

Forging of Partnership Between the Cooperative Development Authority and the LGU Cooperative Development Officers:

**THE DAVAO DECLARATION**

We, the National Officials of the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) headed by the Chairman, Dr. Emmanuel M. Santiaguel together with the Board of Administrators and all the Regional Directors nationwide and the Cooperative Development Officers, and some Local Government Officials from different Provinces, Cities, Municipalities all over the country led by the Officers of the League of Cooperative Development Officers of the Philippines (LCDOP), headed by its President, Mr. Crispulo S. Lamatan, Jr. have come together in the National Consultative Forum with a firm collective intent to advance the essence of cooperativism by forging a strong partnership.

Mandated as the leading edge in coop development, the Cooperative Development Authority together with the LGU Cooperative Development Officers have been trail-blazing cooperativism that now has a critical mass of over 7 million members nationwide cutting across creed, class, beliefs, race, gender, sectors, and political affiliations. The 18,484 cooperatives nationwide are now scaling the heights in making life better for their members through their Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises that over-all have a total contribution to the Gross National Domestic Product of some PHP 1.4 trillion.

Be that as it may, we realize that cooperativism has a long way to go in terms of gaining headways in membership, in capitalization, in capability building and in sustainable development. This is so because the culture of poverty is still widespread as the Philippines has still the prevalent incidence of poverty in East Asia (based on ADB Report). The culture of powerlessness brings despair and out of hopelessness, many have to leave their loved ones to find jobs abroad. The culture of corruption and greed has stripped our country of whatever dignity it is left.

It is in this light that we have come together to harness our collective potentials to launch a collectivist counter culture based on the firm belief that the cooperative movement is now up to the task to be that long awaited transformational leader to liberate the people from the quagmire of poverty. It is the countervailing force against the culture of corruption as it exemplifies good governance *“tungo sa matuwid na daan.”*

As the problem besetting our country is deeply rooted in flawed systems, structures and cultures, we stand firm in our unified vision to effect social transformation.

To give concrete credence to the pronouncement of His Excellency during the 10<sup>th</sup> National Cooperative Summit on October 10, 2010, that *“ang mga Kooperatiba po ang katuwang ng pamahalaan sa pagtataguyod ng sistemang patas at maunlad, at ang kaagapay laban sa matinding kahirapan,”* we now put in clear categorical term what we intend to do for the next three and a half years, as follows:

Firstly, from 7 million members we will solidify our ranks to increase the cooperative membership to 21 million members. We will put cooperativism to new heights by recruiting additional 14 million members. This would mean putting those in the margins into the mainstream of development processes. Such can be done through intensive promotion and campaign for membership for new recruits to join established cooperatives with proven track record, high financial performance and organizational stability, characterized by good governance.

Increase in membership can also be fast-tracked through our strong advocacy for the recognition of member-consumers as co-owners of Electric Cooperatives and their consequential registration with CDA.

Secondly, a country's number one resource are its people. We will therefore mobilize our resources to enhance the capabilities of every cooperative member and every stakeholder to develop fully their human potentials through the establishment of Training Institutes. This is based on the premise that a country that has not developed its human capital is penalized by slow growth. Through cooperativism we will reach to more members whose capacities will be enhanced, opportunities will be broadened and thus, productivity will be the logical conclusion.

Thirdly, in the journey to make life better for our people through cooperativism, there created milestones which must be emulated. It behooves therefore that there be due recognition and award for the purpose of modelling, replication and up-scaling as they showcase best practices.

To pursue the above agenda, we will harmonize our working relationship as partners. We will clearly define our respective functions and lay down the parameters of engagement where we can collaborate and complement each other.

Based on the recognition of the LGU's prominent and imperative role in advancing cooperativism in their respective territorial jurisdiction, we will work together to enhance the capabilities of the Cooperative Development Officers and to advocate strongly for their mandatory appointment. We will also make for certain the inclusion of the cooperative agenda in the Local Government Medium Term Development Plan with corresponding budgetary allocation.

Together, CDA and the Cooperative Development Officers can become a formidable development force for cooperative promotion, development and regulation. We call on all other stakeholders such as other line agencies which have integrated cooperativism in their respective programs to join us in this crusade to make cooperativism not only a vehicle of development and empowerment but also an instrument of peace, unity and ecological integrity.

Indeed, the road ahead will be long and arduous, the climb will be steep and uphill. But with our abiding faith in cooperativism as that beacon of light amidst the darkness of poverty, we will certainly get there. It is that biblical faith found in Mathew 17:20, that, "if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, and if you tell a mountain to move from here to there, it will move."

Highly committed and inspired by that unwavering faith, we wholeheartedly hereunder affix our signatures this 24<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2011 during the 3-day National Consultative Forum, February 23-25, 2011, Davao City.