



THE SECOND CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT STAKEHOLDERS' ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND THE PLATFORM COOPERATIVISM CONSORTIUM CONFERENCE 2024

“Digital Africa Rising”

Concept Note

July 2024

Introduction

In this era of everchanging technology and the fast-rising influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI), we ask, ‘What is the impact of the digital era on co-operatives globally, in Africa, and, particularly, in Kenya?’ We seek to identify opportunities for the co-operative movement which could further enhance and embellish the place of co-operatives in Kenya’s socio-economic development. With the Year 2025 declared by the United Nations as the International Year of Co-operatives, and aware of the critical role digitization plays, co-operatives should accelerate the momentum to embrace technology and demonstrate their contribution to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Kenya’s Vision 2030. The government of Kenya through the Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA) is providing the infrastructure for a digital superhighway. This digital superhighway will create new opportunities for a tech industry that will bring renewed energy to the co-operative movement and attract youth to the sector.

To delve into this further, the State Department for Co-operatives, The Co-operative University of Kenya, and the Platform Cooperativism Consortium are organizing a joint summit to explore these topics. The five-day Joint Co-operative Conference scheduled for 4-8 November 2024 has “Digital Africa Rising” as the overarching theme. The conference is divided into two parts. The first two days of the five-day conference will be the annual co-operative stakeholders' conference which will bring together key players in Kenya’s extensive co-operative movement and tech industry to discuss the place of technology in the country’s co-operative space. It will bring participants from across Kenya’s co-operative spectrum. The last three days will be devoted to participants from across the globe through the Platform Cooperativism Consortium scientific conference, which will contribute to the annual event.

1.0 Conference Organizers

1.1 The State Department of Co-operatives

The State Department of Co-operatives falls within the government of Kenya's Ministry of Co-operatives and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Development. The Department is tasked with the development of co-operative policy, promotion and supervision of co-operatives, championing of co-operative education and training, and co-operative financing policy. Through the government's BETA program, the State Department is tasked with promoting co-operatives as economic transformation vehicles, with channeling support and resources to the grassroots as well as championing the adoption of technology in developing solutions for co-operatives.

1.2 The Co-operative University of Kenya

The Co-operative University of Kenya (CUK) is a chartered public institution with the specific mandate of supporting the co-operative movement through provision of quality co-operative education, training and research. This role is well captured under Sessional Paper No.4 of 2020 on National Co-operative Policy on Promoting Co-operatives for Socio-Economic Transformation, to enforce the fifth co-operative principle on education, training and information.

1.3 Platform Cooperativism Consortium

The Platform Cooperativism Consortium (PCC) is a global think-tank that supports the co-operative platform economy through research, experimentation, education, advocacy, documentation of best practices, technical support, the coordination of funding, and events. The Consortium is built upon the concept of platform cooperativism, which is anchored in collective ownership, democratic governance, decisive commitment to the global commons, inventive unions, social justice, and ecological and social sustainability.

2.0 Conference Thematic Areas

Digitization is changing the traditional global economy into a global village where online presence is the single most important determinant for success and sustainability of economies. The Joint Co-operative Conference seeks to promote digitization (converting and recording data) and digitalization (developing processes) of co-operatives as a transformation tool that stimulates economic vibrancy in the co-operative movement. Towards that end, the following thematic areas have been identified:

- a) Digitization and Digitalization in Co-operatives
- b) Digital Technologies to enhance Co-operative Activities
- c) Digital Technologies and Climate Change
- d) Technology and Inclusivity
- e) Technology and/in Leadership and Governance of Co-operatives
- f) The place of Platform Cooperativism in Co-operative Development

- g) Legal, regulatory and compliance issues in the Era of Digitization

3.0 Target participants

The joint conference will provide a conducive and vibrant environment where public officials, NGOs, policymakers, scholars, practitioners, actors in the technology space, researchers, climate-smart crusaders, gender and human rights champions, and other interested parties come together to share experiences, reflect, learn about the creation and improvement of a digital future with special focus on cooperativism.

4.0 Expected Outcomes

Participants will be transformed by the conference:

- a) Co-operative leaders and members will shift their perception, recognizing the potential of digital transformation to scale their co-operatives.
- b) Policymakers, legal scholars and various public officials will gain understanding of legal barriers hindering co-operative scalability in the digital space and possible solutions.
- c) Technology enthusiasts, from social enterprise entrepreneurs to developers, will integrate ethical practices into their businesses, aligning with a vision for positive social impact.
- d) Researchers will expand their understanding of digital platform cooperativism and actively contribute to a global research community, fostering collaborative endeavors and advancing insights into this evolving landscape.

5.0 Venue and Date of the Joint Co-operative Conference

The Joint Co-operative Conference will take place from Monday, 4th November 2024 to Friday, 8th November 2024 at Sarova Whitesands Beach Resort and Spa, Mombasa.

6.0 Conclusion

Technology is a key driver of social and economic progress. The “Digital Africa Rising” Joint Co-operative Conference seeks to promote the adoption and use of technology in co-operatives and the development of platform cooperativism, which is not only owned by members, but offers services which can be accessed at a click of a button. The conference will also promote the growth and development of sustainable collectives that attract youth, women and other members of society. By participating in the conference, stakeholders can learn and contribute toward a sustainable economic future.