



Nr 4  
Friday  
October  
19

# ICA GA Digest



## Today's programme

- 9.00-10.00  
Panel session:  
Conclusion from Sessions I-IV  
(Pandang & Canning)
- 10.30-12.30  
International Accounting Standards  
(Pandang & Canning)
- 12.45-15.00  
Distribution of voting cards and ballot  
papers  
(ICA Registration Desk)
- 13.30-18.00  
ICA Statutory Business  
(Pandang & Canning)
- 19.30-23.00  
ICA Farewell Dinner  
(For registered ICA GA delegates  
only, RCC, Raffles Ballroom)

## GA opens with big bang!

2007 General Assembly delegates packed the ballroom at Raffles Convention Centre to officially open the event. Lights, pyrotechnics, dancing and 'magic brushes' painted an exciting backdrop to the two-day programme ahead.

Mr Seah Kian Peng, Chairman SNCF thanked Guest of Honour Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Singapore Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports. ICA President Ivano Barberini said Singapore provided an ideal context for the GA theme; Innovation in co-operative business.



## Birthing Together: steps on the road from conflict to peace

On the western edge of the Negev desert facing the Gaza strip and straddling the Israel Palestine border, Kissufim - the kibbutz Yehudah Paz helped establish in 1950 - has donated 10 hectares of land for a new 120 bed maternity hospital that will be jointly owned and run by Israelis and Palestinians.

When the idea was first announced following a grant from Co-ops UK, co-operators in the audience immediately came forward to pledge more funds. Doctors from around the world have volunteered to take part, and when the first stone is laid, hopefully on International Women's Day next year, the potential for peace is inspiring. "This isn't talking peace, it's making peace" comments Paz. "Peace is political but rests on the people to people interaction. This is the way to build understanding and move away from conflict. From enemies

to neighbours, from neighbours to partners and from partners to friends. You don't have to look very deeply into this to see how co-operatives can play a central role in the peace process in this way."

Another project, funded by the EU, looks to promote the role of women in rural development. It is a partnership between a Palestinian NGO - YED, the Israeli NISPED and the Italian LEGACOOP and offered 80 places to Palestinian women. "There were 1200 applicants for those 80 places," said Yehudah Paz. "Imagine what happens when these women tell their families and extended families about this partnership project and when they pack their first products for sale and export?" The various aspects, practical, ideological and historical of co-operatives and peace form the subject matter of a new book that Yehudah Paz and Dr. Ian MacPherson are writing.

### Growing peace...

"Co-operative Produce for Peace" is a proposed joint venture of the Israeli and Palestinian vegetable growers in the Gaza strip. The aim is to jointly grow and market produce for peace, in the hope that consumers willing to pay an extra penny for Fair Trade coffee, would consider paying a penny more for "peaceful" cherry tomatoes. For growers on both sides of the border, peace is an essential precondition for growing anything."

The project plan is to set up a co-operative that embraces the co-operative notion of conflict resolution.

"We believe that joint business partnerships require a minimum amount of trust, especially if partners are on opposing sides. The idea here is that if the growers - who share the same ecosystems to grow potatoes, strawberries and sweet peppers - are willing to enter into a businesses partnership together then they must also be ready to end the conflict," says Ravi Goldman of the Centre for Co-operatives Studies at the Negev Institute, whose own kibbutz URIM is a partner in the project.



## Protecting our children against violence

Today's resolution submitted by the National Co-operative Union of Turkey identifies some of the dangers that the children across the world are increasingly exposed to. It acknowledges that whilst it is governments who should take on board more social responsibility within their actions to solve this problem, Co-operatives also have a role to play within their own activities and in partnership with government and other organisations.

The other Resolutions for consideration by the General Assembly are: Climate Change: Our Co-operative Commitment and DotCOOP



## Survival ...

"When you explain what you mean by climate change to small farmers in Asia, they will certainly confirm that over the last 10-15 years there has been more havoc caused by weather patterns affecting their crops and threatening food security. Sustainable farming practice is the key to survival."

**Wim Polman**

*Natural Resources Management and Environment Dept. FAO*



*Steinar Dversdal, ICA Board member and Chair of the co-operative Fellowship Supply of Marketing Co-ops (centre left) and Paul Hazen, CEO NCBA, National Co-operative Business Association, USA (centre right).*

## 3.6 m US\$ dollars for new co-operative project in Mozambique

Collaboration between the Norwegian Government and Federation of Co-ops in Norway and the NCBA (National Co-operative Business Association) to facilitate a programme to produce Soya Beans by co-operative farmers in Mozambique has been awarded 3.6 million US Dollars of funding. The announcement was made at the GA. This project began as the idea of Steinar Dversdal, ICA Board member and Chair of the Norwegian Co-operative Fellowship of Supply of Marketing Co-ops who was aware of the expertise in Africa of NCBA's CLUSA programme. "The Norwegian Government have been encouraging us to import more agricultural products from developing countries - and we investigated the desperate situation for co-operative farmers in Mozambique following the civil war and realised this was an

opportunity to stimulate 3000 small co-operative farmers to produce Soya beans for us for the first time." Paul Hazen commented "This is a good example of an innovative collaboration between co-operatives in Norway and the United States We want to work with organisations that share the same principles and values. This is the message that we want to go out to the ICA." Steinar anticipated concern from his members if the arrangement to purchase Soya bean from the farmers at a fixed price turned out to be uncommercial. " But when we showed a short film of the Mozambique farmers we will support, our members all applauded and came up to us to beg us to go through with this project even if it was non-commercial for us."

# ”Stay true to values and prosper” - minister challenges co-ops



”  
Trustworthiness  
and social worth-  
ness have a place  
in today’s world.  
Co-operatives  
demonstrate these  
characteristics...”

*Mr. Seah, Chair-  
man SNCF, Board  
Member ICA and  
MP Republic of  
Singapore.*

In his address to the GA at yesterday’s opening ceremony, **Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan** issued a heartfelt challenge to the global co-operative movement to succeed in commercial terms but stay true to its core values and principles. Dr. Balakrishnan, put aside his prepared notes to deliver an impassioned speech about the role co-operatives can play in today’s context of unprecedented economic opportunities but growing socio-economic disadvantage.

Balakrishnan thanked ICA for providing Singapore the opportunity to host the meeting, a high level co-operative event in South-East Asia and

”  
True human development can only  
occur when economic development  
is placed at the service of current and  
future social needs.”

*Ivano Barberini, ICA President*

described the gathering of 1000 co-operators from 70 countries as a ”mini-UN”. The Minister said the movement had three issues to consider. Firstly, to ask if it is still relevant in the new world economy. Secondly co-operators should question if they are here to



make money or to do something else? Finally co-operatives should examine how they will maintain trust and integrity with clients, members and the community.

Balakrishnan said the world had entered an era of unprecedented economic growth, which had raised the human global capacity for job creation and generating profits. It was also an era of disproportional return on capital to the owners of capitalistic enterprises over their workers. ”In this context I believe co-operatives are more important than ever...the situation cries out for a further expansion of the co-operative movement,” he said.





"Co-operatives must be more than viable businesses...Ask yourself each day, 'are you true to your cause' be it empowerment of women, sustainability or elimination of poverty..."

To ensure trustworthiness co-operatives must insist on transparency; "Do what you say and say what you do"; and they must maintain competence in the business they carry out, in governance and accountability. Balakrishnan said that in the last two years, his Ministry had been working with SNCF to review the legislation governing co-operatives to ensure long-term relevance and viability. "In Singapore we have been blessed because there has been strong political leadership that has recognised the special role co-operatives play."

Speaking again from the heart, Balakrishnan concluded by saying, "I believe, in my heart of hearts that the co-operative movement is alive and well and must triumph in the decades to come."

Opening the GA, Mr. Seah focused his comments on the importance of the ICA restructuring and governance process. "Good governance is needed to strengthen the good work of co-operatives...This process marks a new point in ICA history and prepares the way for the future."

Mr. Seah said that Singapore was very proud to have two co-operatives represented in the Global 300, NTUC Fairprice and NTUC Income. "Co-operatives have a wide profile in Singapore and provide a model for co-ops in the region." The GA



would provide a forum to discuss ways to strengthen the mind-share of co-ops he concluded.

Ivano Barberini spoke strongly of the threat posed by unchecked capitalistic endeavour to environmental sustainability and socio-economic development for all people. "The mere goal of profit making can only lead to destruction of the environment...Economic development must meet today's needs without compromising the future," said Mr. Barberini.

Barberini said the co-operative movement is committed to fulfilling the Millennium Goals, but lasting economic development and lasting social transformation can only occur with a change in the present approach to economic development. "The great ideas behind co-operation have found new reasons to be pursued," he said.





*Profile: Teo Say Hong,  
Global Youth Representative on  
ICA Board:*

## "Succession planning is vital"

The incoming Global Youth Representative Teo Say Hong, has put succession planning at the top of his list of priorities for his two year term on the ICA Board.

"We must provide a structure and a framework to ensure the next generation of young people come through and there is no loss of momentum," said Teo.

Teo was instrumental in establishing the Asia-Pacific Youth Committee in response to the need for a formal structure around youth involvement in the region. He would like to pass on the lessons from this process to help develop formal structures for youth development at global level.

"I am also looking forward to the opportunity to contribute to Board discussion on all aspects of ICA activity."

Teo said he had first-hand experience of co-operation between co-operatives helping the global peace-building process. "By co-operating we are able to let go of some historical conflicts and realise out common humanity. Co-operatives build bridges between people and nations."

Teo Say Hong is also Chair of ICA AP Youth Committee and Chair of SNCF Youth Committee.

# Opportunities for collaboration

One of the benefits of membership of ICA is that it provides an opportunity for co-operatives to meet and discuss common interests and strategies to address some of the challenges for the movement globally. GA Digest spoke to Trent Bartlett, CEO Capricorn Society about a meeting between co-operators from Canada, Australia, NZ, US and UK to discuss issues of common concern and opportunities for collaboration.

"It is important that apex organisations consider how we generate fees for service ... For co-operatives that operate in a global environment, one of the key issues is how to levy membership fees in an equitable way. An arrangement for an adjustment of fees based on local currency can be made. This allows the maintenance of equitable distribution of services for all members."

"There was general consensus that all countries want to promote the co-operative way as a 'better' way of doing business, and for a commitment to developing local co-operatives such as suppliers of services in developing areas. Some of the larger co-ops, with



ICA support, can encourage investment in co-op development, but when it comes to individual countries, there is an urgent need for leadership".

"To help it along there's a push from the US for a socially-responsible investor class for economic development. The question is for co-ops to lay claim to their call for commitment to sustainability, if they want to appeal to these investors. The point wasn't lost that many co-operatives form out of adversity, or to address something that is unjust in commercial or social terms. For example, the adverse affects of International Accounting Standards on co-operatives has united people. The importance of apex organisations and federations in the co-operative movement has been reignited around this particular issue".

## ICA GA Digest

Four issues of the General Assembly Digest will be produced and distributed 16-19 of October.

If you have information, comments or suggestions for any of the GA Digest issues, you will find us in the Blundell room in the Executive Conference Centre.

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### Find GA Online here:

The GA Programme <http://www.ica.coop/calendar/ga2007/index.html>

Meeting Documentation <http://www.ica.coop/calendar/ga2007/docs.html>

Speaker Biographiess <http://www.ica.coop/calendar/ga2007/bios.html>

ICA Singapore page: <http://www.icasingapore.coop/>

## "We all started out small"

Jean Luis Bancel, Credit Cooperatif and Chair of the ICBA (International co-operative Banking Association) sees the Global 300 lists, as well as the meetings devoted to discussing accounting standards, as a critical step in the direction of a global ICA that offers essential services to its members.

"I cannot stress how important this accounting standards issue is, and how we need a global lobby to ensure that co-operatives can retain their historical diversity and remain coherent. The Global 300 is not just about figures. We need to look behind the figures at real people who want to retain their freedom. On my return I shall be publishing a National 100 list for France and a ICBA top 100 list as part of the global data gathering exercise. This is not about being "big" - co-ops all began small once."



*Lim Boon Heng:*

## Remember the spirit of co-operation

Lim Boon Heng, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Government of Singapore and Chair Social Enterprise Development Council, Singapore National Trades Union Congress (SNTUC) spoke yesterday about the need for co-operatives to reflect on why they came about.

"Whilst globalisation has helped growth it has brought about social imbalances. The model (to increase the wealth of its stakeholders) is immoral, especially when it also said that the most important asset of any company is its employees...Businesses must look beyond profits as their raison d'être. They must exist for their communities.

"It is our obligation to work together in the spirit of co-operation. Our real value is in keeping the social contract with communities alive, to improve the living standard of working people and ensure they get a fair return for their hard work.

"The co-operative movement acts as a counterweight to the excesses of profit driven businesses. In order to do this the movement must grow to a size where it can be a significant force with status throughout the world. Co-operatives need to share best practice with each other to develop co-operatively and to make this world a better place. This is my wish."

### Question:

## "What is the most important issue at the GA?"



"It's very important that we prepare the future employees of the movement by promoting the development of young co-operators. We need to build the youth movement."

**Bubung Lukman Hakim, DEKOPIN**



"The GA should be concerned with reviewing and correcting old conceptions about co-ops."

**PH Suroto, Youth delegate, Indonesia**



# Italian backing on energy response

Felice Scalvini, Italian member of ICA Board will lead the push to find solutions to the global energy crisis. "We are very interested in creating a new energy group within ICA, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to lead that group."

"Historically in my own country we had a large co-operative energy sector mainly in hydro-electricity production. The development of the public sector and nationalisation of energy by the government has led to the closing of many of these sites. Now with the looming energy crisis we need to look at opportunities to explore alternative facilities such as wind and solar power, and identify ways co-operatives can be involved in distribution and provision of services to consumers."

"We are committed to examining joint solutions with people like Paul Hazen (NCBA) and others interested in this subject. In the meantime we will begin to compile a database of co-operatives in the energy field worldwide."

# Strategic thinking

Innovation is great but it needs to be sustainable says keynote speaker, David Cook, CEO "The Natural Step". "Co-ops at the highest level need to be much more strategic in addressing the global bio-fuel issue. There many solutions and huge debate about the sustainability of ethanol and other energy options. Huge ethical issues confront us and I suggest that the co-operative movement must get down to detail and start funding serious research into the alternatives. We need independent, neutral and sustainable development. All the co-operative principles and values fit under the banner of sustainability but we are not portraying this successfully. The co-operative movement has real 'power' to be able to sponsor analysis of what is going to work.

# Global 300 in Israel

The Negev Institute run courses and study missions on using co-operative values to gain competitive advantage to persuade co-operative business

managers that members are an asset rather than a liability.

"The Global 300 is a very important exercise, but how conscious are the management teams of the listed enterprises about their responsibility to promote co-operative values?" Ravi Goldman asks. "Some co-operative enterprises have become world class businesses. Here in Israel we are very successful at the business side but less good at promoting co-op values. We want to introduce these ideas to our own management teams and study the best practice models that CEOs in the Global 300 can share with us."



## Sorry, Dzung!

Yesterday's GA Digest incorrectly ran a photo of GA delegate Bubung Lukman Hakim with a quote from Dzung Vu Van of Vietnam. This is the real Dzung!

# Thanks...

On behalf of the delegates and visitors to the General Assembly, the GA Digest team expresses thanks to Zulkifh Mohammed, the Organising Committee Chair of SNCF and to Marie Elena Chavez Hertig, deputy Director General of ICA and their teams for the smooth organisation of this week in Singapore and of course, special thanks to the staff of the Raffles City Convention Centre. And a big 'thank you' to Madame Vivianne Vaucher and her team of interpreters and to the Japanese team for helping many of us to understand the General Assembly proceedings.

Your GA News Digest team also thank all of you, our readers, for your patience and understanding when we have stopped you for an interview or picture - your eagerness to tell us your story has made our job easier. Lastly, we must ask for a smile from our printers - we did our best to meet your deadlines, we just need more practice!

