years old. I am a sophomore majoring in media studies, and in the future, I hope to write or design for a newspaper or a magazine. Currently, I am an illustrator and graphic designer for the Daily Californian, a writer for the Center for Nonprofit and Public Leadership, and a member of several design clubs on campus. In my free time, I like trying new foods and searching for new music. If you have any questions feel free to email me at skim@bmun.org. I look forward to meeting all of you and making this conference an awesome educational experience!



Table of Contents

Promotion of Cooperatives to Drive Job Growth	4
<i>Topic Background</i>	4
The International Labour Organization	4
Background on Cooperatives	4
Cooperatives and Job Growth	5
<i>Past International Involvement and Attempted Solutions</i>	6
Recommendations	6
Resolutions	7
Other Endeavours	7
<i>Case Study</i>	8
European Banks	8
<i>Recommended Reading</i>	9
<i>Questions to Consider</i>	9
<i>References</i>	9
Maintaining the Rights of Farm Workers	12
<i>Topic Background</i>	12
Introduction	12
Four Fundamental Work Rights of the ILO	12
Adequate Wages	12
Social Protection	13
<i>Past International Involvement and Attempted Solutions</i>	14
ILO Rural Work Legacy	14
Collaboration with Food and Agricultural Organization	14
<i>Recommended Reading</i>	14
<i>Questions to Consider</i>	15
<i>Works Cited</i>	16

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Promotion of Cooperatives to Drive Job Growth

Topic Background

The International Labour Organization

The International Labour Organization is a specialized committee of the United Nations Development Group tasked with ensuring decent work and fair labour standards for all working people, with the goal of “lasting peace, prosperity and progress” in mind. Founded after World War I through a framework of social justice and human rights, the ILO is unique in its tripartite structure, which consists of government, worker and employer representatives from among 185 member-states. This set-up has allowed the ILO to affect change on several levels for a wide variety of issues, from child labour to green jobs to rural development and globalization. The ILO has four strategic objectives when dealing with any issue in any region of the world, which include: to “promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues” (International Labour Organization, *Mission and Objectives*).

Background on Cooperatives

The International Labour Organization defines a cooperative as the “autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise” (R193 Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation, 2002). As an alternative to employment and workers’ organizations, cooperatives are recognized based on eight key principles they must strive to embody: voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; member economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information; cooperation among cooperatives; and concern for community (2002).

In general, a cooperative is characterized by its ownership structure, in which all members have equal say in business decisions and receive equal pay from profit distribution. Aside from this baseline criteria, cooperatives can differ in their organizational and hierarchical structure, which can range from having paid managers to a Board of Directors to outside investors (Cultivate.coop, 2012).

Cooperatives, with their emphasis on maintaining the livelihoods of workers, originated as a challenge to traditional business organizations but were widely believed to be confined to and



successful in only the informal economy. Only in the past century have cooperatives gained legal protection, resulting in mainstream economic and social success in various parts of the world. Cooperatives have been formed by producers, consumers, workers, businesses and even between cooperatives, forming organizations like the International Cooperative Alliance and the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (International Year of Cooperatives, 2012). Today, cooperatives make up a significant portion of many countries' economies and cooperative parties are major players in the politics of several Latin American and European nations. Cooperatives have been successful in many industries, most notably in the banking, insurance and agricultural sectors of local, national and international economies. The ILO estimates that cooperatives have generated "more than 100 million jobs . . . securing the livelihoods of nearly a quarter the world's population" (International Labour Organization, *Cooperatives*).

Cooperatives and Job Growth

Along with addressing the informal economy, guiding and regulating multinational corporations, emphasizing small and sustainable enterprises and strengthening the system of microfinance, promoting cooperatives is one of the major ways the ILO is working to "empower[] people, provid[e] protection, alleviat[e] poverty," and importantly, "creat[e] and consolidat[e] employment opportunities" (International Labour Organization, *Cooperatives*). In 2009, the ILO published a report on the *Resilience of the Cooperative Business Model in Times of Crisis*. A summary of the report states that it provides "historical evidence and current empirical evidence that proves that the cooperative model of enterprise survives crisis, but more importantly that it is a sustainable form of enterprise able to withstand crisis, maintaining the livelihoods of the communities in which they operate" (*Resilience of the Cooperative Business Model in Times of Crisis*, 2). Using banking as an example, the report compares private banks backed by investors with cooperative banks and credit unions and finds that cooperatives' focus on member benefits rather than profits allows the unique form of enterprise to "survive and even thrive" in times of crisis, compared to their profit-driven counterparts. It goes on to list several other comparative advantages that the cooperative structure enjoys, and elaborates on "the significance of cooperatives for employment creation and decent work." The number of private companies being taken over by its workers has increased, as well as the number of women's cooperatives. More and more governments (local, regional and national) are turning to



cooperatives to stabilize and safeguard their economies. The evidence in the report shows that cooperatives are in a unique position to not only expand the number of jobs for working people around the globe, but take better care of these workers as well, compared to multinational corporations and other big businesses.

Past International Involvement and Attempted Solutions

Recommendations

Since its inception, the International Labour Organization has adopted two Recommendations concerning cooperatives-- R127 (1966) and its replacement, R193 (2002). Recognizing the importance of cooperatives in economic and social development, Recommendation 127, *Co-Operatives (Developing Countries) Recommendation*, was adopted during the 50th International Labour Conference in Geneva in 1966. As the ILO's first Recommendation dedicated solely to cooperatives, R127 laid the groundwork for how cooperatives should operate and should be viewed in the context of a nation's economy (the ILO had published several local, regional and national reports on various cooperatives prior to 1966, but this recommendation publicized internationally the ILO's views regarding cooperatives and formally defined a cooperative and its internal structure). The Recommendation primarily emphasized the importance of cooperatives, and why they should be encouraged, cultivated and developed. It elaborated on the necessity for fiscal laws and regulations of a country to be adapted to the special structure of cooperatives in order to ensure their competitiveness with other forms of enterprise. The ILO called for international collaboration and believed that knowledge of "principles, methods and possibilities of cooperatives" should be transmitted between developing countries; furthermore, the forms of dissemination should be "adapted to the particular conditions of each country." The recommendation also outlined the means by which members of cooperatives and the general public could be educated about the economic, social and political potential available by the success of cooperatives and the manner and sources by which financial aid may be loaned to cooperatives. Most importantly, R127 argued for the beneficial role cooperatives could play in addressing certain problems of a developing country, giving the case of cooperatives and agrarian reform as a lengthy example. Concerning cooperatives and employment, R127 stated "co-operatives should be established and developed as a means of . . . increasing national income, export revenues and employment by a fuller utilisation of resources, for instance in the implementation of systems of agrarian reform and of



land settlement aimed at bringing fresh areas into productive use and in the development of modern industries, preferably scattered, processing local raw materials" (International Labour Organization, *R127 - Co-operatives (Developing Countries) Recommendation, 1966 (No. 127)*). By applying R127 to "all categories of cooperatives" ("consumer co-operatives, land improvement co-operatives . . . transport co-operatives, insurance co-operatives and health co-operatives"), the ILO marked its stance on cooperatives as an alternative form of business, especially regarding the potential for job and revenue growth that cooperatives could provide.

Approximately four decades later, in June of 2002, at the 90th International Labour Conference session, the ILO adopted Recommendation 193, *Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation*, which officially replaced Recommendation 127. R193 recognized that cooperatives were now an integral part of many nations' economies and called for the further development of cooperatives while outlining key principles and objectives for the business model. It outlined measures to strengthen cooperatives, both internal structures and external relations with other types of businesses, to "create and develop income-generating activities and sustainable decent employment," among other goals. Notable clauses of the recommendation included helping advance disadvantaged groups, promoting female participation, female leadership and gender equality within cooperatives, listing financial, legal and social services governments should provide cooperative businesses and calling on cooperatives to form alliances with each other on the local, regional, national and international levels. Lastly, R193 stated that "governments should promote the important role of cooperatives in transforming what are often marginal survival activities (sometimes referred to as the "informal economy") into legally protected work, fully integrated into mainstream economic life" (International Labour Organization, *R193 - Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation, 2002 (No. 193)*). Thus, R193 filled in the gaps left by the preliminary R127, outlining all the necessary provisions member-states should follow to enable the success of cooperatives in their respective nations.

Resolutions

Resolution A/64/136 passed by the United Nations General Assembly December 18, 2009 also recognized the beneficial role of cooperatives on economic and social development and calls upon member-states to further facilitate the creation and development of cooperatives within their countries.

Other Endeavours



Resolution A/65/184 by the United Nations General Assembly designated the year 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives to “highlight[] the contribution of cooperatives to socio-economic development, particularly their impact on poverty reduction, employment generation and social integration” (social.un.org, *About IYC*). Since 1992, the United Nations has also held an annual International Day of Cooperatives, to promote awareness of cooperatives worldwide.

The ILO has also partnered with the International Cooperative Alliance and is a member of the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives. Within the ILO, the Cooperative Unit (COOP) provides services and resources to cooperatives to help facilitate the transition from recommendation to practice. More recently, cooperatives have been an integral part of the United Nation’s post-2015 development agenda and focus on sustainable development.

Case Study

European Banks

For the past 40 years, the European Association of Cooperative Banks has played a major role in both the European and global economies. As of 2014, the association represents 56 million members, 850,000 employees working at 3,700 locally operating banks and 71,000 outlets and serves an upwards of 215 million customers (eacb.coop, *About Us*). Most impressive, EACB’s member banks hold around 20% of the total share of retail banking business across all of Europe, with that number reaching as high as 40% in France and the Netherlands (“Cooperative banking alive and thriving in Europe,” 1). Major members include Crédit Agricole, Crédit Mutuel, Rabobank and The Cooperative Bank; most of the 29 member institutions are fully owned by members and forego the pressure on traditional banks to maximize dividends for shareholders. Despite their alternative structuring and business models, cooperative banks have consistently posted gains year after year, especially during times of economic instability of financial markets. Especially notable are the resilience and even profits cooperative banks reported during the 2008 global financial crisis-- successes which delivered the concept (and the benefits) of cooperatives into the public discourse.

What factors have contributed to the success of cooperative banks? What organizational characteristics from them can be applied to financial institutions in your countries? Can these characteristics be translated into success for other types of industries?



Recommended Reading

1. Resilience in a downturn: The power of financial cooperatives
2. Savings Banks and Cooperative Banks in Europe

Questions to Consider

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of pursuing different business structures (corporations, collective bargaining/unions, collectives, cooperatives) on promoting job growth? Consider the perspectives of government, industry and workers. Consider international, national and local-level economies.
2. What barriers do cooperatives face entering the market at each of these different levels?
3. What changes need to be made to cooperatives to ensure optimal job growth on each level?
4. What limitations do cooperatives face in terms of expansion and job growth?
5. What must cooperatives do to remain independent when financial aid is received from governments or private investors? Can true independence be maintained?

6. What niches do cooperatives occupy in different countries? How can the presence of cooperatives be expanded into different sectors in your country and across borders?

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“Resource guide on cooperatives Selected Statistical Data Relevant to Cooperatives” *International Labour Organization*. March 2013.
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/support/lib/resource/subject/coop/stat_coop.pdf>



Maintaining the Rights of Farm Workers

Topic Background

Introduction

The source of most goods and commodities can be traced back to resources the natural world provides, and it is most often the duty of the farmer to perform the manual labour to harvest these resources. Unfortunately, as corporations and consumers demand lower and lower prices, the work that farmers perform is constantly being devalued, leading to the impoverished state many farmers around the globe find themselves in today. According to the International Labour Organization, “Agriculture accounted for 35 percent of employment in 2009, representing some 1.07 billion workers” (International Labour Office, 1). As the world’s population continues to skyrocket and global supply chains continue to destabilize, more and more demand is being placed on farmers to produce more with less pay. As a result, governments today must work to ensure and maintain the rights of farm workers to protect their livelihoods and ensure the stability of the global economy.

Four Fundamental Work Rights of the ILO

During the late twentieth century, as globalization was securing its prominent position atop various markets, it was becoming clear that the social progress promised by an integrated world economy was far from being fulfilled. The economic growth globalization had brought many regions was not accompanied by social success, and many low-income workers in both low and middle income countries were deprived of their share of growth. Recognizing this trend, in 1998 the International Labour Organization adopted the “Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work,” which outlined four fundamental work rights necessary for ensuring social and economic success for labourers around the globe. These four principles included: freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced and compulsory labour, the elimination of discrimination in the workplace and the abolition of child labour (*International Labour Organization Caribbean*, 1). Though much progress has been made, these rights are still being violated in various industries, a major one being farming.

Adequate Wages

In many countries, farm workers are often among the lowest-paid in communities, earning lower wages than most industry and urban workers. Year-round work is rarely guaranteed, with



temporary, contractual arrangements often dominating employer-employee relations. As a result, temporary work has led to “poorer pay and working conditions,” as strict, direct employer responsibilities are often not outlined in “short-term, daily or seasonal contracts” (*Food and Agricultural Organization*, 1). Ensuring adequate wages and protection from price shocks (guaranteeing a minimum price) are often standards set by private organizations such as Fair Trade or Equal Exchange, yet more work needs to be done by national governments and transnational corporations (*4lenses*, 1). Furthermore, crop seasonality and consolidation of family farms into plantations have forced many small farmers into bankruptcy or to accept below-living wages. According to the International Labour Office, there has been increased concentration within all major food and agribusiness sectors; five companies control 90 percent of the world’s grain trade; six corporations control three fourths of the global pesticides market; and one TransNational Corporation (TNC) controls 80 percent of Peru’s milk production (International Labour Office, 1).

Social Protection

Wages are just one subset of services that fall under the umbrella of social protection, a term used for the necessary services governments are expected to provide for their citizens, and importantly, one of the 14 themes included in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization, “Today, only a fifth of the world population enjoys sufficient social protection. An additional 30 percent is partially, but not sufficiently covered, leaving half of the world excluded . . . Only a small fraction of the 842 million people considered undernourished in the world have access to some form of social protection, including safety net programmes. Most of them live in rural areas and depend on agriculture. Rural women and youth, as well as migrants, tend to be over-represented among the poor and those lacking access to basic social services” (*Food and Agricultural Organization*, 1). Basic social services, as well as access to legal support and health care, continue to elude a high percentage of farm workers, often disproportionately within one country.

Another issue facing farm workers are the adverse known and unknown health effects due to poor working conditions and emerging technologies, a major one being agrochemicals i.e. organopesticides. According to the International Labour Office, “Out of some 335,000 fatal workplace accidents, about 170,000 occur among agricultural workers. Agriculture is one of the three most dangerous sectors to work in, along with forestry and mining” (International Labour



Office, 1). The FAO adds “Agricultural workers run twice the risk of dying on the job compared with workers in other sectors: some 170,000 agricultural workers are killed each year and millions are injured” (*Food and Agricultural Organization*, 1). Along with poor labour standards, repeated mass poisonings, traumatic injuries and high rates of infectious disease and emerging chronic disease also plague workers.

Past International Involvement and Attempted Solutions

ILO Rural Work Legacy

Since its formation, the International Labour Organization has consistently recognized the importance of rural development as a primary factor for growth in all other areas and sectors of a country’s government, society and economy. Since its creation of the Rural Employment and Decent Work Programme, the organization has had varied success in integrating rural development into many of its other programmes and projects, for example the Workers’ Education Programme and more recently, its SCORE project (*Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (SCORE) Project - Phase 2*, 1). In 2011, the ILO published a report titled “Unleashing rural development through productive employment and decent work: Building on 40 years of ILO work in rural areas,” a comprehensive overview which elaborated on past successes and introduced plans for future initiatives (*Unleashing rural development through productive employment and decent work: Building on 40 years of ILO work in rural areas*, 1).

Collaboration with Food and Agricultural Organization

The International Labour Organization and the Food and Agricultural Organization address many overlapping issues, with collaboration officially starting in 1947. Some joint areas of concern include: decent employment for the rural poor, child labour in agriculture, youth employment, gender dimensions, cooperatives and producers' organizations, rural workers, occupational safety and health, sustainable livelihoods and emergencies, sectoral issues in agriculture (crop production, fisheries and forestry) and labour statistics. In past decades, the ILO and FAO have jointly produced guidance documents, knowledge products and workshops and regularly engage in fieldwork, and in 2008, the importance of the partnership was recognized at the 97th session of the International Labour Conference (*Food, Agricultural & Decent Work*, 1).

Recommended Reading



1. *Weak Coffee: Certification and Co-Optation in the Fair Trade Movement, Daniel Jaffee*
2. *Agriculture: An Engine of Pro-Poor Rural Growth, Rajendra G. Paratian, ILO*
3. *BMUN FAO Topic Synopses*

Questions to Consider

1. What are the advantages and drawbacks to third-party organizations like Fairtrade International and Global Exchange, which certify companies that guarantee minimum prices for commodities and other goods?
2. Are organizations like these a potential solution to guaranteeing the rights of farmers?
3. What policy on sustainability has your country adopted or can adopt to ensure minimal environmental damage while increasing agricultural output?
4. Consider the role of agricultural subsidies both within your country and the effect of subsidies on relations between countries.
5. Should there be a universal document that guarantees basic rights afforded to farmers?
6. What projects of the International Labour Organization and Food and Agricultural Organization have been successful?



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