



**Tribute Speech to Mr. Barberini**  
**by Iain Macdonald**  
**Director General of ICA**



Fellow co-operators,

I'm very honoured to be asked to speak about Ivano Barberini. We are all here, affected by his death. But as the leader of the global cooperative movement, he was unsurpassed. I have been inundated with messages of condolence, testament to the high regard, in which he was held, as well as love and affection. Messages have been and are still being received from all around the world conveyed by our regional directors from Europe, Asia, the Americas and Africa – from Japan, China, India, South Korea, Australia, Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, Brazil, Paraguay, Mexico, USA, Canada, UK, France, Sweden, Bulgaria, Russia, Poland and many others.

Indeed, it was in his ambassadorial role for ICA that he particularly shone. It was Ivano who in recent times personified the International Cooperative Alliance with his utter commitment to cooperative values and principles, and that message came across loud and clear wherever he went. His passion for cooperation was matched only by that for social justice and peace, and he clearly linked all three as one.

Ivano took over as president in 2001 when ICA was having a difficult time particularly from a financial point of view. Many here will know that Ivano had a passion for detail, as well as loftier ideals! It made him quite difficult to work with sometimes, but he was invariably right! It was his belief in his own convictions, which made him who he was. Indeed he was not beyond correcting my English, rather than the other way round!



And I think many would agree that the reason that ICA is now in a much more stable position, is down to Ivano's insistence on openness, transparency and financial probity. The task force, which he led from 2001 as eventually achieved what many before him had tried and failed - that is a modern, progressive and decentralised ICA with the centre, regions and sectors all working together on an equal basis, and most importantly, a transparently fairer subscription system. There is still much to be done, but undoubtedly Ivano's dogged approach is one of the main reasons for this success.

Ivano was of course a product of the great Italian cooperative movement. Legacoop's support for him during his time as president was superb and I would take this occasion, to acknowledge that. Ivano appeared to be immersed in cooperative and political life in Italy, and as an ICA newcomer from the UK, I was particularly impressed by that.

For Ivano the world economic crisis was not a surprise but an opportunity. He constantly pressed us to promote cooperation in a way, which would show the world what we had to

offer. The neo-liberal economy was destined to fail, concentrating as it does on personal greed and exploitation, and it was clear to him, and many of us, that cooperation offers an obvious solution. Our growing evidence base is now showing without doubt that the cooperative movement is already a major force in the global economy -and that was one of his important messages to the outside world.

He would have been delighted to learn that Jeremy Rifkin, the well-known economist, will give the keynote address to our General Assembly in Geneva in November. Indeed, it was Ivano, who set up the initial meetings with him and supported his advocacy of an economy where the cooperative movement will be a key player in shaping a new economic order based on ethics, mutual economic benefit and environmental concern.

But Ivano was also a very human person. With all his energy is seemingly spent on the cooperative movement, one might have thought that he would have nothing else to offer. Far from it. My time as director general has been highlighted by many personal kindnesses from



Ivano and Nerina. A very learned and well read man with a great sense of humour, he excelled in company. Very often, wearing his beautiful smile, he would be surrounded at the end of any conference, by his many fans posing for photographs -as only he could! And of course he took many photographs himself - there must be a wonderful memory bank, often catching people unawares, but usually nicely.

Actually, I was meant to meet him this very week for one of our regular work sessions - particularly to discuss the next board meeting. Even the day before he died, I understand he argued with Miriam and Nerina about cancelling my visit! That was his nature -working to the very end. I particularly enjoyed those meetings, which usually involved a very nice Italian lunch with some very nice Italian red wine! As he didn't drink much, it probably ensured his views were accepted rather than mine!

I regarded Ivano, as my friend, colleague, mentor and fellow co-operator. I have never met anyone quite like him and I will miss his intellect, support and wise counsel. On behalf of the ICA board and staff, my deepest condolences go to Nerina, Sylvia and his grandchildren - of whom he talked constantly.

He deserved to complete his term as president of the International Cooperative Alliance - the highest elected position in our co-operative world, but he fitted so much into his time. The ICA, the Italian co-operative movement, and indeed Italy itself, should be very proud of him.

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