



Symposium
On
Reactivation of Co-operatives
In
Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) Countries
Organized by
International Co-operative Alliance, Asia & the Pacific
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I am very grateful for your invitation, your warm welcome and the hospitality offered to me by the Government of UAE. I would like to

congratulate to ICA Asia-Pacific for organizing this important initiative and to thank the Minister of Social Affairs and the Government of UAE for their support.

It is a great pleasure and an honour to be here. I hold co-operators of the Gulf Area in high esteem. I have a lot of respect and friendship for them. Some years ago, I had the opportunity to know first hand the co-operative reality of Kuwait and I received a great impression.

The International Co-operative Alliance and myself have a lot of interest and a strong hope for the re-activation of co-operatives in Gulf Co-operation Council Countries.

The development of the co-operative movement depends on the convergence of two essential factors: a co-operative legislation, within the frame of a favourable political and social environment and

the strong commitment of co-operators in building effective enterprises, which are an essential means to achieve mutualistic and social finalities.

For this reason, the support of Governments is extremely important, as the International Labour Organisation's Recommendation 193 underlines; it is essential to build co-operative organisations able to promote, represent and assist co-operative enterprises.

At international level, the co-operative movement represents a complex reality, articulated in all economic sectors, formed by very small organisations as well as by big enterprises.

For the way it historically developed, the co-operative enterprise is part of the local community and, at the same time, of a co-operative movement which, at global level, counts 800 million members and

100 million employees; a movement of people and a system of enterprises committed in giving their contribution for the creation of a more human globalisation, where freedom is joint with responsibility; where rules are respected and the affirmation of the values of solidarity and equality in the participation in the benefits of global economy are actively pursued.

Half of the world population feels safer and surer thanks to the role carried out by co-operatives.

The market economy needs the “difference of species” and co-operatives all around the world have given their contribution to the competitiveness of the economic system, the development of human relationships and social cohesion.

The fact that some of the most innovative and successful projects to reduce poverty are based on the co-operative model shows that its wider and more effective application can be an effective way to overcome the challenge of poverty.

Co-operatives are, therefore, an important resource for an economic development joint with the improvement of the conditions of life of people, and the safeguard of the environment.

This awareness inspires the expectations and the commitment of co-operators.

Poverty is, first of all, in the mind of people: it is essential that they become aware of their condition and feel that the future is in their hands rather than somebody else's. There are cultural, social and

political aspects at the basis of the prospects of economic development.

Helping people to play an active role in solving their problems creates the condition to decisively improve the situation.

The initiative of the co-operative movement at national level develops on these bases. It aims to stimulate self-determination and the ability to enterprise of individuals who, by getting together, become able to prevail over the obstacles and try-out new ways to achieve decent jobs, to create acceptable life conditions and to help building a lasting peace.

To spread and enhance this way of thinking represents, in itself, a very positive fact.

The International Co-operative Alliance unites, represents and serves co-operative organisations all around the world.

It was born and developed away from any political and religious discrimination. Inter co-operative and intercultural relationships are rooted in the constitutive agreement of ICA, based on a common system of values and principles.

For this reason, the ICA it represents a meeting point for co-operators of any country and religious belief. It helps co-operators maintaining an open dialogue even when they belong to different worlds, or if their respective countries are at war.

Being part of a global network is a significant advantage for co-operative development, as it represents a valuable way to adopt an international perspective and to exchange knowledge and

experiences, which are essential ways to consolidate relationships and to activate innovation processes.

To strengthen the co-operative network means to reinforce its values and principles and improve the communication between co-operatives, co-operators and social organisations.

To question ourselves and try to understand, all together, where the world is going, is a way to better define the path to follow, to improve our self knowledge and identify potentials and possible synergies.

Here lays an important *raison d'être* of the International Co-operative Alliance.

The growth of co-operative enterprises happened over the last few decades, in many developed and developing countries, has

strengthened their role and their responsibility toward members, local communities and the future of our planet.

International Institutions and several national Governments recognize co-operatives as one of the best-suited enterprises to contribute to the solution of the problems inherited from the past as well as of the new ones, caused by modernity and globalisation.

It is the awareness of the interdependence between the local and global dimension, which feeds the culture of solidarity and co-operation.

In the present context, risks are very high but, at the same time, there are big opportunities for the Cooperative Movement.

The opportunity for development comes from new markets being set up based on the new needs of consumers. In many sectors, cooperatives are able to do what multinationals don't do or cooperatives do it better than multinationals.

The International Co-operative Alliance, at regional and global level, is especially interested in strengthening of co-operation in this area, and is fully available to give its contribution in every possible way.

This represents the premise for the realization of a more active presence of the co-operative movement of this region, so important, in the sphere of the international organisation: it is a necessary and desirable prospect.

Finally, I would like to wish all the success to this initiative, finalised to the re-activation of co-operatives in the Gulf area, an objective so appropriately put at the centre of this Symposium.

Thank you