



## **Report of the Director General to the ICA General Assembly, Oslo, Norway 2003**

Good morning,

I was appointed as Director General almost exactly one year ago today so I was only DG for one third of 2002. When I arrived I found staff colleagues very welcoming and eager to continue the key tasks of the ICA. Certainly 2002 had, especially for them, been a difficult year to that point but more credit to them they had responded to the problems in the best way – with a strong resolve and commitment. In fact for most of the year Maria Elena Chavez was acting Director General and deserves your considerable thanks.

Similarly my only meetings with the President and Board have been equally productive. The Board clearly wanted to promote the principles and values of global cooperation rather than dwell endlessly on financial problems. They had to do both, and combined with staff commitment, considerable progress was made. You have a very able and committed President, whose own cooperative record is second to none – and who is determined to see the world co-operative movement recognised for the great philosophical and business enterprise which it is.

The last General Assembly in Seoul which decided to set up a Task Force to undertake a root and branch review of ICA.

Its members were, Ivano Barberini, Pauline Green, Ousseynou Dieng, Glen Tully and Yehudah Paz. It met several times and its recommendations were reported to the Board earlier this year. Today's restructuring report to be presented by Pauline Green this afternoon is the end result.

But 2002 was also positive year also for ICA and International Cooperation.

Following a lot of hard work by ICA staff and members as acknowledged yesterday by Juan Somavia, the governing body of the International Labour Office adopted Recommendation 193 calling on all Governments to actively promote cooperative enterprise. Obviously this had particular resonance in countries struggling to emerge from poverty but it is equally relevant in industrialised countries where cooperation can be seen as a fairer and more just way of running a modern business. Recommendation 193 has become a clarion call for co-operators all over the world and is an extremely important milestone in cooperative history – not least in persuading governments of the need for good co-operative legislation and good co-operative governance.

Dot Coop is another emerging success from 2002 having had, I think, all would agree, a slow start- least particularly in the USA – the land of unfettered free trade – cooperative organisations are recognising the importance of dot Coop for emphasizing their special identity as a cooperative enterprise.

So who is using Dot coop now? We are – ica.coop is our address on the Internet and in our e-mail. We have supported .coop from the beginning because we knew how valuable this was to our members and to their members around the world. As one co-op leader recently said – it's just right!

And we have many other ICA members actively using their names – and reaping the benefits.

Mondragon cooperative from Spain  
The Japanese Consumer's Co-operative Union from Japan  
The Confederacion of Cooperatives from Uruguay  
The Confederation of Italian Co-operatives.

Each one of these world-class co-ops and co-operative organisations have recognized the value of having a .coop domain and have made the investment in the future of co-operatives.

Your co-operative should be on this list. And you need to make sure that your member co-ops know about .coop – not just from brochures and messages from ICA – but from you and from your leading members. You need .coop to help people learn about co-operatives and to help co-operatives in remote and under-served areas reach their full potential. You need dot Coop to let young people know that co-operatives are part of their way of communicating. You need Dot coop to remind your members that they are part of a special community.

And our Regions are becoming more and more significant. This was emphasised yesterday during the development debate. All of our regions used 2002 to consolidate and build.

In Africa we recognise that we must work with the UN and others in tackling the scourge of HIV/Aids and look beyond that to better times. Our teams held successful events and training programmes on agriculture, gender and human resource development as well as an excellent Regional Conference in Mauritius which was my first official function as Director General.

Similarly in the Americas work continued with our development partners and the Region promoted initiatives in regard to credit and savings cooperatives, forestry and gender. Their website is also well worth a visit. And again I was at their very well attended and enthusiastic Regional Conference in Asunción, Paraguay – my first visit to South America.

In Asia and the Pacific a very successful Ministerial Conference was held in Nepal attended by our President and Jan Eirik Imbsen and during the year many events were held with farmers, researchers, bankers amongst others. They also moved office in New Delhi which I look forward to visiting.

I did visit their splendid Regional conference in Cebu in February this year – technically not part of this report!

Last but certainly not least Europe. Lisbon in October showed what great support we have throughout the continent and also emphasises that coops are not just for poor people. A lot of work was done in 2002 helping coops in Central and Eastern Europe re-establish their positions and an excellent housing conference was held in Turkey.

I don't want to pretend that all is wonderful – we work in all our Regions and at Head Office with the minimum of resources and too much time is taken up with administration and the running of meetings. However I do feel very positive about the future and if so much was achieved in the difficult year that was 2002 it bodes well for the future. My positive feelings were confirmed by our speakers yesterday.

We must start being a little less modest and tell people how good and big we are. My visits to all Regions show what tremendous enthusiasm there is for the philosophy of cooperation and its influence in business enterprise. We must harness that for our advantage as well as for the people we represent.

Thank you.