

# **Trade Unions and worker cooperatives: Where are we at?**

International Labour Office (ACTRAV and COOP)  
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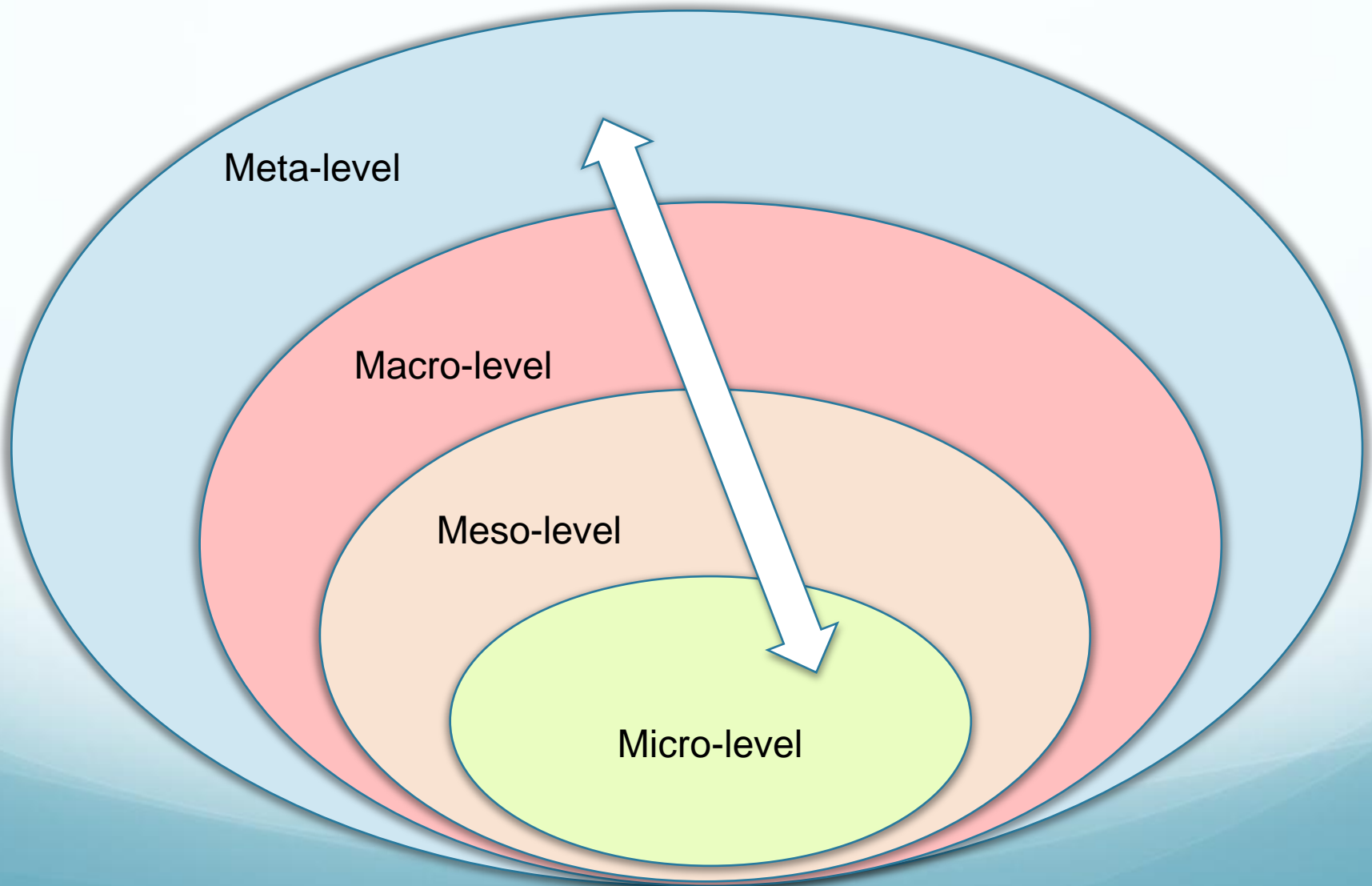
# Structure of closing session

- Main discussion points of today and future challenges
- Input of participants in the construction of a joint document
- Future challenges and policy priorities (ACTRAV-COOP)

# Structure of presentation

- Micro level – individual worker cooperative
- Meso level – organisations, associations, networks, platforms
- Macro level – legal and policy frameworks
- Meta level – ideas / paradigms
- Future challenges
- Transversal issue (SSE conference)

# Trade unions and worker cooperatives mutual relations at different levels



# Introduction

- World declaration on worker cooperatives (Cicopa, 2005):

The cooperative movement should maintain a permanent dialogue with the trade unions, as the representatives of the workers, in order to make sure that they understand the nature and essence of cooperative worker ownership as a distinctive modality of labour relations and ownership, overcoming the typical conflicts of wage-based labour, and that they support it in view of its importance and the prospects that it offers to human society

# Definition: main characteristics and internal functioning

- They have the objective of creating and maintaining sustainable jobs and generating wealth, in order to improve the quality of life of the worker-members, dignify human work, allow workers' democratic self-management and promote community and local development
  - Job creation
  - Voluntary membership
  - Autonomous from state and third parties
  - Democratic ownership and decision-making
  - Work compensation
  - Investment of profits/surpluses in reserves
  - Work and welfare conditions
  - Permanent training
  - Embedded in family and community
- Debate: Enterprise ? Plural ? Unmet social needs ? Capital ? Global ?

# TUs and Worker Cooperatives

At various levels: micro, meso, macro and meta

- **Mutual (two-direction) and complementary** inspiration between TUs and cooperatives (e.g. legal expertise of TUs; opening-up of membership of TUs towards alternative sectors, unemployed, etc. through worker cooperatives or innovation on workers' participation in industrial relations)
- **Shared values/concerns:** joint historical and ideological foundation ...
- **Collective and mutual** (solidarity) dimension
- **Diverse** experiences (successful or not; recognizing complexity)

# Micro level

## GETTING BETTER

- Capacity building at the individual enterprise/worker cooperative level
  - Technical (management, social security, communication, social dialogue-interest representation, ...)
  - Financial
  - Legal (recognizing organisational-legal diversity: associations, societies, trusts, informal and popular economy, etc.)
  - Decent work is not necessary an “additional cost”, but may contribute to economic sustainability
  - Etc.



# Meso level

## GETTING TOGETHER

- Level of umbrella organisations, associations, platforms, networks - scaling up (economic, political reasons)
- Broader society - local community (social movement: Argentina)
- Including international collaboration

# Macro level

## SHAPING ENABLING FRAMEWORKS

- At the level of legal and policy frameworks (e.g. social protection schemes, decent work conditions, ...)
- Macro economics (times of crisis: inflation, indebtedness, unemployment figures, etc.)
- Broad debate and civil society involvement (HOW to involve public opinion; local governments; political parties; bridging other sectors in society: private business, ...)
- Level and actors in policy making (global vs. national / governmental vs. civil society in policy making)
- Political nature (e.g. favourable political attitude in Brasil)
- Grey zone – autonomy (key principle) - different roles of cooperatives (implementation and policy influence)

# Meta level

## THINKING DIFFERENTLY

- World of ideas: we are living an intellectual crisis
- Rethinking existing paradigms on sustainable development, through praxis: worker cooperatives as laboratories to rethink sustainable development in moments of crisis
- Public - private - third sector - ...?
- Common good - social ownership - ... ?

# Future challenges

- Timely: respond to crisis, but ...
- Horizontal cooperation (South-South; among peers)
- Financing mechanisms
- Governance structures and social dialogue
- Flexibilization of labour (“cooperativas truchas”)
- Privatization of public services (role of the state, private sector, third sector, ...)
- Research and data (normative field; inductive and participative method)
- ...



**I WANT YOU**