



## **ICA REGIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR AFRICA**

**8 October 2004, Praia, Cape Verde**

### **Address by Ivano Barberini, President of International Co-operative Alliance**

Your Excellency, THE President of Cape Verde  
Your Excellency, Mr. Prime Minister of Cape Verde,  
Honorable Ministers,  
Honorable Mayor of Praia City,  
Distinguished Representative of the African Union,  
Distinguished Ambassadors and Heads of Diplomatic Missions,  
Honorable Guests,  
Dear Friends and Fellow Co-operators,  
Ladies and Gentleman

First of all, I would like to thank your Excellency, the President of Cape Verde. Your acceptance to personally chair the present opening ceremony of our Regional Assembly is a great honor and a privilege for all of us, co-operators coming from many African countries and other continents.

It testifies the high democratic process in Cape Verde and the recognition of the role of the cooperative movement in supporting it. It is a very important fact, because democracy is the necessary condition for economic development and the respect of fundamental rights and freedoms.

I would also like to thank your Excellency, the Prime Minister, the Honorable Members of His Government and the Mayor of Praia for their considerable support in the organization of the present meetings.

As shown by the events characterizing the last two centuries everywhere in the world, co-operation and democracy are strictly connected. Co-operatives find in democracy the best condition to grow on the basis of the free subscription and the self government of their members.

On its part, co-operation promotes democratic development, fostering networks of associations of people which represent an incomparable resource for the creation of "social capital".

Co-operation can therefore be defined a “school” of democracy, when is allowed to develop according to its basic principles.

Last September 8, I had the honor and the privilege, on behalf of ICA, to take the floor at the Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Ouagadougou, on the topic of “Employment creation and poverty reduction in Africa”.

The Summit was preceded by the African Co-operative Forum, where African co-operatives met to share and discuss their experiences on the topic of employment creation and poverty reduction in Africa and the strategies to adopt to overcome this serious problem affecting the African continent.

Today’s assembly represents a further opportunity to discuss the urgent need to find innovating solutions.

Unemployment and poverty constitute a unique and intimate question of dignity and human rights; the right to a decent job, to an adequate education, the right to enjoy security and freedom, in short, the right to live in dignity sustainably, equitably and democratically.

This is the main commitment of the co-operative 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”

A fair globalisation means giving priority to people, respecting their rights, their cultural identity and their autonomy and giving the power to the local communities in which they live. The persistent unbalances in the functioning of the current global economy are not acceptable in terms of ethics and cannot be justified in terms of politics.

It is in this context that we assist to the re-discovery of the role of co-operative enterprises. Through their ideals, values, principles and practices, in fact, co-operatives are the best suited enterprises to achieve a more human, equitable and sustainable development.

The same recognition is expressed by the World Commission on the Social Globalisation, composed of distinguished world leaders, which acknowledges the key role of co-operatives as private enterprises able to provide the necessary basis for the creation of a local economy and to favour the access to global markets for small producers.

It is important to underline that the co-operative system seems to be more compatible with the African traditional culture than any other forms of enterprise.

Numerous women, young people and men get together freely and democratically based on cooperative principles and values, to take care of themselves, to address Africa’s development challenges including, health care, education, unemployment and poverty.

In Cape Verde, co-operatives have known various evolution phases and adaptation to the socio-political and economic context.

FENACCOOP, with its 10.000 members and 300 employees provide consumer good supply and distribution services which benefit to about 56.000 people, i.e. 16% of the country's total population including women and marginalized people.

Coop. Simplicidade's experiences, as well as the experiences of housing, fishing, semi-industrial and agricultural cooperatives stand as tangible proofs that cooperatives do create jobs and play a significant role in employment creation, women's empowerment, and poverty alleviation.

The initiative of the establishment of the FORUM is to be commended and encouraged because all the co-operative movement need to be organized at the national level for more visibility, dialogue and defense of their interests.

The achievement and positive impacts of African co-operative cannot hide nor dissipate the numerous problems and constraints they are facing, and which resolution would contribute to increase their potential and capacities

It with this situation in mind that ICA provided valuable input to the ILO Conference during the drafting and negotiation of the text of ILO Recommendation 193 on the Promotion of Co-operatives and today is working closely with ILO in its promotion around the world.

Still in the same spirit, 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 Goals, especially regarding poverty reduction by half by 2015.

The challenge is certainly ambitious, but we believe that with the support of the governments and the International Community, co-operatives are able to contribute to take up this challenge, because they represent a fairer and a more human face of the globalisation, a bridge between the economic and social aspects.

Your Excellency, Mr. President of the Republic, the ICA with its 800 millions members, is convinced that there is a possibility for another destiny for Africa, and that the World needs a new order based on a different form of solidarity, a new partnership, respectful of human dignity and values.

Thank you for your attention