

Let's stand up and be counted on co-operative principles

Coming from the UK, more particularly Scotland, one is inclined towards a fairly conservative view of the rest of the world - one that has the UK at its centre, at least of the English speaking part of the world over which we have had some influence. However, from a co-operative point of view, a few visits to Asia, Africa and South America, which I have been fortunate enough to undertake recently, occasion some reflection to say the least. For instance the recent Human Resource Development (HRD) conference in India shows how we are relying on the co-operative movement there to take forward our setting up of the global portal of co-operative education opportunities. I was delighted to open their new technological centre in Pune, designed for that purpose.

My recent visit to Seoul identified Korea as one of the most co-operative countries in the membership of the ICA. Korea's National Agricultural Co-operative Federation (NACF) is placed at number five in the **Global 300** list. Similar progress in China, Eastern Europe and

South America shows that our co-operative world is changing. It is long overdue that the assumed centre of cooperation shifts from Western Europe, more particularly UK and acknowledges advances elsewhere. It is surely time for us to stop lecturing others on things they already do better.

Indeed the more the world moves away from the influence of former colonialists and their modern partners the better. And it is time, I think, that we emphasise one of the least promoted aspects of our beliefs - that of peace and social justice. Time, perhaps, to be less pragmatic? What about standing up and being counted on these issues?

WTO talks: It is time for ICA to have a policy here. Many of us can see that the less developed nations of the world require our support and if the co-operative value of solidarity is to mean anything our more affluent members should be campaigning on their behalf.

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to our values and principles.

Peace and Justice: Everywhere in the world, the co-operative movement must campaign for peace through co-operative enterprise. We cannot accept the dictates of the governments of countries when they adversely affect co-operators. It is time for the ICA and its members to challenge governments who pay lip-service to co-operative principles and values. Perhaps then we will gain the respect and attention we know we deserve. Let's encourage them to use co-operative enterprise to build new and equal societies rather than, for instance, spending obscene amounts of money on weapons of mass destruction and wars.

So enough of the co-operative movement's favourite occupation of navel gazing - what do you think?

DG's report



Iain Macdonald
Director-General

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Iain Macdonald

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Recent Activities of Director-General March-April 2007

- Strategic planning teleconference, March 2
- 37th Legacoop Conference, Rome
- Restructuring Committee Teleconference, March 7-9
- Meeting with representative from the Mongolian Mission, Geneva, March 12
- IFAD/NACF workshop on agriculture co-operatives, Seoul, South Korea, March 14-18
- Meeting with CEO of Migros, Zurich, March 23
- Preparation for upcoming board meeting, Mexico Mexico, May

The next ICA board meeting will be held in Leon, Mexico on May 4-5. Contact macdonald@ica.coop

Co-ops in Mexico

Thanks to a change in the Mexican law of co-operatives in 2001, local organisations can apply for grants for specific co-operative projects. The government funds 70% of the project and the "co-operativistas" fund the other 30%. In some parts of Mexico, it is almost unthinkable not to be in a co-op.

