



ICA General Assembly
“Innovation in Co-operative Business”
Singapore, 18-19 October 2007

Report of Ivano Barberini, President, International Co-operative Alliance (ICA)

Dear Delegates, Distinguished guests,

In the two years which separates us from Cartagena, our entire organization, from the Board to the Regional Councils, from the Head Office to the Regional Offices, from the sectoral organizations to the thematic Committees, carried out consistent and important work aimed to achieve four main objectives: - the strengthening of the democratic life and the way of working of ICA; the shared definition of a vision and a middle term strategy; the improvement of the cooperative visibility and the diffusion of best practices.

The ICA Board, in office for two years now, worked hard to make some proposals to the GA in Singapore.

It has been clear that the responsibility for strengthening ICA, regionally and globally would be achieved through working together and improving the relations between ICA and its members, and a more effective democratic process. The Governance Working Group did excellent work.

Today, the Chair of the group, Gut-Britt Martensson, will introduce the Governance progress report.

The main goal of the agreed ICA global strategy, started in September 2006, has been to help the ICA to be a focused organisation, providing tangible benefits for its members.

That means to ensure the dynamism and strength of ICA through an effective project and program, renewed structure and service offering.

The adopted method and proposals are really helpful to clarify the role of the ICA in the short term. It has been useful to identify the strengths, priorities and united action, a shared vision and strategic direction, well-defined governance rules and to improve significantly the reputation and recognition of cooperatives globally and amongst key target audiences.

The aim of the ICA Board in setting up an ICA Restructuring Working Group has been the implementation of some of the most important strategic objectives.

The ICA Regions are working well and carrying out several qualified initiatives, which are highly appreciated by ICA members and often by stakeholders and Institutions.

The wide documentation fulfilled by the RWG, opened an unprecedented and serious debate by the ICA Board and tabled some recommendations on membership and revised subscription formula as well as on the most suited organizational global structure for the ICA which would best support the fulfilment of the proposed mission, vision and 4-years strategic plan for ICA itself.

Later, Mr Alban D'Amours, Chairman of the RWG, will present the content of the Recommendations and the modalities to reach shared conclusions, in a fully participative and democratic way.

As regards the restructuring of ICA, the regionalization process, decided back in 1992, made important steps during these last few years, entering a new phase, in line with the decisions taken that began it all, in distant 1992.

Since then our organization, progressively decentralized in regions and sectors, benefited from a widespread responsibility, joint to a team spirit and to an effective working together on global themes.

The experience made in the last few years called for an opening of a new phase of the restructuring, able to take into consideration the specificities of each region and the integration at global level. Supporting the role, the

visibility and the development of the co-operative movement is a considerable task to carry out at all levels, interacting with each other, because of the multi-dimensionality of the co-operative organization.

For these reasons, more and more, the International Cooperative Alliance must act like a “Governed Network Organization”, made by vital and self-determined nodes, united by shared vision, values, rules and strategic objectives.

The recent choice to create Cooperatives Europe has been essential to strengthen the representation in Europe. This new organization is the European region of ICA.

A valuable co-operation between Cooperatives Europe and ICA was signed through the protocol.

The on going restructuring of ICA Africa tries to achieve a sustainable way of working and to strengthen the cooperative reputation and the sense of belonging of ICA African members. In that continent, co-operatives need to be assisted by the worldwide cooperative movement, meeting and encouraging a strong commitment of African co-operators.

ICA is strongly committed to improve its relations with International Institutions. The fight against poverty, the preservation of international peace through the creation of decent work and the economic development, linked with the improvement of standard of life represent the main point of collaboration between ICA and ILO, UN and other international institutions. In the last three years the collaboration between ICA and ILO has become more cogent and concrete, including a joint annual check on achieved results, particularly on the implementation of the Global Campaign against Poverty.

In this context, Cooperative reputation represents an essential asset to protect and implement. The cooperative system is a very complex phenomenon. Often, co-operatives are victims of warped information, carried out by people or organizations that ignore or mystify the facts.

That is the reason why, in the last few years, ICA has devoted a particular attention and an intense work to elaborate and implement its Communication strategy.

Dear fellow co-operators,

To make ICA stronger, at global and regional level, we need to become more aware that many problems have a global dimension even when they are local.

For this reason, every exchange of knowledge and experiences, every possible joint initiative carried out by the global and regional ICA can help to better understand the effects of globalization on co-operatives and how to face them with better social and human resources.

The motivation of the work for co-operatives is based on their conviction in the social usefulness of this initiative and on the support to the development of the co-operative movement in any possible way.

By definition, co-operation represents a joint work opportunity for people and organizations, even while keeping their individual responsibility

There is a rich patrimony of knowledge and experiences, originating from the ongoing analysis of the larger co-operatives and other factors which, if well utilized, can help competitive strategies and strengthen the co-operative identity.

Finally, I wish to appeal to all our members in order to support the innovative process and the initiative of ICA strengthening internal cohesion and active participation.

Now, let me conclude by saying that the Board felt it was appropriate to make a short comment regarding the situation of Myanmar, as we are strong supporter of the peace joint to the social justice.

Statement about Myanmar

The General Assembly of the International Co-operative Alliance meeting in Singapore expresses its concern about the events in Myanmar and strongly supports the current attempts to find a peaceful solution to the troubles of that country and its people.

The worldwide co-operative movement is based on peace, democracy, self-help, equality and fairness. These concepts underpin our values and have created a global co-operative economy that reaches into local communities across the globe regardless of political affiliation, religious conviction or color. Our movement is a powerful player in the campaign to fight poverty, support commercial development balanced with social progress, and develop sustainable communities.

This general Assembly expresses its support for the process initiated by the United Nations to bring about a peaceful transition to democracy in Myanmar.

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