



Speech of Mr. Ivano Barberini  
President of the International Cooperative Alliance

SUMMIT OF THE AFRICAN UNION HEADS OF STATE

8-9 September 2004 – Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

Your Excellency Mr. Blaise COMPAORE, President of Burkina Faso,

Your Excellency Mr. Olusegun OBASANJO President of Nigeria, President in Office of the African Union,

Your Excellencies Heads of States and Governments,

Your Excellency, President of the African Union,

The Director General of the International Labour Office,

Honorable Ministers,

Distinguished Ambassadors and Heads of Diplomatic Missions,

Distinguished Representatives of International and Inter-African Organizations,

Honorables Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all let me express my gratitude to his Excellency, Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, for giving me the honour and the privilege to attend this important and historical Summit.

It is a great honour for the International Co-operative Alliance, which represents 800 million co-operators, including a great number of African women and men.

Your Excellencies Heads of States and Government, I would like, on behalf of our members, to congratulate you with a deep deference and to wish the greatest success to this summit.

The action plan and the strategies that will be adopted by this Summit, added to the NEPAD, constitute innovative options and tools for a continent which is drawing its own development paths for its children of today and tomorrow.

The future is built by decisions taken at the present, some of them involving ethic choices. Unemployment and poverty constitute a unique and intimate issue of human rights: the right to live in dignity, sustainably, equitably and democratically.

In the globalized economy everything is strongly connected: the local and global perspectives; the economic development and peace; the security and freedom; poverty eradication and health care; the dignity of cultural differences and the fight against terrorism.

The real problem we have to face is not globalization in itself but the inequality of taking part in it.

This is not acceptable in terms of ethics, and cannot be justified in terms of politics.  
A different kind of Globalization is needed, focused on the authentic human development.

This is the main commitment of the cooperative movement, as underlined by the theme of the International Cooperative day celebrated last July by the ICA and the UN: - “Co-operatives for fair globalisation: creating opportunities for all”.

Developed countries cannot turn away from the serious situation tormenting this area of the world, so important for those who live here and for the world as a whole.

Cooperation has an important role in these processes. This same growth depends, to a major extent, on an actual demonstration that, thanks to the cooperatives, they can improve the quality of life and liberty for many people.

The objectives of sustainable, equal and democratic development and those stated in the UNO's “Millennium Development Goals” can only be achieved if they become an integrative part of the policies for economic growth and economic and commercial integration, and not an appendix entrusted to the social softeners.

Cooperation must be part of the solution as it has the values and useful experiences. They should be fully valued and exploited.

(Charity is important but is not enough.)

Fighting poverty, to reduce and eventually eliminate it, firstly involves people becoming aware of their conditions and feeling that the future depends on them, themselves, and their governments.

However, in the case of Africa a support from abroad is essential. You cannot escape from a model of economic organization based on subsistence without going through a complex process of learning. This must be facilitated by those who have the means, the knowledge and experience and also contributing the appropriate resources.

It must be based on medium to long term projects. This is the time necessary to set up internal systems making them able to manage small and medium sized enterprises, operate in the market, promote and carry out new innovations. It is really important to improve the connection between culture and technology.

In Africa sono in atto tentativi importanti e coraggiosi, in questa direzione

Many women, young people and men get together freely and democratically on the basis of cooperative principles and values, to take care of themselves.

They are facing development challenges in the fields of employment, health care, food and social security, the mobilization of indigenous financial resources, education, environment, housing.

La fiducia in se stessi e degli uni verso gli altri è di grande importanza per vincere una sfida che è al tempo stesso economica e culturale.

Essi dimostrano che le Cooperatives represent a bridge between the economy and social aspects.

Excellencies, allow me to illustrate my assertions with a few examples, picked from a long list:

- ✓ The co-operative clinics of Benin and the Co-operative for the Production of Agricultural Equipment of Benin created hundreds of permanent jobs for physicians, nurses and more than 600 jobs for artisans. They provide low-cost health care services to poor people, and supply small farmers with farming equipment.
- ✓ The networks of Savings and Credit Cooperatives of Kenya, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Togo, Mali, Nigeria and Ghana mobilize local savings from their members and give out loans to farmers, small traders, artisans at the best or adapted conditions.
- ✓ Several village groups including women and youth from the Sahel produce, process and market agricultural products while undertaking tree planting and using water and soil conservation techniques. In Northern Burkina, the Naam groups succeeded to harmoniously integrate African cultural values to the requirement of development and the protection of the environment.
- ✓ Health mutuals in Cameroon, Senegal, Mali and South Africa contribute to eradicate poverty by securing health care services to members.

At the global level, the number of jobs created by cooperatives is about 100 million.

Le Istituzioni internazionali e molti governi nazionali riconoscono che l'impresa cooperativa è una delle forme di impresa più in grado di agire nello scenario del ventunesimo secolo, in quanto è fortemente radicata nel proprio territorio ed è parte di una rete globale.

The World Commission on the Social Globalisation formed by distinguished world leaders, acknowledges and underscores the key role of co-operatives enabling the formation of the local economic basis, promoting access to global markets for small producers, in fostering better governance and dialogue as schools of democracy, crucibles of national integration and social responsibility.

Recently, on the occasion of the International Co-operative Day, the UN Secretary General underlines that Governments and international organizations should promote and support cooperative development through appropriate policies and laws.

ICA and ILO are currently uniting their efforts to launch a Global Campaign against poverty in 2005, which will aim to increase the role of cooperative in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

However we cannot hide the numerous problems and constraints faced by African cooperatives.

Although the traditional African culture is based on the self-help organizations, the way to the development of modern cooperatives is still long and difficult.

Your Excellencies, heads of States and Government, we are convinced that there is a possibility for another destiny for Africa, with the support of your Excellencies and of the International Community, co-operatives can contribute to take up the huge challenges Africa has to face.

Thank you for your attention.