



INTERNATIONAL
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TO: ICA Member Organisations
FROM: Charles Gould, Director-General
REF: Update message from the ICA Director-General to Members

As the future of North Africa and the Middle East unfolds, we are once again reminded of the impact that individuals can have when they unite for a common purpose. This is a message that co-operatives live every day. Around the world, people have been encouraged by the developing story in Egypt, even when anxious about the ultimate outcome, as ordinary men and women seek democracy and opportunity.

ICA has remained in contact with the co-operative movement in Egypt during these momentous days, and they have shared with us their thanks for the messages of support we have given on your behalf. They, too, struggle to comprehend the full meaning of these events, but their focus remains on the daily challenge of dealing with the disruption of communications and infrastructure. As these challenges are overcome and the nation turns a new-found energy to the social and economic issues it faces, we know that the co-operative model has much to contribute to their future, and ICA will work to support them.

This opportunity is so clear in Egypt because of the recent events, but it is equally true around the globe. The limits of other economic systems, combined with the emergence of a generation for whom technology-aided coalescence and collaboration are second-nature, has made this the time for the co-operative message. The opportunity of the United Nations International Year of Co-operatives in 2012 could not have happened at a better time.

I talk about the International Year frequently, not because it is a solution to all that is wrong in the world, but because it is a not-to-be-missed opportunity for co-operatives everywhere to deliver a focused message at a time ready for that message. Because the message we will be delivering will be common among us, we will demonstrate our scale, scope, and alignment, and can capture the attention of people hungry for a new way.

ICA is raising funds now to ensure that we can seize this opportunity together. We are developing the materials you will need to take advantage of the Year -- key messages to promote the Year; templates to incorporate the Year into your communications and packaging; posters to advertise the Year; media kits to help tell the story. We are developing the web site for www.2012.coop, where we will direct those individuals who see the slogan in your communications and who want to learn more. We are preparing the stories that will ensure that the general public is exposed to the international, multi-sectoral dimension of co-operatives. And we are developing the social media strategy that will allow us to attract especially that next generation that is so critical to the future of co-operation. The UN is within days of finalising the logo that will accompany the already-announced slogan: Co-operative enterprises build a better world. When the logo is available, work on the templates can proceed to the next stage.

Thank you to those members who have already contributed or pledged to the ICA International Year Fund appeal! You are making it possible to leverage the opportunity the Year represents in the most efficient way, through our global co-operation.

I am always available to answer any questions you may have on the Year or on the ICA International Year Fund appeal. Thank you for your membership and support!