



ICA General Assembly
“ICAO Seminar & General Meeting”

Singapore, 17 October 2007

Address by Ivano Barberini, President, International Co-operative Alliance (ICA)

Dear President Chung Dae-Kun, Ladies and Gentleman, Dear Friends,

Thank you very much for your kind invitation to this seminar.

It is a great pleasure to be here with you and to have the opportunity to welcome you and to congratulate ICAO for including in the agenda such important topics, consistent with the themes that are at the centre of this ICA/GA .

Agricultural co-operation is an essential part of the co-operative movement at a global level. Everywhere, in developing countries, as well as in developed ones, farmers acknowledge co-operatives as an essential tool in improving their work methods and their income. The co-operative associations of farmers provide a great contribution not only to the smooth-running of the market, but also to democratic development.

Globalisation and modernisation have generated new, fast-moving social changes, concerning the whole of humankind. The challenges we

are called upon to face have become greater and many.

In general, the most difficult challenges in agriculture concern the safety of the environment and the food supply for 8 billion people. The goal for a higher productivity must be pursued together with adequate measures to promote a sustainable development and safeguard consumer health.

Environmental and energy issues have become a priority, also owing to the lack of attention showed by Governments in the past years. Agriculture is the economic sector that suffers the most serious consequences from environmental damages and, therefore, it is in its best interest to reverse this trend.

Our future choices regarding what and how to produce will inevitably have to be very different from the past. Respecting ethical principles is essential in earning consumer trust and thus, in improving business performance.

Co-operatives, for their part, have an important role to play in promoting a greater awareness among their members toward a sustainable environment, the quality of products and food safety.

Instead, governments, for their part, should adopt policies encouraging the growth and activities of agricultural co-operatives. This is an essential condition in facing the competitive challenge within a market which rewards the value and the quality of products and which is

increasingly characterized by large retail groupings.

Technological innovation and the continuous updating of the organisation, also achieved through the dimensional growth of the enterprise, are the vital conditions for the modernisation of agriculture, particularly agricultural co-operation.

Mr President, Ladies and Gentleman, dear friends,

We are all aware that agriculture remains the main economic sector in developing countries, where many farmers still live in extreme poverty. Improving their lot, and overcoming the most serious inequalities dividing the world we live in are vital conditions, not only for humanitarian reasons and promoting social justice, but also for building a long lasting peace.

The work carried out by ICAO to support modernisation and the development of agricultural co-operation is of ICA general interest and part of its commitment in the fight against poverty. Education is the most important tool to fight hunger, to strengthen social cohesion, and promote participation and individual responsibility. It is essential to improve the ability to expand the available economic resources and to increase farmers' productive power and income. In the current situation, the sharing of experiences and knowledge remains, therefore, the highest and most effective form of co-operative solidarity.

Thank you

