



Weekly Digest

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Editorial

Welcome to the thirty-sixth issue of the Weekly Digest. This week we report on the ICA Americas Regional Assembly. This completes our coverage of the ICA's four assemblies held during 2004. The next round of regional assemblies will be in 2006. The focus for 2005 will be our global General Assembly, which like the recent regional assembly will be held on this occasion in the Americas region. We will be shortly previewing the General Assembly programme and related events. It is shaping up as one of the most exciting yet, with its focus on co-operative business models. We hope you enjoy this week's special issue, next week we return to our normal format of news and coming events. Finally, thanks to Manuel Mariño and Diana Retana from ICA Americas for help in producing this issue of the Digest.

Economic Integration, Social Wealth and Employment focus of Americas Regional Conference

Economic integration, social wealth and employment were the crosscutting themes of the 13th Regional Conference of ICA Americas, held 22-26 November 2004 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

More than 640 co-operative members from the Americas and Europe attended the lectures, panel discussions and sectoral workshops.

Activities during the week included a youth meeting and the 2nd continental meeting of women co-operative members. In addition, at the 2nd meeting of American parliamentarians themes related to co-operatives and legislation were discussed. The Executive and Finance Committee of ICA Americas also met as did the Regional Council and the 6th Regional Assembly for the Americas was held.

Inauguration

The inauguration of the 13th Regional Conference took place on Wednesday 24 November 2004.

The photo shows from left María Elena Chavez Hertig, Deputy Director-General of ICA; Patricio Griffin, INAES; Juan Carlos Fissore, President of Cooperar; Ivano Barberini, President of the ICA; Carlos Palacino, President of ICA Americas; Gustavo Sebastian Lopetegui, Minister of Production of the Province of Buenos Aires and Manuel Mariño, Regional Director of ICA Americas.



Participants at the registration table.



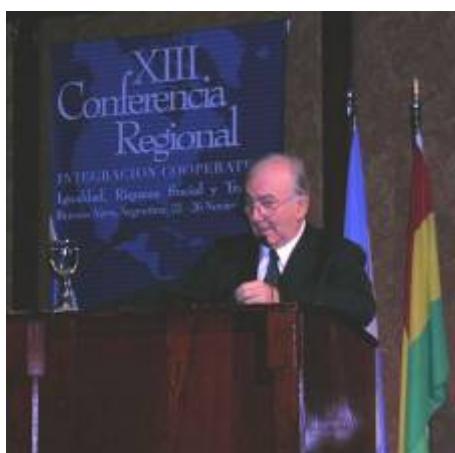
Commitment to Co-operatives: 2nd Meeting of American Parliamentarians

The 2nd Meeting of American Parliamentarians, with the participation of 40 legislators from the eight Latin American countries of Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay was held on 23 November as part of the 13th Regional Conference of ICA Americas. Also participating were the members of the ICA Americas Consultative Council and other special guests.

This was the second consecutive year American parliamentarians interested in co-operatives met. They examined advances with respect to the 2003 Declaration of San Juan, Puerto Rico. They addressed the development of the sector and discussed perspectives on the business model in the context of globalisation, the legal framework of co-operatives and public policies on sectoral promotion and development in each of the countries.



Parliamentarians and co-op representatives



ICA President, Ivano Barberini addressing the conference

An innovation this year saw the parliamentarians and other participants divide into four work groups: globalisation and possibilities for development, workers' co-operatives, legislation and taxation. Each group studied and analysed the work theme and developed conclusions, which were included in a final declaration.

At the end of the session, the parliamentarians signed a declaration as an outcome of their analysis and work. It includes the following commitments:

- Signatory parliamentarians pledge to promote and defend the co-operative model as an instrument of equality, social wealth and employment, based on the principles adopted and disseminated by the International Co-operative Alliance.
- Influence national, regional and local governments to have co-operatives incorporated in public policies as an alternative socio-economic and development model, through the definition of programmes, projects and sources of funding that facilitate community access through co-operatives for productive and sustainable economic outcomes.

• Encourage legislative reforms enabling the establishment of a suitable judicial framework for sound development of co-operatives, observing, among others, ILO Recommendation 193 on the promotion of co-operatives, and continue working towards framework co-operative legislation for all the countries of Latin America. In addition, insist that education for youth promote the teaching of co-operative values and principles and their practice in business.

• Support co-operative development as an effective alternative to mitigate the economic and social impacts stemming from free market processes and economic globalisation. Advance the role co-operatives play in the creation of local and regional markets and their role defending the interests of small producers and consumers. Clusters of productivity should consequently be cultivated among co-operatives of all types. Also, promote processes fostering harmonised and friendly legislation that enables co-operatives to take advantage of regional integration schemes.



Claudia Sanchez Bajo, EU representative of the RECM (Mercosur Specialised Co-operative Committee) with Professor Dante Cracogna



*Permanent and substitute delegates attending the
6th Regional Assembly*

- Encourage the establishment of a special homogeneous tax regimen attuned to co-operatives, which encourages associational activity and promotes the collective creation of economic and social capital, with due State control to prevent abuses placing the co-operative system at risk. Strive for compatible accounting and tax norms in keeping with the special nature of co-operatives, to avoid conflicts between fiscal authorities and the co-operative sector.

- Promote comprehensive oversight for co-operatives through a specialised supervisory entity, suited to its special judicial nature and the characteristics and particularities inherent to its business and associative structure and economic system. Similarly, establish internal control mechanisms exercised with the force of law by the co-operatives' special integration bodies, which defend their practice and denounce and expel offenders of the law and co-operative doctrine.

- Recognise that associative work co-operatives represent a self-management instrument for the business organisation of workers, useful for combating unemployment through the autonomous creation of jobs. The State should promote and strengthen this type of entity and design oversight mechanisms to prevent their demutualisation.

At the initiative of the Mexican parliamentarians, the next meeting will be held in Mexico in July-August 2005. Read the complete declaration on the ICA Americas website: www.aciamericas.coop.

ICA Americas Regional Assembly Approves New Strategic Plan

During the Regional Assembly, delegates heard and approved reports on the past two years of work (2002-2004), presented by the President of ICA Americas, Carlos Palacino, and Regional Director Manuel Mariño.

After an analysis of the principal guidelines of the ICA Americas Strategic Plan for 2005-2008, it was unanimously supported by delegates and now becomes part of the ICA's overall global strategy.

The Strategic Plan

With the future implementation of this plan, the aim is to consolidate the role of co-operatives in Latin America through the strengthening of political, economic and social advocacy on behalf of the co-operative movement.

The five strategic areas analysed and approved were:

- Political and Institutional development
 - Representation, and defence
 - Co-operative integration
 - Gender and youth policy
 - Institutional development
- Development and sustainability of the Regional Office
 - Human Resources
 - Financing
 - Organization and structure
 - Strategy



Manuel Mariño outlining the new strategic plan



Ivano Barberini and Paul Hazen discussing an issue while a fellow delegate looks on.

- Promotion and development
 - Co-operation among sectors
 - Co-operative excellence
 - Co-operative services
- Innovation and learning
 - Co-operative training
 - Innovation and knowledge management
- Communication and image
 - Dissemination, Information and communication media



Carlos Palacino, Ivano Barberini and other participants

Second Continental Meeting of Women

Women co-operators aim to establish gender equity policies that benefit the integration of the co-operative movement in the American region

In the framework of the 13th Regional Conference, more than 150 women met to discuss and analyse policies on equality and integration within the framework of the co-operative movement. Men and women shared the objective of assessing the need to establish an ICA certification programme for gender equity, as a contribution to the comprehensive development of co-operatives.

ICA Deputy Director-General, María Elena Chávez was in charge of inaugurating the activity and stressed that the role of women is vital in the development of co-operatives and the generation of competitive businesses.

“Meetings like this one make it possible for women to analyse their personal capacities and share ideas on how to achieve a more active gender experience in their own co-operatives.”

Participating in the opening speeches, as lecturer was Teresa Páez, Vice-president of Federación Andaluza de Empresas de Trabajo (FAECTA), who stressed that women’s collaboration in co-operatives is essential to generate policies for equality.



A working session of the Forum



Participants from the Women’s Forum

“It is an ideal platform for broadening the existing co-operative principles and values, so that programmes and proposals can then be developed for gender equality.”

In addition to the presentation of the possible ICA gender equity certification programme, women’s participation in regional co-operatives was also examined, and perspectives were shared on women’s situation in the different co-operative organisations

Youth Meeting

The Regional Conference provided a forum for young people in the American region for discussion and analysis.

Given the need to revitalise and strengthen the internal forces of the movement with youth leadership, more than 50 young co-operative members from Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina met to analyse and discuss their role and possibilities within the regional co-operative movement.

To encourage the formation of new leaders and to help develop their professional careers and identification with forms of co-operative organisation, various lectures and work groups were offered. Topics on



Young co-operators at the youth forum

the themes of education, employment and opportunities for participation, along with the possibility of forming co-operative youth connected with the social economy were offered.

Youth participants

At the end of the session, the young people issued a declaration in which they requested intervention to intensify a political process that is coherent and consistent, locally focused, and constructed by means of promotion and communication tools that ensure the participation of the region's youth co-operators. See Declaration: www.aciamericas.coop

Meeting of the Network of Universities

The researchers from a number of different universities had an opportunity to meet within the framework of the 13th Regional Conference. The academic committee of the Asociación de Universidades del Grupo Montevideo and Red UniRcoop shared their work and lines of investigation with respect to co-operatives and education. *Photo opposite of academic committee.*



Welcome to New Members



CENECOOP receives accreditation as an ICA member.

On the evening of November 25, at a formal ceremony characterised by the solidarity and fraternity of ICA members, six new co-operative organisations were warmly received, as they became a part of the co-operative family of the ICA. The new organisations received by the delegates of their respective countries and special guests were: Seguros Panal-Paraguay; Colegio Gimnasio Los Pinos-Colombia, Cooperativa del Magisterio (CODEMA)-Colombia, Cooperativa Mixta de Mujeres Unidas (Comixmul)-Honduras, CHF-International -United States, and Centro de Estudios y Capacitación R.L. (CENECOOP)-Costa Rica.



The organisations received the flag and plaque accrediting them as members of the International Co-operative Alliance. The ceremony was headed by ICA Americas President, Carlos Palacino, Regional Director, Manuel Mariño, and Elba Echevarría, member of the ICA Board.

Photo opposite shows PANAL receiving their certificate of membership.

Sectoral Workshops: Training and Exchange of Experiences

As part of the activities of the Regional Conference, on November 24th twelve sectoral workshops were held on the topics of workers, forestry, agriculture, health, communications, human resources, student co-operatives, public policy, public service and tourism. The workshops permitted interaction with specialists who analysed and shared experiences and concrete cases with the participants.

Insurance Workshop

Held on the afternoon of November 24, the workshop on insurance examined the following themes:

- The role of insurance co-operatives in the generation of social wealth
- Channelling insurance through the co-operative financial system
- BANCA-SEGUROS
- Business possibilities between insurance co-operatives and the co-operative savings and credit sector
- Challenges and opportunities for Latin America insurance co-operatives

Health Workshop

The following topics were addressed:

- Situation of the health sector in Argentina, proposals of the co-operative sector
- Questions and answers
- The co-operative sector in Argentina, perspectives for the health sector
- Situation of the health sector in Colombia
- Situation of health co-operatives in Canada

Forestry Network

The Forestry workshop, “Development of Forestry Models: How to Create Alliances Encouraging Economic Development and Investment” was held November 24 and 25. As a special activity, on the second day participants visited the INTA “25 de mayo” forest station.

During the first day of the workshop, attended by Réjean Lantagne, Director General of SOCODEVI, 44 participants from nine South American countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico and Uruguay) had the opportunity to hear an inaugural address by Richard Lacasse, SOCODEVI’s Director for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Afterwards, the following speakers gave presentations: Jocelyn Lessard, Conference of Forestry Co-operatives of Quebec, Canada; Forestry Engineer Richard Trudel, SOCODEVI Canada; Andrés Berterreche, Uruguay; Carlos Vasallo, CCU, Uruguay; Martin Nicolas Ecker, Argentina; Luis María Mestres, Director of the Department of Forest Resources, Province of Corrientes; Rodolfo Stella, forestry consultant; and Gerardo Bermúdez, ICA Americas.

The aim of the workshop was to build and strengthen participants’ capacities to plan and develop forestry models attractive to national and international investors.



Latin American participants on a field visit to the INTA 25 de mayo forest station



Gerhard Klassen and Gustav Savaatzky

Agriculture Network

The following speakers participated in the agriculture workshop on November 24: Marcio de Freitas-OCB of Brazil, Gastón Rico-CAF of Uruguay and Gustav Savaatzky-FECOPROD of Paraguay. In addition to learning about the situation in the South American countries, agreements and proposals were made for the ICA Agricultural Committee.

Some of the major agreements reached were the following:

- Recognising the role of the ICA and of the Specialised Meeting of Co-operatives in the Mercosur (RECM), co-operatives should demand two basic measures from the government to facilitate co-operative activity: implement ILO Recommendation 193 and endeavour to avoid the fiscal assimilation of our organisations with businesses in the non-solidarity economy
- Work decisively to increase the value added of our products
- Co-operatives should reinforce their potential through quality certification for their products
- Reinforce our co-operatives tools with: a) professionalisation of management; b) investment in human capital; c) train negotiators in order to create a business network; d) act with social responsibility; e) access regionally integrated information mechanisms for more and better decision-making
- Co-operatives in the region should be aligned behind a common strategy addressing the problems identified as priorities.

Worker Co-operatives

Both the workshop and the forum on associated work held in Buenos Aires as part of the 13th Regional Conference of ICA Americas focused on two fundamental issues: legislation on worker co-operatives, and the importance of worker co-operatives in the countries' new social and economic context due to their contribution to the generation of employment and social and economic wealth.



Panel on worker ownership

Over 80 people attended, including Rainer Schluter and Bruno Roelants, the President and Secretary of CICOPA, with cases presented on the situation of co-operatives and successful experiences in Uruguay, Argentina and Colombia. Discussion also took place on the analysis of Uruguay's Law 17.794.

Speakers included Bruno Roelants, Secretary-General of CICOPA; Rainer Schluter, President of CICOPA; Danilo Gutiérrez and Sergio Reyes, CUDECOOP (Uruguay); Walter Coscio, ACTRA (Argentina); Carlos Castro, CPCA (Costa Rica); Alberto Rosa, FECOOAPORT (Argentina); Jorge Tocalino, CELSI (Argentina); and Rosani Holler, OCB (Brazil); Marcos Silveira FECOTRA (Argentina), John Jairo Gómez, CONFECOOP-Antioquia (Colombia); Julio Gambina, IMFC (Argentina), Walter Tesch, CICOPA-Américas, Clemente Jaimes, COOPVENCEDOR (Colombia) and Alberto Rezzónico IDELCOOP (Argentina).

Copies of the Weekly Digest are archived on the ICA's website www.ica.coop