



ICA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

"Co-operation and Peace in the Era of Globalisation"

15 - 17 October, Seoul - Korea

Opening Speech of the ICA President

16 October 2001

It gives me great pleasure to welcome co-operators, government officials and our guests from around the world to the momentous General Assembly being held in this beautiful city of Seoul. We have chosen to address the theme of "Co-operation and Peace in the era of globalisation". We had hoped to come together in a time of greater hope for peace as tolerance and understanding in our world increased. The recent tragic events in the United States and their consequences have demonstrated that much work still needs to be done. For us as a movement, it means that we must reassert the value of humanity and use globalisation to promote the respect of humanity. In more concrete terms, globalisation offers us the possibility to bring our message of co-operation and peace to a wider group of people, but it offers us too a multitude of our own specific challenges from how to ensure that our co-operative businesses continue to be successful in a more competitive environment from a commercial, legislative and even cultural perspective -- to how to spread our dearly held values and principles of solidarity, democracy, equality, equity, concern for community, and peace to the peoples of our world.

As we meet today, a nation and a movement that has vowed to promote peace and has taken actions to bring together a divided people, welcomes us. We know that there is still much to be done, but we should not focus on the challenges, but rather praise the courage that it takes to begin a process where through solidarity and dialogue, peace and unity can be a thinkable outcome. I would like to commend the people of Korea in these efforts.

The Co-operative Movement both in Korea and around the world can be proud that its movement is one that inspires tolerance and understanding, but we must all commit to increase our activities to promote peace through co-operation. It is only in a peaceful world -- and here I refer to peace in the largest sense of the word -- that each of us will have the right to live, to love, to hope and dream and to aspire to a world where everyone has those rights. It would be a world where human insecurity, poverty, hunger and illiteracy would no longer have a place. I know that through our actions, at the individual, organisational and societal levels we will work toward such a world. I hope that here in Seoul in our official and unofficial meetings, we will also contribute to making our globalising world a more peaceful place.