



INTERNATIONAL
CO-OPERATIVE
ALLIANCE

Route des Morillons 15
1218 Grand-Saconnex
Geneva
Switzerland

Tel: (41 22) 929 88 38
Fax: (41 22) 798 41 22
E-mail: ica@ica.co-op
Website: www.ica.co-op

Opening Speech for the 8th ICA Asia-Pacific Regional Assembly and 5th Co-operative Forum

3 December 2008, Hanoi (Vietnam)

His Excellency Mr NGUYEN PHU TRONG
Honorable Chairman of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

His Excellency Mr. HOANG TRUNG HAI, Deputy Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic
of Vietnam

Honorable President of Vietnam Co-operative Alliance, Mr. NGUYEN TIEN QUAN

Distinguished co-operators, fellow colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure to be here and I would like to extend greetings to all the distinguished delegates and special invitees to the 8th ICA Asia-Pacific Regional Assembly and the 5th Asia-Pacific Co-operative Forum in this beautiful country.

Honourable Chairman, honourable Statespersons, your presence is a great honour for all of us and for the international co-operative movement.

The theme of this event is extremely relevant and important and I congratulate the vision of the ICA Asia-Pacific leadership and the management in choosing it.

Moreover, it is heartening to witness the co-operation and understanding between the government and the co-operative movement in Vietnam as it has contributed significantly to the success of the co-operatives in this fast developing country.

At the moment, the world is going through a very uncertain and turbulent period, due to a worldwide economic crisis which is destined to become long term, and with still unforeseeable developments.

The disastrous outcomes of financial globalization based on deregulation and the aim of merely realising profit, have brought into discussion the present models of development and cultural hegemonies that were appearing to be confirmed everywhere. The crisis of capitalism is, above all, a moral issue.

We see that an economic growth that is divorced from improving standards of living cannot assure stability and social well-being.

In this context, ethics and social responsibility take on an even more concrete and binding meaning.

It is a very demanding request that appears to be shaking the economic world, even if it is not yet clear how much, and how, the present crisis will change capitalism.

This means that we will have to embark on new roads in order to avoid losing control.

A strong and committed multi-lateral intervention is essential, thus rendering co-operation between the economically developed and developing countries more real and effective.

Never-ending poverty, hunger, malnutrition, sicknesses and illiteracy on such a vast scale have given rise to an injustice that creates a threat to our global economy, to the environment and to political security.

The opportunity to draw up new, more effective and fairer agreements is now being provided by the top level meeting on development financing that will take place in Doha in the next days.

It will be an excellent opportunity to examine the situation and individuate the measure to be taken in order to guarantee the resources needed to reach, by 2015, the Millennium Development Goals and the consequent commitments solemnly taken in the United Nations headquarters in the long-distant 2000.

We must make up the accumulated and serious delays that will allow us to reach these Goals, embarking on immediate actions.

It is for this that ICA has made the commitment, together with ILO, to go ahead with a global campaign in the fight against poverty.

The acknowledgement of co-operation as a form of private initiative deserving of a legislation and public policies that allow for its development, results from the social importance of its actions, the expression of individuals, that only through forming associations, can hope to achieve new economic relations and new forms of social solidarity.

In the Asia-Pacific region, co-operatives are seen as an alternative model in providing services vital for its members who are normally excluded from such services. In the present global context, co-operatives must be clearly seen as providers of value-based services to their members, in both conventional and non-conventional sectors.

The challenge for the co-operative movement is as demanding as it is exhilarating. We must adapt our policies and our strategies to the new situation and, at the same time, strengthen member participation and co-operative identity.

This means that the development of co-operative democracy and efficiency in economic actions, the network of relations with society and the market, the organization and rules of a good co-operative governance and social responsibility must be given top priority. These actions are inspired by the values that place the individual at the centre and are inherent in the co-operative DNA.

They are the main factors that fuel the motivation behind co-operative action and place it in harmony with the more important problems of society.

Rethinking the rules governing a “good co-operative governance” involves beginning with these premises and from the awareness that the present and future co-operative movement lies in a reordering of the work based on the real, shared and operative values of our everyday activities.

From all this, there arises an articulate and unanimous response that encompasses a vast range of needs – from creating a dignified work to safeguarding purchasing power, health and the environment; from training to housing; from health to assistance for the elderly and the disadvantaged; from support for the development of small and medium enterprises to banking and micro-credit services.

However, among the more serious problems that the world must face is that of climate change.

This is not only a threat for the future but also for the present. It is essential to act now, and internationally, to avoid its worst repercussions. Some time ago, Nicholas Stern, ex-head economist of the World Bank, affirmed that “even a delay of 10 or 20 years will take us onto dangerous ground”.

The co-operative movement, as was solemnly confirmed in the ICA General Assembly held in Singapore last year, considers its contribution to solving these problems as an essential part of its long-term social responsibility towards the planet and its commitment for sustainable development.

Time has matured the awareness that we are all “citizens of the world” and this must be translated into consistent and committed choices.

Honorable Chairman, honorable Statepersons, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends
We are living in a time where there is a need for signs, hope in a future and positive examples that will recreate trust and a sense of belonging.

We all know that the path to co-operative development is full of difficulties and obstacles of all kinds.

Yet, the present crisis and the widespread awareness that the economy cannot be divorced from ethics, offer co-operation new opportunities for growth and a role, together with a growing responsibility in confirming a new development model.

It’s also for this reason that we are committed to strengthening the International Co-operative Alliance based on a medium to long-term vision and strategic objectives consistently adopted and carried out.

With the same passion, courage and tenacity of the generations of co-operators who, over the decades, have made co-operation great in every country and at a global level.

I wish this Regional Assembly and the Co-operative Forum the utmost success.

Thank you.