



World Coop Leaders Symposium

Tokyo, Japan, 11 July 2007

Address of Ivano Barberini
President,
International Co-operative Alliance

Mister President, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends,

Thank you very much for your kind invitation. It is a pleasure and an honour to be here with you and to have the opportunity to say a few words in occasion of this World Co-op Leaders Symposium and the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Co-op Tokyo.

First of all I wish to say a warm hello to all of you and to congratulate with Co-op Tokyo and Japanese Cooperation for all the successes attained in these past few decades.

For a long time, consumer's co-operation has been facing difficult and complex challenges, represented by changes of members' consumptions and life styles as well as an increasingly strong competition.

Retailing is becoming increasingly concentrated.

In all developed countries Top Five Retailers control more than 60% of the retail trade, through integration, backward integration, outsourcing, acquisition and mergers.

In Europe, 60% of the sale of these multinational retailers comes from their own private labels

Top Five Retailers of the world will control 60% of the global retail trade.

In this context, consumer co-operation ended up being scaled down in several countries, especially European ones, while in others, such as Germany, France and Austria, lacked the strength to re-structure the co-operatives in crisis at the right moment and ended their days.

Their image and their ability to compete were badly affected by the lack of willingness to abandon what was old and obsolete in the organization.

However, consumer's co-operation still keeps an important presence in many Countries. It has been able to overcome crisis and continues to grow and to play an important socio economic role.

Now, 12 Consumer Cooperatives are in the Top 100 retailers of the world, while in some countries - Switzerland, Italy, Vietnam, Singapore, Kuwait, Denmark, Finland – consumer Cooperatives dominate. Japanese Consumer's Co-op is first, at international level, in terms of turnover and number of members.

"You must be Better not Behind; if not better, be different", says a Japanese proverb: it is the way followed by successful co-operatives.

The building of consortium and networks between co-operatives has shown to be essential to improve economic performances, develop new services and strengthen co-operative's purchase and marketing

strategies. Still today, this choice proves to be the right one. We have learnt that, no matter how large it is, a co-operative cannot win the competitive challenge against multinationals by acting alone.

Being part of a network means to be part of a circuit of knowledge, experiences and abilities which facilitates the accomplishment of innovative processes, necessary to anticipate changes: they are all essential factors for a mutual growth and a higher social visibility.

For this reason, the sharing of Co-op Tokyo in the Coop Net consortium is very important. It is a choice consistent with the strategies it pursues and, at the same time, it contributes to the strengthening of JCCU and the whole co-operation.

Another essential choice, strictly related to the previous one, is the constant application of co-operative values and principles: member's participation, social responsibility, innovation, integrity, etc.

When these values are the true leaders, the co-operative maintains a strong distinctive identity and achieves a high level of loyalty from its customers.

Co-op Tokyo represents an exemplary case.

Its opening to the problems of the world, together with its strong rooting in the territory give the correct reading of how the corporate social responsibility should be expressed.

The initiatives taken by Co-op Tokyo range from the search for lasting solutions to fight against poverty and suffering around the world, to the safety of the environment, from the preferential relationship with local producers to the support of overseas producers to improve the effectiveness and ensure the quality and safety of the products.

The support given by Coop Tokyo to farmers in order to reduce the use of pesticides and the aid given them to experiments in rotating system represent a very good practice. As well as the contract with plantations overseas to assure the quality, to reduce pesticides, to check ethical issues and actually supported banana suppliers to improve bananas varieties.

Mr. President, dear friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Japanese Consumer's Co-operation enjoys a high consideration in international co-operation.

Together with other co-operative sectors, it made Japan a co-operative Country, by heightening the social role of co-operative enterprise and contributing to the economic development of the Country.

It is important that the revision of the legislation allows the full unfolding of the potentiality of co-operative enterprises.

The challenges to be faced are difficult but also exciting. The long experience of our movement teaches us that if we don't win all together we are bound to loose as individuals.

For this reason, unity among co-operators represents a precious resource, which must be continuously nourished.

Also for this reason, I am very grateful to the Japanese co-operators for their commitment, solidarity and long and valuable contribution to International Co-operative Alliance.

Thank you for your kind attention.

