



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

**Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Foreign Affairs and Aid Sub-Committee**

MEDIA RELEASE

Issued: 3 March 2016

*Chair: The Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP
Deputy Chair: Senator Alex Gallacher*

LEADING IN HEALTH AND CO-OPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA AND THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

International experts working to improve the health and wealth of vulnerable women in Africa and, more widely, to grow market opportunities for farmers across the Indo-Pacific region will meet today with the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade's Foreign Affairs and Aid Sub-Committee in Canberra.

As part of its *[inquiry into the role of development partnerships in agriculture and agribusiness in promoting prosperity, reducing poverty and enhancing stability in the Indo-Pacific region](#)*, the Sub-Committee will hear from Democratic Republic of the Congo MP the Hon Dr Luc Mulimbalimba-Masururu, Medical Director of Mission in Health Care and Development (MHCD), and from visiting regional directors of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), the peak body for the world's co-operative organisations.

Sub-Committee Chair the Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP said that Dr Luc, as he is known, is an inspiring figure who has been championing women's health needs in war torn Congo.

"As Medical Director of the MHCD, Dr Luc is well known for his work improving maternal health in partnership with the Birth Kit Foundation Australia. These birth kits are donated by service clubs and others in Australia," Dr Stone said.

"Less known perhaps is the work being done to improve women's health and wellbeing through agricultural and livestock diversification, or providing bicycles so they can get their produce home and to market safely."

Dr Stone said the ICA is the global peak body representing co-operative businesses and their peak organisations, and is one of the oldest and largest global non-government organisations having been formed in England in 1895. The ICA is now based in Brussels to promote the ideas of co-operation to develop stronger, more resilient organisations and society.

"The ICA is holding its Annual Board meeting in Australia for the first time. The Sub-Committee welcomes the opportunity to hear from regional directors about the role that the partnerships between consumer and producer co-operatives can play in increasing food production and nutrition by strengthening value chains, reducing costs and growing markets for healthy foods", Dr Stone said.

"The activities of farming co-operatives are fundamental to support food security in many parts of the Indo-Pacific region."

The public hearing will be held *today*, Thursday 3 March 2016:

Time: 3.30 pm to 5:00 pm
Venue: Committee Room 2R1
Parliament House, Canberra

A live audio broadcast will be available at http://www.aph.gov.au/News_and_Events/Watch_Parliament

For background: Contact the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Secretariat on (02) 6277 2313 or visit jscfadt@aph.gov.au for further details about the inquiry, including copies of submissions and how to contribute.

For media inquiries: contact the Sub-Committee Chair, the Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP on (03) 5821 5371 (Electorate Office) or 02 6277 4477 (Parliament House).