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## THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA COOPERATIVE BANKING

### PRAISES THE ENTERPRISE POWER OF MONDRAGON

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Both presidents of National Cooperative Bank & the North-American Credit Unions visit Euskadi to deepen ties that they maintain with the Mondragon group.

**SAN SEBASTIÁN.** Donostia, five in the afternoon of Thursday 14th July, Hotel Maria Cristina terrace, Michael J. Mercer and Charles E. Snyder could easily pass for two more tourists, maybe some of the travelers of the super luxurious cruise 'YatchWorld' anchored in front of La Concha bay. But no, 'Mike' & 'Chuck' –that's how they do introduce themselves- have come to Euskadi to work. They are the presidents and CEO of Georgia Credit Union Affiliates (GCUA) and National Cooperative Bank (NCB), the latter with headquarters in Washington; two authentic authorities in the financial-cooperative sphere of the United States of America. A segment of banking that controls the 7% of all mortgage loans and deposits and up to 20% of the credit card industry of that immense country.

Their stay here in Gipuzkoa masks an intense three days visit to (what they consider) the world mecca of cooperative business and the most competitive on the planet, the Mondragon Corporation. << It's a reference, especially because it succeeds in joining the cooperative values and worker-owners' best interests with business results and the internationalization of profitable enterprises; that does not happen often in the rest of the world >> C. Snyder.

He speaks knowledgeably, as the National Cooperative Bank has signed (since September 2.013) a collaboration agreement with LABORAL Kutxa. A pact that's now reinforced by business opportunities and which both entities work consistently to strengthen.

The idea is that Mondragon cooperative enterprises in the future or who already work in the United States of America will have in the National Cooperative Bank or any of the 3.000 Credit Unions (Credit Cooperatives) – whose association is run by Mercer- a financial ally for whatever they need. Everything is set up, they state, to pursue significant expansion opportunities.

The internationalization phenomenon of Mondragon enterprises is something that actually attracts their attention. << In the United States, a large country, the cooperatives are local; they don't see that they could actually go overseas for new business, that is something missing. >> C. Snyder.

<< It's like that, that's why it attracts our attention to what we have seen here >> adds Mercer, and also says << The cooperatives of Mondragon, wherever they go in the U.S., will always have a Credit Union nearby. >> It is true; this kind of credit cooperatives is widespread and you might find them working with any profession, company, union or activity. There are ranchers, Coca-Cola workers or Delta Airlines workers. This last one, for example, includes 300.000 people.

When you bring up the economic crisis to them, that, I have to say originated in the United States, both smile instead of brushing the question off (as would happen in Spain, or even in Europe). And they recognize that although the “big crisis” still impacts, and has burdened their institutions with thousands of new requirements, demands and regulations from supervisors (like in the old continent), the credit unions have benefited from this.

<< A lot of people have been disappointed with large scale traditional banking, and many, who could not pay off their loans or have been fired from their jobs, have found in us a different banking experience >>, they highlight. << We are more regulated than ever, but as we’ve never been linked to any speculative products, we had no problems >> Snyder underscores.

Their biggest fears are not far from those of Spanish or European banks. Mercer summarizes them: << The challenges, now that we have the same regulations as other banks, are cyber-attacks, the flood of regulations that inundate us and competitors, the new financial actors that come from the technology world of Silicon Valley banking. >>

After investigating Chuck Snyder’s biography it is impossible to avoid asking a question that, at first, has little to do with business. And it is that this Executive is a member (this is 100% American) of the Cooperative Hall of Fame. ¿Is there any place with a bronze-statue of you? This journalist is joking but while Chuck’s laugh is automatic, (also prototypical), the answer is quick and very serious: << There are no statues, but I’m very proud of the distinction >>.

<< I have spent many years working in this field and have proved that it is ok if you develop a banking career and make money, but also being able to help people is something you are more aware of as you get older >> he concludes.