



ICA Digest

Issue 50

July 2006

Inside this issue:

- From the editor's desk 2
- ICA welcomes new members 2
- DG's report 3
- Co-op Peace Conference 5
- International Day of Co-operatives 6
- Peace prize award to co-operator 8
- Global 300 9
- icanews.coop 10
- Appeal 11
- ICA Americas 12
- Housing 16
- Agriculture 17
- Members news 18
- Interview 20
- People 23
- Calendar 24

Editor:

Garry Cronan
cronan@ica.coop

Associate Editors:

Suzanne Henderson
Melina Morrison

www.ica.coop

2006 International Day of Co-operatives: "Peace building through co-operatives"

Saturday, the first of July 2006 was the 84th ICA International Co-operative Day and the 12th UN International Day of Co-operatives.

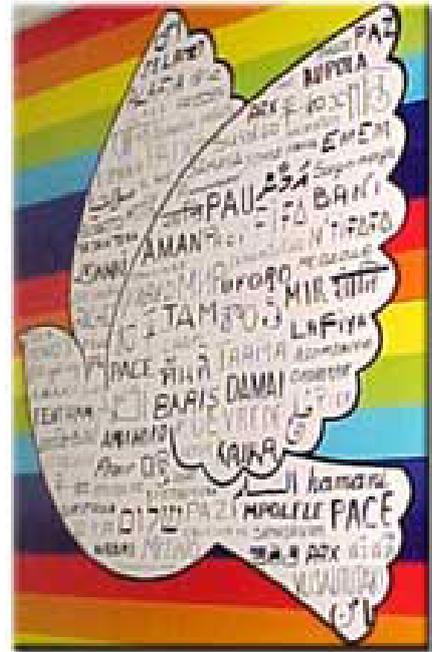
This year, International Co-operative Day celebrated all that co-operatives have done and are doing to make the world a safer and more secure place for all.

The theme of "Peace-building through co-operatives", highlights the fact that co-operative enterprises continue to foster peace among peoples, communities and nations.

It underlines the two most important factors for peace in the world - economic growth shared by many and democracy - and thus the significant role that co-operatives play.

The co-operative model of enterprise itself is based on procedures and structures, which help promote harmony within diversity.

.....Continued on page 8



See inside for our special two page feature on International Day of Co-operatives -

Co-ops at the World Peace Forum in Vancouver 2006

The World Peace Forum was held in Vancouver, Canada, 23-28 June 2006.

The secondary title of the World Peace Forum was *Cities and Communities: Working Together to End War, and Build a World of Peace and Justice*.

During the opening session of the forum, Ivano Barberini, President of the International Co-operative Alliance, spoke on the merits of co-operatives working with communities in crisis; helping build communities to meet people's social and economic needs and thus promoting peace.

....Continued on page 23



ICA President, Ivano Barberini one of the keynote speakers at the World Peace Forum. This forum had over 5000 participants and was one of the largest such gathering in recent years.

From the editor's desk



Garry Cronan
Editor

Welcome to the fiftieth edition of the ICA **Digest** - our first half century!

The focus for this month's issue is peace. This year's International Day of Co-operatives' theme is *peace building through co-operatives*.

The choice of this theme reflects the importance the ICA has continually placed on promoting peace building through co-operatives since its very beginnings in 1895.

This month we also take a detailed look at the activities of our ICA Americas region in a special four page feature.

Additionally, we welcome Andrew Bibby to the ICA communications team. Andrew will be regularly offering commentary on the news which we are now gathering through our new ICA news service at www.icanews.coop.

Our now regular **Global 300** reports continue to highlight a number of interesting developments among the world's largest co-operatives as they seek to compete in an increasingly competitive environment.

The popular interview

series this month features Seah Kian Peng, Chairman of Singapore National Co-operative Federation and recently elected ICA Board member. He provides a number of interesting ideas on what the international co-operative movement should be doing to advance its cause.

As usual we would welcome your comments on or contributions to the **Digest**.

Garry Cronan

cronan@ica.coop

New members

ICA's now has 226 members from 91 countries making it one of the largest NGO's in the world - it is also one of the oldest!

ICA welcomes new members

Two new organisations have formally joined the ICA since the last ICA Board meeting in Washington in May. This brings the total number of ICA members to 226 member organisations (220 Members and 6 Associate Members) from 91 countries.

CONFENACOOP - Peru

CONFENACOOP is the national representative organisation of the Peruvian co-operative movement. Its main activities include promoting co-operative integration among the various sectors, representing the movement with government authorities, promoting co-operative training and education, defending the co-operative principles, promoting the job-creation in rural areas through co-operatives and undertaking income generating activities to finance its actions. It is funded by member subscriptions and donations.

CONFENACOOP regroups 5 national federations and 380 co-operative societies (280 financial co-operatives, 50 insurance co-operatives and 50 other types of co-operatives (consumer, agricultural, etc). It represents 790,000 individual members (410,000 women and 380,000 men) and provides employment to 3,500 individuals (1,900 women and 1,600 men).



Kibbutz Movement - Israel

The Kibbutz Movement, an apex organisation, brings together 250 kibbutz village settlements with 62,500 members. Kibbutzim are responsible for 40% of Israeli agriculture production and kibbutz industry contributes 9.2% of Israel's country-wide sales, 7.2% of export, 5.2% in investments and 9.2% in industrial employment. Industrial sales totalled USD 4.44 billion. See www.kibbutz.org.il/eng/welcome.htm



KIBBUTZIM SITE

Co-operative communities - a strife free environment?

Working for the ICA, reminds me on a daily basis of the uniqueness of our cause. I spend a lot of time telling people that co-operatives are businesses with social purpose.

This is designed to appeal to governments and international organisations that find it difficult to accept the concept where business transactions carried out in a non-hostile environment. At the same time I make the point that some of the most successful businesses in the world are co-operatives. The domination, particularly at present, of the liberal free market economy - makes our case even harder to sell but also presents us with a huge opportunity. The world is clearly tired of the antagonisms of big capitalist business and their bullying tendencies. They are also relating in-



Iain Macdonald at the recent Canadian Peace conference

creasingly to the massive gap between rich and poor and consequently areas of conflict. So let's not pretend that what we are saying is not controversial. We can offer serious solutions to

poverty and the causes of poverty but we cannot do this without threatening the fundamental basis of global capitalism. Perhaps it is time we said this more clearly. We offer an alternative economic and social structure – and it is not one that can easily coexist with the economic systems responsible for causing most of the world's problems.

ICA rules clearly state this. Article 2 says: “to promote sustainable human development and to further the economic and social progress of people thereby contributing to international peace and security.” Easy to say, not so easy to put into practice!

In my address to the UK Co-operative Congress last year in my role as Congress President, I emphasised the role co-operatives can make to world peace. I said: “If you take some of the images I have just encountered in a visit to Sri Lanka

and Indonesia and couple them with African poverty and the ravages of HIV/Aids, one begins to see the world in a rather different way. A divided world of haves and have nots; a world where the accumulation of material wealth knows no bounds while poverty knows no limit of despair. And a world where politicians, particularly in the

West, refuse to take seriously the role that our movement could play in alleviating this dreadful situation.”

I also quoted Henry May, secretary-general of the ICA from 1917 to 1939, who made one of the best and simplest cases for co-operative internationalism in the ICA review of 1938: “The co-operative movement of the world should stand unflinchingly for the principles of toleration, equity and justice in all the relations of life; respect for the rights of others; the settlement of disputes by reason and the abolition of armed conflict; the honourable fulfilment of all contractual obligations and association of the security of all in the exercise of their legitimate functions.”

Indeed it was those sentiments, which were behind the founding of the ICA in London in 1895. In 1913 the ICA Congress in Glasgow passed a famous resolution on peace, which is still basically our policy today:

“That this Congress fully endorses the action recently taken by the Executive and Central Committees of the International Co-operative Alliance in order to manifest that it is in the interests of the co-operators of all countries to do their best to uphold peace. The Congress emphasises once more that the maintenance of peace ...continued over page

DG's report



*Iain Macdonald
Director-General*

The ‘co-ops and peace’ theme continues in this month’s report from the DG.

Iain Macdonald writes from Canada where he attended both the “Co-operatives and the pursuit of peace” conference and the World Peace Forum in Vancouver.

A new feature has just been added to our website - a [President's and Director-General's page](#).

DG's report continued

“There are many such examples of how co-operatives contribute to peace locally, regionally and internationally.”

Iain Macdonald

See also ICA President, Ivano Barberini's speech to the World Peace Forum. Click here for a full transcript of the speech[more](#)

Co-operative communities - a strife free environment?

and goodwill among all nations constitutes an essential condition for the development of co-operation and the realisation of those ends, which are aimed at by this movement.

The Congress further desires to impress upon the public opinion of all nations the fact that the reasons for the continuance of armaments and the possibility of international conflicts will disappear as the social and economic life of every nation becomes organised according to co-operative principles, and that, therefore, the progress of co-operation forms one of the most valuable guarantees for the preservation of the world's peace. The Congress, therefore exhorts the people of every country to join our movement and strengthen their power.”

Co-operators at the time considered this a hugely important issue. William Maxwell during that famous and enthusiastic debate declared that international co-operation was the very antithesis of international strife. As Ivano Barberini said recently: “Competition is married to conflict, co-operation is married to peace”.

Indeed there has been a resolution on peace at the last four ICA Congresses showing the commitment to this area. It has to be said however that resolutions themselves are not enough.

The ICA has survived two world wars and numerous other conflicts holding on

to this policy. Indeed only recently we sent a message to the United Nations reaffirming support for their work especially in light of the Iraq war and the way in which the USA and Britain have ignored UN resolutions.

And of course, this year's International Day Of Co-operative's message is *Peacebuilding through co-operatives*. In this message we link the resolution of conflict and civil strife with the abolition of poverty whether caused deliberately by globalisation or by natural disasters such as the tsunami.

We draw attention to the current proposal linking the Palestinian and Israeli co-operative movements; the work ongoing in Bosnia and Serbia using housing co-operatives to rebuild communities; we will hear more about what has happened in Ireland and how the co-operative movement has contributed - I have personal experience of that; we are hopeful of assisting further in Sri Lanka where at this moment civil war seems a bit closer but where the co-operative movement is one of the few organisations bridging the racial divide.

There are many such examples of how co-operatives contribute to peace locally, regionally and internationally. We are working with the ILO to put together a global project that will show how much our movement is doing. Indeed the ILO is contributing to this conference and will be showing how co-operative forms of organisation are uniquely suited to meet the challenge to livelihood support and economy recovery in

post conflict environments. Our proposal for an African facility will hopefully serve to improve lives through co-operative enterprise in several African countries and thereby reduce poverty and conflict.

In every form of co-operative enterprise comes the ability to reduce conflict or strife. I've seen it myself in the transformation of 'sink' housing estates in Glasgow becoming models of community involvement and togetherness with the introduction of tenant management co-operatives. Similarly, credit unions have single-handedly destroyed the activities of loan sharks. Agricultural co-operatives have revitalised British farming after the disasters of foot and mouth and mad cow diseases. Fishing communities have survived the onslaught of bureaucracy and globalisation by banding together. In some countries health co-operatives are the only way in which people have access to health services and tourism co-operatives are successfully combating the abuse of young people. Many jobs have been saved by the development of worker co-operatives.

These are all the result of achieving a peaceful and secure environment. That's what co-operatives do. Conflict and co-operatives are exact opposites.

Co-operatives and the Pursuit of Peace Conference - Canada

With peace, the theme of the 2006 International Co-operatives Day celebrations – Dr Yehudah Paz's comments in his closing address to the *Co-operatives and the Pursuit of Peace conference*, held 18-20 June, in Canada, are particularly apt:

"Peace and social well being are not only relevant to co-operatives but co-operatives are relevant to



A conference session being led by Ann Hoyt, former chair NCBA, USA

the peace making process in communities and societies throughout the world," he said.

38 participants representing over 14 countries met in Victoria, British Columbia, to review the history of how co-operatives have addressed conflict and to reflect on the current practices of co-operatives operating in areas deeply divided by political, economic and social injustices. The conference, hosted by the British Columbia Institute for Co-operative Studies, web.uvic.ca/bcics/, drew delegates from around the globe: Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Japan, India, Kenya, Israel, Colombia, the UK, Finland, Germany, Italy, the US and Canada.

Participants shared knowledge and insights on the factors contributing to

certain conflicts, the particular challenges co-operatives must address in these areas and how co-ops and regional co-operative movements are contributing to peace making and sustainability. Different areas of conflict were explored, such as conflict related to gender oppression; conflict that arises from economic oppression, poverty and related social injustices; situations of armed confrontation and political strife; and conflict following wide-scale natural disasters such as

the 2004 tsunami.

Among specific case studies presented for discussion was: rebuilding the co-operative movement in Sri Lanka and Indonesia (the Aceh area in particular which also touched on the Post-MOU conditions); Israel and Palestine - a co-operative approach to conflict; the role of informal co-operatives in peace building in Ethiopia; co-operatives, armed conflict and sustainable development in Colombia; and women's co-operatives dealing with conflict in Nepal.

In the dialogue that unfolded over the three days of the conference, many insights were offered on ways co-operatives can respond to conflict and contribute to the democratic and rebuilding processes in the societies in which they operate. It was also noted that more could be done - both within the movement and without - to tap the under-developed potential



Conference organisers Yehudah Paz, left and Ian MacPherson

of co-ops to contribute to peace building. In the closing session, a number of recommendations came forward from the conference working groups. These include: encouraging the ICA to take the initiative in promoting the role of co-operatives in addressing conflict and contributing to peace; to consider developing a protocol for co-operatives on ways they might address conflicts; to be more involved in peace education; to develop training programs on mediation as it relates to co-operatives in areas of conflict; and to encourage this discussion to go forward to the ICA and regional ICA boards for development of policies.

Specific outcomes from the conference include two publications on co-operatives



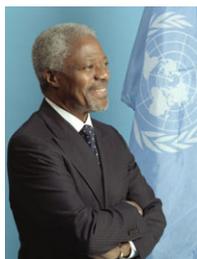
and peace (one will be a collection of essays based on presentations from the conference), a video - drawing on conference presentations and discussion, a website and web-based resources and other educational materials.

ICA President, Ivano Barberini with some of the peace and co-operatives conference delegates

"Peace and social well being are not only relevant to co-operatives but co-operatives are relevant to the peace making process in communities and societies throughout the world"

Yehudah Paz

IDC messages



United Nations,
Secretary-General,
Kofi Annan



ILO Director-
General, Juan
Somavia



ICA

The ICA's message is available in the following languages from our [website](#) English, French, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Romanian, Czech, Catalan, Bulgarian, Malay and Finnish.

“Co-operatives have at their core a set of values and principles designed to advance the cause of peace. The values of solidarity, democracy and equality have helped many millions of people throughout the world build social harmony through a more secure economic future...” [more...](#)

United Nations

Kofi Annan the Secretary-General of the United Nations has issued the following statement

“The theme of this year's International Day of Co-operatives - *Peace building through co-operatives* - highlights the growing significance of these enterprises in promoting peace and development. The international cooperatives movement has been a longstanding voice for peace. As far back as the turbulent period leading up to the First World War, it stood firmly against militarism. And in its aftermath, the International Co-operative Alliance strongly supported both the League of Nations and, subsequently, the United Nations. Today, co-operatives contribute to peace building by promoting local economic and social development.....” [more....](#)

International Labour Organisation

Juan Somavia, The Director-General of the ILO has issued the following statement.

“The ILO is pleased to join the international co-operative movement in celebrating the 84th ICA's International Co-operative Day, and the 12th UN International Day of Co-operatives, as we focus together this year on peace-building. The ILO is founded on the principle that “if you desire peace, you must cultivate justice.” The co-operative ideals of social solidarity, equality and democracy transcend boundaries including those of nationality, race, religion and gender. Co-operatives offer collective strength through organisation, and organization for economic production and social protection based on fair distribution of risks and benefits among members. They serve as important agents in promoting social justice through the world of work. For this reason, the ILO has had a long and productive association with the co-operative movement.....” [more.....](#)

International Federation of Agricultural Producers

FAP has issued the following statement to mark this year's IDC.

“The theme of this year's International Day of Co-operatives is: “*Peace-building through Co-operatives*”. It is an opportunity to recall how cooperatives are making the world a safer and more peaceful place by promoting the understanding of people through democratically-run economic enterprises. One of the reasons that make this possible is the strength of cooperatives in their values and principles which can be shown in different ways. In rural areas, cooperation between farming families brings wellbeing. Farmers working together in cooperatives, as well as the added-value in the market of that cooperation brings, are stabilizing factors among the rural population worldwide.....” [more...](#)

ICA - a history of support for peace

The global co-operative movement has consistently demonstrated how its members have been concerned with peace and peace-building.

On the policy level numerous resolutions on peace have been adopted, see [A Retrospective look at ICA's Concern, Resolutions and Action throughout the 20th Century](#).

Also for more background... www.copac.coop

How we marked 1 July...

- Many ICA members around the globe translated the ICA message "Peace-building through co-operatives" into their local languages. Others have put out messages of their own. See ICA website www.ica.coop/activities/idc/2006.html for details.
- The UN Secretary-General, Director-General of ILO, and IFAP published messages on the day, see opposite page for extract of messages and links to full messages.
- The ILO and UN also include links to the ICA message on their websites. On their home page, the ILO has a link to a feature article on co-op reform in Tanzania to mark International Day of Co-ops.
- Co-op publications around the world ran articles and information on the day and theme, including: Revista PRENSA COOPERATIVA (Argentina), Cooperació Catalana (Spain), ANGKASA monthly magazine (Malaysia) and SCOP Enterprise (France).
- National newspapers also published articles which spread the co-operative message. (Daily Nation of Kenya: "Top prize for NMG sacco", 3 July 2006)

Members celebrating IDC



Celebrations around the globe

Here's just a handful of the many special events held to mark IDC around the globe...

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe National Co-operative Federation (ZNCNF) held its annual celebration in all the provinces to show how co-ops are 'co-operating out of poverty'.

UK

Co-operative Group Wales & Borders Region (UK) celebrated with a cruise down the river Severn from Worcester to Upton, where they held a seminar on co-operation.

Vietnam & Australia

Vietnam Cooperative Alliance (VCA) and Community Housing Council of South Australia, Australia held special IDC events.

Argentina

The Confederación Cooperativa de la República Argentina (Cooperar), celebrated their national co-operative day on the same day. They organised an event in Punta Alta that also celebrated the 80th anniversary of the founding of Electric Co-op of Punta Alta, a pioneer in the provision of utilities in Argentina.

Canada

In the run-up to IDC, ICA and University of British Columbia, Centre for Cooperative Studies conducted a seminar: "Cooperatives in the Pursuit of Peace", from 14-18 June 2006, exploring the role of co-operatives in peace-building (see separate **Digest** reports).

Mauritius

ICA member, the Mauritius Cooperative Union Limited organised picture and essay contests for school children, and a public speaking competition for university students. The theme was 'peace' and prizes were awarded at a special gathering attended by the Minister of Cooperatives and the United National Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Coordinator, who read the UN Message.

International Day of Co-operatives helps raise the profile of co-ops around the world

How did you celebrate IDC?

Please send an e-mail to cronan@ica.coop with details and any pictures. - they will be included in the next issue of the **Digest**.

Peace

Yehudah Paz of the Negev Institute receives the Golden Dove of Peace prize for 2006 from the President of Italy

The Golden Dove of Peace prize, one of the most prestigious awards in the world, is conferred once a year by the President of Italy at a gala event in Rome.

This year, the panel of judges, chaired by Rita Levi-



The two Golden Dove of Peace prize winners, Hazem Kawazmi on left and Dr Yehudah Paz

Montalcini, winner of the Nobel Prize for Medicine, awarded the prize to Dr. Yehudah Paz, Chairman of the Negev Institute, and

to Hazem Kawazmi, Vice President of the Young Entrepreneurs of Palestine, for their contribution to promoting peace in the world.

Since 1986, the Golden Dove of Peace prize has been awarded every year to individuals and institutions that have made unique contributions to peace. During the

past 20 years the prize has been won by organisations such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace, by individuals such as Nelson Mandela, Mikhail Gorbachev and Hans Blix, heads of international organisations such as the UN, UNESCO and the International Labor Organisation.

Dr. Yehudah Paz, a member of Kibbutz Kissufim, is the founder and Chairman of the Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace & Development (www.nisped.org.il), a non-profit association which seeks to promote peace and development, focusing on civil society. It is an educational centre for training and project development for societies undergoing fundamental processes of transformation. These processes include transition from conflict to conflict resolution; from dictatorship to democracy; from poverty and dependence to selfhood and sustainable human development.

Dr. Paz has held many inter-

national positions including being a Board member of the ICA. Dr. Paz received the Golden Dove's highest award, which is granted once every four years.

Hazem Kawazmi, former Assistant Director-General of International Relations in the Palestinian Ministry of Economics & Industry, is presently the Vice-President of the Young Entrepreneurs of Palestine, an organisation devoted to empowering the younger generation in Palestinian economy and politics. In this position, Mr. Kawazmi has initiated a number of projects for promoting peace in social and economic areas. The Negev Institute and the Young Entrepreneurs of Palestine have a number of joint projects including "Entrepreneurship for Peace."

For more information please contact: Liad Ortar, liad@arkada.co.il

“Peace building through co-operatives” continued from page 1

“ICA has assisted in rebuilding communities after war and civil strife...”

Co-operatives help provide an environment within which the benefits of putting aside mutual hostility can be seen to be real - therefore creating conditions that promote understanding, conflict resolution and peace in the largest sense.

Co-operatives have also demonstrated their ability to promote peace through specific actions. Co-operatives have been the model of enterprise chosen by people who wish to rebuild commu-

nities after wars or civil strife to create conditions to lessen the resurgence of violence. By improving the economic conditions of communities in which they operate they create economic justice while fostering and restoring social dialogue.

The global co-operative movement too has shown its commitment to fostering peace. ICA, the global representative of the world co-operative movement, has consistently demonstrated how its mem-

bers have been concerned with peace and peace-building.

Recently ICA has assisted in rebuilding communities after war and civil strife. The housing projects in Serbia undertaken by ICA Housing, the facilitation of trade links with Palestinian and Israeli co-operatives to rebuild economic and social ties, and assisting with long-term tsunami reconstruction efforts in Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka, are just a few examples.

Latest news - Global 300 co-operatives

Included below are some recent items from the ICA's media and online monitoring of reports on a small number of the Global 300. When the ICA launches the first ever listing of the world's largest 300 co-operative and mutual organisations later this year we will also be launching a supporting website which will feature news items like those listed below.

If you would like more information please contact Garry Cronan cronan@ica.coop

Global 300



Agriculture

- Fonterra gains set for public offering [Source](#)
- Fonterra sends lawyer to Europe [Source](#)
- New logo enables Dutch to choose consciously - Campina [Source](#)
- European Commission Approves Campina Fonterra Joint Venture [Source](#)
- Arla Foods strengthens global brand strategy [Source](#)
- Dairy Farmers of Britain cut milk prices [Source](#)
- MPG takes £4m buying brief for Danepak [Source](#)
- Farm co-ops needs 7 trillion won - NACF, Korea [Source](#)
- Farmers in developing face-off - Australia [Source](#)
- Land O'Lakes closes on division sale to Golden Oval [Source](#)
- Farmers to get less for milk - Murray Goulburn, Australia [Source](#)

Consumer/Trading

- Foodstuffs (NZ) close to 10pc Warehouse target [Source](#)
- Consumers lose appetite for organic food [Source](#)
- Unions target "fat cat" salaries Switzerland [Source](#)

Financial

- Rabobank and IFC acquire strategic stakes in URCB in Hangzhou [Source](#)
- Rabobank publishes Sustainability Report 2005 - [Source](#)
- Rabobank acquires two banks in Indonesia [Source](#)
- Transfer of ownership of Performa Financial Group to Desjardins Financial Security [Source](#)

Many of the trends affecting co-operatives generally often appear first in the larger co-ops. We need to better understand such trends.

For more information, contact

Garry Cronan
cronan@ica.coop

Czechs establish Council for the Co-operative Movement

The Czech Republic Government recently established a Council for the Co-operative Movement and the parliament adopted the EC regulation on the Statute for a European Co-operative Society.

Jiří Svoboda, Executive Director of the Co-operative Association of the Czech Republic says: "the establishment of the government council as a permanent advisory body to the government is an important step for sup-

port of co-operative development and fully corresponds with the international declarations evoking co-operative support i.e. the ILO Recommendation 193 and the UN Resolution No 56/114 adopted by the 88th UN General Assembly.

"This step of the Czech Government also fulfils the recommendation of the Communication of the EU Commission COM (2004) 18 on the Promotion of Co-operative Societies in Europe. The Czech admini-

stration has joined those European Governments that fully understand the task and the role of co-operatives as one of the pillars of the social economy in the fulfilment of the Lisbon Strategy aims."

The second important act of the Czech Government for Co-operatives is the adoption of the EC regulation on the Statute of a European Co-operative Society for implementation in August 2006.

This report is drawn from *Cooperatives Europe* new newsletter - it is published in English and French and available on their website
.....[more](#)



Latest from [icanews.coop](http://www.icanews.coop)



Andrew Bibby looking forward to providing his regular commentary on the latest developments at www.icanews.coop

"I hope that as time goes by that the entire co-operative movement would be networked to this website"

Kandiah Paramasvaran, Co-operative Union of Malaysia

"Congratulations on launching the ICA news web site...I am very impressed and I will certainly be using it on a regular basis. This is a great member benefit of ICA and an incredible service to the co-operative sector"

Paul Hazen, CEO NCBA, USA

Looking more deeply at www.icanews.coop

Last month's [Digest](#) reported the launch of the ICA News service, scouring the world's newspapers and on-line media to track down news and information of co-operatives worldwide.

ICA News offers a daily-updated insight into what co-operatives are actually doing – ranging from, say, major policy announcements by leading agricultural co-operatives to news of community events sponsored by small credit unions.

The coverage is also worldwide, and recent days have seen reports on ICA News which originated in major newspapers such as the Bangkok Post and Kenya Times, and in much smaller circulation titles such as California's San Luis Obispo Tribune.

The breadth of ICA News (available at www.icanews.coop or via the ICA's main [website](#)) has already received commendation. Kandiah Paramas-

varan, deputy president of the Co-operative Union of Malaysia, calls it an embryonic newsletter for the entire co-operative fraternity, adding, "I am saddened that many Co-operators have not got to know about this facility as yet".

For first-time visitors to the website, however, the sheer quantity of information can seem daunting. In a new development, therefore, ICA has asked business journalist Andrew Bibby to explore in detail the material which is carried on the website and to offer his own regular commentary and analysis of the issues which are emerging.

Andrew Bibby, who writes for a number of major British and international newspapers, has a long association with the co-operative movement and has recently undertaken work both for the ILO COOP branch and for the UK's Co-operative College.

He says he is anticipating

keenly taking on this new role. "It's already clear that co-operatives in many different parts of the world are tackling the same key concerns and themes. I'll be looking in-depth at the material on the ICA News service to identify these points in common and to offer my analysis of the strategic issues which face the movement globally," he says.

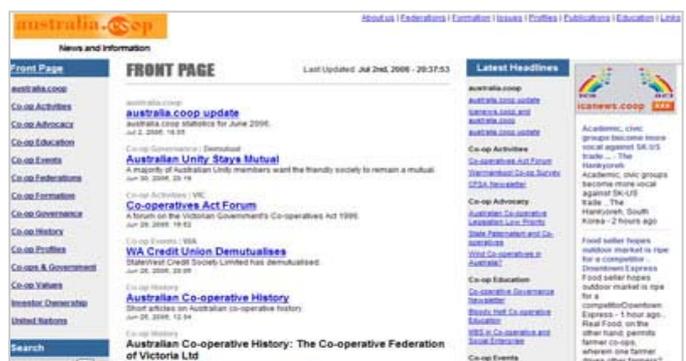
"For example, demutualisation has already cropped up as one theme which needs exploring. I'm also interested in material from a number of countries which describe how cooperatives are getting engaged in the provision of renewable energy. And I have no doubt that other key issues, such as fair trade, member participation and co-operative governance will also demand attention before too long".

Andrew Bibby's own writings on co-operatives and mutuals can be accessed at www.andrewbibby.com/coops. His commentary will appear regularly on www.icanews.coop.

Positive response to launch of ICA's news service

There has been a very positive response to the launch of the ICA new news service last month.

We have as can be seen in the accompanying side bar received very supportive comments for the new service. During the first month we have linked to approximately 2000 news item on co-operatives from throughout the world. If you have not already done so, maybe it is time to visit www.icanews.coop



Among the first to make use of the ICA's new service by providing direct news feeds to their websites was www.australia.coop. As can be seen from the above graphic they have incorporated the news feed box directly into their front page. This is a very simply process - contact Garry Cronan at cronan@ica.coop for details.

Selected news items from icanews.coop

Since the launch of the www.icanews.coop service a little over a month ago links to over 2000 news items have been featured on the site. A representative sample of the items, one per country, have been listed below to give those readers yet to visit the site an idea of the items available.

- China - Farm co-ops may get legal backing at last - 26/6/06
- India - Concern over dwindling share of co-ops banks 27/6/06
- Rwanda: Youth train on project management 27/6/06
- Bulgaria – “co-operatives will go bankrupt” 26/6/06
- Scotland – Social enterprise strategy given green light 15/6/06
- Vietnam – Supermarket rules exclude farmers 25/6/06
- Africa – Rural women in the wired world 24/6/06
- Nepal – co-operatives essential to uplift farmers 24/6/06
- Uganda – only co-operatives can cure poverty 23/6/06
- Italy - Capitalism that works for all 23/6/06
- UK – Mutuality remains way ahead for Royal London 21/6/06
- Swaziland – New Act for co-operatives 27/6/06
- Barbados – New rules affect credit Unions 20/6/06
- Nigeria – Shell donates to Isoko women co-operatives 20/6/06
- USA – Got organic? Demand lifts dairies
- Ireland – GP’s vote for out-of-hours scheme 16/6/06
- Sri Lanka – India calls for meeting with Sri Lanka vanaspati producers
- South Africa – DTI, NDA to provide support to co-operatives 13/6/06
- Venezuela – Action plan to boost agricultural production
- Thailand – The Bank for Agricultural Co-operatives follows sufficiency economy principles in doing business 12/6/06
- Japan – Disappearance of village life will hurt us all 5/6/06
- Tanzania – What is the role of government in promoting co-operatives 5/6/06

Latest co-op news

What is apparent after only a month of operation of icanews.coop is that there is a large amount of online “news” on co-operatives being reported.

However, we need to be much more pro-active in responding to many of these reports, while also circulating them to a wider audience .

Earthquake in Indonesia – help needed for affected co-operatives

ICA Asia-Pacific has launched an appeal to help the victims of the devastating earthquake that recently hit Central Java Province killing more than 5000 people.

The Indonesian Co-operative Council, DEKOPIN, has established a command post in coordination with LAPENKOP (The Co-operative Education and Training Development Institution), to assess damage caused to co-operatives in the region.

The number of quake victims who were members of DEKOPIN and LAPENKOP co-operatives is still being estimated. Staff of DEKOPIN and LAPENKOP and their families

are being looked after in temporary accommodation.

Three LAPENKOP offices in Yogyakarta city, Bantul and Kulonprogo, five DEKOPIN district offices in Yogyakarta city, Sleman, Gunung Kidul, Bantul, and Kulonprogo along with a building of students’ co-operative, KOPMA were destroyed by the earthquake.

ICA Asia-Pacific appeals to the co-operative community to give generously to rebuild the physical infrastructure of severely damaged co-operatives and the lives of unfortunate victims in these areas.

Financial help can be directly sent to the following bank



account: Bank Bukopin c/o LAPENKOP DEKOPIN, account number: 1001611093. LAPENKOP Nasional’s Office, Jl. Raya Bandung-Sumedang Km. 20,5 Jatinangor 40600, Indonesia.

Or to: ICA New Dehil, India, Bank a/c with : STANDARD CHARTERED BANK, 10 Sansad Marg, New Delhi-110 001. India. Bank a/c No. : 525-0501177-4. Swift Code : SCBLINBBXXX.

Scenes of destruction caused by the earthquake in Central Java.

Appeal

Regions Americas

Meet the team at ICA Americas

In our regional report this month we feature the staff of our hard working ICA Americas region. We also report on a range of their key activities and projects on the following pages.



Manuel Mariño, Regional Director ICA -Americas, joined the ICA as ROAM's Regional Director in October 2001. He was the Director of the Swedish Co-operative Centre (SCC) regional office located in San José, Costa Rica, 1996-2000. SCC is an organisation offering support to co-operatives in developing countries. Mr. Mariño was director of the Latin American department at SCC head office in Stockholm, responsible for relations with the European Union, Inter-American Development Bank, and UN among others.



Jennifer Soto Acosta, Director's assistant with responsibility for membership, oversees the organisation of regional council, assemblies and parliamentary encounters.



Alberto Mora Portugués, business administrator and marketing, project co-coordinator for activities, public policy and development.



Diana Retana Villalobos, social communicator. Diana promotes ICA and ACI-Américas' activities through the Website, bulletins and press releases.



Marcelo Chavarría, business administrator, responsible for the regional process project of cooperative integration of the Americas (see article).



Francia Borowy, social anthropologist, in charge of gender equity, youth and human resources, and the certification of co-operative values and principles.



Jonny Melendez, accountant, in charge of administrative duties, employees and internal control. Also responsible for budget allocation for co-operative projects.



Carlos Quintero, responsible for general services, as well as messenger services.



Paula Manzanares, assists in the preparation of materials for diverse activities and in the reception in the regional office.

International Co-operative Business Meeting – Costa Rica

Americas

ICA-Americas recently created the Cooperative Business Group (CBG) for regional organisations interested in business development inside the co-operative movement.

This initiative is aimed at establishing a permanent business platform that develops products and services as well as securing commercial ties in fair and accessible conditions.



Participants listening to a presentation at the business meeting

The 1st International Co-operative Business Encounter was held in Costa Rica, 11-12

May 2006, to strengthen the integration of co-operative businesses in the region and to offer access to commercial opportunities and new markets.

The event was organised by ICA-Americas with its member organisations: Banco Popular de Desarrollo Comunal and Federación de Cooperativas de Ahorro Crédito, with the support of INFOCOOP, CENECOOP, Coopemex and CoopeLibertad.

The meeting provided a forum to learn about the experiences and business initiatives driving several co-operative sectors in the region.

The event brought together 30 co-operative representatives from Canada, United States, Mexico, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Colombia and Paraguay, as well as repre-

sentatives of the Ministry of Foreign Trade. Best practice case studies and innovative ideas for funding and risk capital were presented. The meeting concluded with business round-tables and two 'Letters of Intention' one for the creation of a healthcare co-operative and the other for the creation of an insurance co-operative. both in Costa Rica).

A new stage has been initiated in which the (North and South) American co-operative movement will work together as strategic allies to meet the new challenges that the global environment presents.

Costa Rican press and radio stations covered the event.



Carlos Palacino, Salud-Coop - Colombia, ICA Board member and Franklin Ramos from Coope Ande N° 1-Costa Rica, during the negotiation rounds

ICA Americas business initiatives reinforce ICA's global emphasis on co-operative business success

Costa-Rica business encounter: What the delegates thought



"Very good, great effort. It is the first meeting of its kind and it really has to be supported."

Francisco Barceló, Cooperativa Universitaria, Paraguay-Seguros Panal, Paraguay



"This broadens our knowledge and we can implement everything we learn here in Honduras. Definitely very fruitful."

Yolany Segovia, Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito Sagrada Familia, Honduras



"What we want to be seen is that we can make business between co-operatives - business co-operatives with a lot of social orientation, where the final benefit goes to the co-operative users: the members."

William Villalobos, Banco Popular y de Desarrollo Comunal, Costa Rica



"Excellent - an opportunity to make contact amongst co-operatives with a very positive purpose. Co-operatives can no longer stay in reflective thoughts; we have to move forward to do business, to establish relations of a commercial type in such way that we complement each other".

Francisco Ugarte, Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito San Martín de Porres Ltda, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia

Americas

Working together – Co-operative integration project

“As part of this co-op integration strategy, up to 45 meetings involving 1300 co-op leaders have been organised in different countries throughout the Americas”

Visit ICA Americas new website at www.aciamericas.coop

ICA-Americas has embarked on a programme to strengthen the co-operative movement across the region.

The Regional Process of Co-operative Integration of the Americas project started in 2004 with the financial support of the International Canadian Agency together with the Co-operative Society for International Development. It was in response to a perceived lack of knowledge of co-operatives in the region about the process of commercial integration. This lack of knowledge is seen as one of the most serious barriers to dealing successfully with the challenges presented by globalisation.

The project focuses on strengthening the effectiveness and the participation of the co-operative movement in the Americas. Amongst the countries involved are: El Salvador, Costa Rica, Honduras, Argentina, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil, Mexico and Guatemala.

The project has brought 3000 co-operative leaders

together to develop a strategy for co-operative growth and integration in the Americas.

The strategy recognises the commercial inequalities between larger and smaller countries in the region, respects human values, cultural differences and the rights of the populations, protects the environment, and supports workers rights. A consensus opinion has concluded that the co-operative movement needs to be strengthened and better marketed in the Americas, that governments should financially assist co-operatives to be better organised, and that co-operatives should do political advocacy.

Specifically, the project has highlighted that commercial expansion in the region is needed and that it is necessary to develop support programs for sectors that are disadvantaged. When commercial negotiations are made between countries of the region, the asymmetries must be recognised so that the smaller countries can develop mechanisms against commercial exploitation, and financial support must be given to the smaller economies. There also needs to

be more concrete and reliable statistics on the co-operative sector in the region and a commitment to participate more actively in the present and upcoming negotiations of the Free Trade Agreement. The value of co-operatives must be maintained and the bigger co-operatives must support the smaller ones.

Coordinated efforts to promote co-operatives are focused on using virtual means, media events and mass communication to shape public opinion and influence policy development.

As part of this strategy, up to 45 meetings involving 1300 co-operative leaders have been organised in different regions in countries throughout the Americas. Politicians as well as members of the press will be invited to participate in the meetings. An important achievement of the project, backed-up by ICA-Americas, was the inclusion of the co-operative movement in the final resolution of the Cuarta Cumbre de las Américas – the Mar del Plata Declaration. As part of this process, Manuel Marino, Regional Director of ICA-Americas, participated in various activities and forums programmed by the American Civil Society and the Organisation of American States.

The screenshot shows the ICA Americas website interface. At the top left is the ICA logo with the text 'uniendo e integrando a las cooperativas de las Américas'. Below the logo is a search bar and a navigation menu with links for '¿Quiénes somos?', 'Servicios', 'Noticias', 'Información', and 'Contactenos'. The main content area features a large blue banner with the text 'COMPETITIVIDAD Y POSICIONAMIENTO COOPERATIVO: El Primer Encuentro Internacional de Negocios Cooperativos generó oportunidades de negocios'. To the right of this banner are several smaller articles and images, including one about 'ACI prepara ranking de las cooperativas globales del mundo' and another about '¿Qué es la Alianza Cooperativa Internacional (ACI)?'. The bottom of the page shows a footer with contact information and a date '23 de junio de 2009'.

New website for ICA Americas

ICA Americas recently launched its new website.

The new site has a more modern and functional design and includes a wide range of material on co-operatives particularly in the Americas region. The site is primarily in Spanish although some material links to English language material.

Work will commence shortly on linking the Spanish language pages on the ICA's global website to relevant Spanish language pages on ICA Americas site.

A voice for change - Advocacy in Public Policies and Co-operative Business Development Project

Regions:
Americas

Another important ICA-Americas project is helping co-operatives become better advocates for change in public policy and promoting the co-operative structure as a development model that can contribute to the alleviation of poverty.

Supported by the Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC) since 2002 the project was initiated in response to the weak advocacy capacity of the co-operative movement in the development of public policies in the region.

The project recognises co-operatives as an organisational form that contributes to poverty alleviation, the creation of employment and sustainable social development.

The development objective of this project is that the co-operative movement actively participates in the formulation of public policies and integrates with other sectors of society striving for social equity.

The next stage of the project, 2006-2008, will promote co-operatives as instruments of economic and social development in the formulation of regulations, public policies and national development plans. The national co-operative movement will undertake action related to subjects of legislation, taxation, integration and co-operative education.

At the same time a pilot will be implemented in co-operative organisations with limited re-

sources, for the use of technological tools in e-learning education, in order to provide high quality training to as many as possible at very low cost.

Through the implementation of a governance model it is expected to improve organisational management so that co-operatives can be more effective actors in the process of poverty alleviation in their countries.

A programme of integration and organisation of the social economy will be implemented in three countries: Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, so that the experience can then be transferred to other countries.

“Another important ICA-Americas project is helping co-operatives become better advocates for change in public policy”

14th ICA Americas Regional Conference

ICA Americas President, Carlos G. Palacino and Regional Director, Manuel Mariño have extended a warm invitation to all co-operators attending the 14th ICA-Americas Regional Conference in Lima, Peru, July 17-21.

COOPETROPERÚ, Peruvian savings and credit co-operative and ICA member will co-host the conference with ICA Americas.

The conference titled *Co-operative Competitiveness and Positioning: Challenges and Opportunities for Economic and Social Development*, will explore opportunities and

challenges for co-operatives in the region to strengthen their competitiveness with social responsibility - as a way of positioning and consolidating themselves a model of economic and social development in the American region.

ICA Americas is committed to bringing together the best speakers to ensure the success of the most important and well-attended encounter of the year for the regional co-operative movement.

Over 600 cooperative lead-

ers and representatives from all over the American region are expected to attend the 2006 event.

ICA Americas and COOPETROPERÚ look forward to welcoming delegates next month to the beautiful city of Lima, World Heritage site since 1988.

For more information visit ICA Americas website: www.aciamericas.coop, or contact conference@aciamericas.coop.



ICA Americas President, Carlos Palacino

Sectors Housing



Mike Doyle, President,
ICA Housing

“A very fruitful discussion was conducted as to what role housing should play as a sectoral body”

Mike Doyle

Housing Update

The board of ICA Housing met in Vancouver, Canada on June 17-18. Eight of the Board's twelve members were in attendance along with ICA Director-General, Iain Macdonald.

In summing up, Mike Doyle, President of ICA Housing, said he was very happy with the positive outcomes from the meeting. A very fruitful discussion was conducted as to what role housing should play as a sectoral body.

The meeting agreed on the importance of being more active in development projects around the world, the need to enhance its role as a co-operative business model and on the exchange of best practise in order to become more effective.

It was also decided to engage a half-time co-operative housing expert to work with the board and liaise with ICA Head office in Geneva, as a way of better serving ICA Housing's members. In addition, a discussion about how to co-operate with other sectoral bodies was initiated.

Following the meeting, board member Nicholas Gazzard and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, which he heads, organised and hosted a symposium on *Micro-finance: Solutions for Housing*. Seven speakers presented ideas and best practices for financing co-operative housing and other means of affordable housing, describing micro-finance principles and offering models from successful programs around the world, including Canada, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and the UK. Speakers included: Mary Mathenge from NACHU, Kenya; Barry Pinsky, Rooftops, Canada; Tabitha Siwale, WAT Human Settlements, Tanzania; May Sommerfelt, NBBL, Norway; and Mike Doyle.

Discussion followed, and plans for a formal conference on microcredit sometime next year, are underway. The presentations will be added to ICA Housing's website www.icahousing.org within the next few weeks.

On June 18th, CHF Canada and Co-operative Housing Federation of British Co-

lumbia (CHF BC) led 30 guests on a guided bus tour of Vancouver housing co-ops. The tour highlighted 22 of approximately 100 housing co-ops in the greater Vancouver area, and included a visit and refreshments at an award winning co-op in east end Vancouver (Lore Krill Housing Co-op).

CHF Canada and Nicholas Gazzard and his staff did a great job in organising these events and hosting the meeting.

The ICA Housing board will meet next by teleconference on August 30. On September 16-17, there will be a face-to-face meeting in Geneva, where the board will also hold a joint meeting with the UN Economic Commission for Europe's Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network.

Last December, ICA Housing signed a formal agreement with the UNECE under which the two groups pledged to work together in providing assistance in the design and implementation of national housing policies and programs, as well as areas of shared concern, including co-operative housing development, housing finance, among others.

Visitors

Indian co-operators visit Geneva



The delegation at the ICA's
head office in Geneva

The Minister of State,
department of Co-

operation, Government of Uttar Pradesh, Mr Sharadanand Anchal, and a delegation of co-operative officials paid a courtesy call on the ICA on 17 July 2006.

The visit was organised by the National Cooperative Union of India and was part of a study visit which also took them to Poland

where the delegation was hosted by the NCC Poland, and Vienna. With a co-operative membership of 16 million, Uttar Pradesh has a long and rich co-operative history. While expressing his appreciation of the global role of the ICA, the Minister was also concerned that the ICA should make a difference to co-operative members in his state.

Farmers look to the future

300 farm leaders from 70 countries convened in Seoul in May 2006 for the 37th World Farmers' Congress. They met to discuss the ambitions of farmers and current issues faced by agriculture worldwide: environmental issues such as desertification, climate change and renewable energies, trade issues and WTO negotiations, health issues, food safety, food labelling, and partnerships for sustainable agricultural development.

This year also marked the 60th anniversary of International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), the world farmers' organisation representing over 600 million farm families grouped in 115 national organisations in 80 countries. The biennial Congress was hosted by ICA member, National Agricultural Cooperatives Federation (NACF) of the Republic of Korea - under the theme: "60 years of empowering farmers – for diversity, for sustainability, for health, for peace".

Jack Wilkinson, President of IFAP said, "We are looking for positive changes in the international agricultural policy that will lead governments around the world to develop national farm policies that will make a real difference in the improving-

farmers' livelihoods. "I tell the decision-makers from all over the world: farmers are ready to work with you, as equal partners, to feed this world but they also need to receive a fair return. This is the main ambition of farmers".

Farmers met with key industry decision-makers to talk about the issues that affect them. Speakers included: Hong-Soo Park, Minister of Agriculture, Korea; Lennart Båge, President of the International Federation of Agricultural Development (IFAD); Issui Miura, Vice-Minister of Agriculture of Japan; Hama Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary of UNCCD; Pascal Lamy, Director General of the World Trade Organisation (by video conference); and Agnes van Ardenne-van der Hoeven, Minister of Cooperation Development of the Netherlands.

As reported in last month's Digest, the congress adopted a global farmers' charter proposed by Korea's NACF. The 10-point charter includes protection and support for poor farmers and balanced development of rural and urban areas. It also stresses the status of farmers as pro-

ducers of safe food and calls for co-operation between farmers' groups to improve their social and economic position. IFAP will work to have the charter adopted as a UN resolution. See: www.ifap.org/en/about/documents/WorldFarmersCharter_web_eng.pdf

The congress adopted four new agricultural policy statements with recommendations that will empower farmers and their professional organisations. They cover the critical issues of desertification, climate change, balanced diets and food labelling.

The critical issue of farmers fighting poverty was introduced by a keynote presentation from the Minister for Development Cooperation of the Netherlands, Hon. Agnes van Ardenne-van der Hoeven. She spoke about public-private partnerships for sustainable agricultural development. Minister Mr Raul Montemayor, Vice President of IFAP (Philippines), suggested co-operation with ICA is very important for reducing farmers' poverty.

Two ICA representatives attended the Congress. Hagen Henry gave a presentation on "Harmonization of legal business standards", and Jin-Kook Kim presented a paper on WTO's impacts on agricultural co-operatives. See IFAP's website: www.ifap.org/en/about/37wfc2006.html.

Sectors Agriculture



IFAP produce a very informative newsletter [more](#)

"co-operation with ICA is very important for reducing farmers' poverty"



Members Canada

CCA AGM & Congress a success

Over 150 delegates, guests and observers attended Canadian Co-operative Association's (CCA) Annual General Meeting, in London, Ontario, from 9 June 2006.

In their remarks during a



Dave Sitaram and
Carol Hunter

joint presentation, CCA President Dave Sitaram and Executive Director Carol Hunter highlighted the accomplishments of the past year and spoke optimistically of the future for both CCA and the Canadian co-operative movement. Copies of these [presentations](#) and CCA [Annual Report](#) can be found at their website.

The AGM was followed by the Annual Meeting for the Ontario Co-operative Association. This was the first time the national association and one of its provincial members held back-to-back AGMs. Holding the meetings together exposes a national audience to the role and accomplishments of a provincial association, and exposes local co-ops to the work being undertaken by CCA on a national and global level.

Dame Pauline Green, Chief Executive of Co-operatives UK, Vice President of the ICA and President of Co-operatives Europe, kicked off the second day with a presentation that reflected on some of the issues that are affecting the sector in the UK, including a national project that is bringing diverse retail co-ops under a single co-op brand (see Digest 49 for the full branding story). Other keynotes by Bob Friesen, President of the Ca-

nadian Federation of Agriculture, and Emmanuel Darko, General Manager of the Credit Union Association of Ghana, complemented the 13 workshops that were offered. The keynotes and workshop presentations are posted on CCA's website: www.CoopsCanada.co.uk/Congress2006.

Participants also got the opportunity to "Beat Poverty" at the Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada (CDF) fundraising dinner and auction, raising over \$9,000 for CCA projects to support the sustainable development of credit unions and co-operatives in less developed countries.

Next year CCA will partner with the Newfoundland & Labrador Federation of Co-operatives and will again hold back-to-back AGMs and a national congress.

Members Australia

Australian co-operators discuss value-adding in communities



Suzanne Henderson,
ICA Digest Associate
Editor and organiser of
the CACOM seminar

The Australian co-operators heard how co-operatives worldwide are giving back to communities at a seminar titled: *Social Responsibility - co-operatives re-investing and engaging in community*, presented by ICA Director of Communications and Intelligence services, Garry Cronan, in Sydney on June 8.

The event was organised by peak Australian research body for community and not for profit organisations, CACOM (Centre for Australian Community Organi-

sations and Management) www.business.uts.edu.au/cacom/ and was followed up by a dinner hosted by the Mercury Centre on June 20.

Garry addressed the need for co-ops to recognise their commercial and social imperatives - to accept who they are and what they aim to achieve in the marketplace in addition to fostering social capital in the community.

He gave specific examples from ICA initiative, the Global 300, [www.ica.coop/publications/digest/46-](http://www.ica.coop/publications/digest/46-digest.pdf)

[digest.pdf](http://www.ica.coop/publications/digest/46-digest.pdf) of large, successful co-operatives embracing their corporate and social identity.

Garry said there was a need for existing co-ops to respond to global forces and work together as an international movement rather than staying within their national borders.

Current good business practice sees large, successful co-ops reinvesting in new co-operative ventures through finances, technical skills as sharing their knowledge and experience. He referred to this as "demonstrating the difference and re-investing."

Co-operatives - the other world game?

ICA's Australian member, Capricorn Society, other Australian co-operatives, the NSW Office of Fair Trading, professional associations, advocacy groups, politicians and academics attended a dinner in Sydney, Australia hosted by the Mercury Centre Co-operative on 20 June.

Speakers, Garry Cronan, Professor Jenny Onyx, director of CACOM, Trent Bartlett, CEO, Capricorn Society, and Phil Montrone, senior vice president, Associazione Puglia Co-operative, provided their insights into the Australian co-operative scene, what is driving communications nationally and internationally and where the movement is heading.

"Our aim in organising this event was two-fold", said Peter Gates, CEO of the Mercury Centre.

"Firstly, to re-ignite the spark in a diminishing co-operative sector in Australia, and secondly to hear about the latest communication trends and initiatives of ICA from Garry Cronan, former general manager of the Australian Centre for Co-operative Research and Development."

In his keynote address, Garry emphasised the need to communicate the benefits of the co-operative difference to stimulate individual and collective action. He also spoke about encouraging the 'big co-ops' to support and nurture 'smaller

co-ops' so they can 'make it' for the long term, and the need to streamline and make uniform national legislation.

Garry highlighted the challenges facing co-operatives, 'the crisis of credibility' and the question of 'visability' within their own community and the global community. Co-ops must find a way to deal with these issues if they are to survive. He said the concept behind the ICA's **Global 300** project is to demonstrate the viability of the co-operative model, thereby turning rhetoric into practice.

Garry offered his observations of the Australian co-operative scene, and concluded that it is "institutionally weak and lacks profile." He stressed the need for more dialogue between co-operators and both federal and state governments.

Trent Bartlett, from Capricorn Society Ltd www.capricorn.com.au/, one of the world's largest automotive spare parts suppliers, defined the co-operative difference as akin to 'the family business', with its inherent values of loyalty and dedication.

Mr Bartlett contributes much of Capricorn's success to the solidarity of the family business and the dedication of those families who had so much faith in the business model that they chose to re-mortgage their homes in order to

keep the co-operative alive. "The members have responded so well to being



Some of the participants at the recent co-operative dinner in Sydney

part of the enterprise that Capricorn's marketing strategy has evolved to incorporate the values and commitment of the co-operative, and become an indispensable link and valuable resource for members."

Trent went on to discuss the lack of national uniformity in federal and state acts and regulations governing Australian co-operatives, which highlights the need for consistent legislation to allow co-operatives to trade across state and territory borders.

Summing up, Phil Montrone, from NSW community-based Puglia Co-operative, concluded,

"Communicating the co-operative structure's corporate strength to the wider community and institutions, from large for-profit co-operatives to community-based co-operatives such as Puglia, is essential in order to engage policy makers in following the European model of uniform legislation throughout the Australian continent."



Trent Bartlett, CEO, Capricorn Society and Professor Jenny Onyx, Director of CACOM at the Sydney function

Members Australia

" need to communicate the benefits of the co-operative difference to stimulate individual and collective action.."

Garry Cronan

Feature interview

Interview with Seah Kian Peng - Singapore

Seah Kian Peng, Chairman of Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF), the apex body representing the co-operative movement in Singapore and ICA Board member since his election last September discusses his many and varied involvements in the national and global co-operative movement in this month's **Digest** Interview.

Digest: How did you get involved in the co-operative movement and what does your current work within the sector involve?



Seah Kian Peng, Chairman of Singapore National Co-operative Federation and ICA Board member

“There is a need to enhance the professionalism of the co-operative movement as well as augment public confidence in co-operatives...”

Seah: I have worked in both the private and public sectors but have spent the bulk of my career in the labour movement and co-operative sectors. I first became involved in the movement when I was looking into the feasibility of starting a healthcare co-operative by NTUC. This was in 1992. It came to fruition in 1993 and I was its first executive secretary and subsequently became its managing director. The co-operative currently operates a chain of retail pharmacies, dental and medical clinics. I have also held concurrent ap-

pointments as CEO of NTUC Media Co-operative, which is in the publishing and broadcasting businesses. A key challenge then was to achieve a turnaround for this co-operative. Fortunately, I was able to do it. I have since relinquished that appointment and am currently its Chairman.

Since 2001, I have been with NTUC Fairprice Co-operative as its Deputy CEO and Chief Operating Officer. NTUC Fairprice is a leading supermarket retailer in Singapore with an annual turnover of over US\$800 million and a staff of about 5,000 employees.

I became involved with Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF) in 2000, first as a member of the executive council and later was elected as its Chairman in 2002. I am now in my second term as Chairman of SNCF. I was also elected as a member of ICA Asia Pacific Standing Committee in 2003 and continue in this capacity. I was most honoured to be elected to the Board of ICA at the last General Assembly in Cartagena, Colombia in Sept 2005.

As you will note, I have thus been strengthening my involvement in the co-operative movement both locally and internationally over the last fourteen years. I hope to play my part and make my modest contribution towards the causes of the co-operative movement worldwide.

I am currently also a vice-president of a society named Singapore Compact for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The society, with the aim of leading corporate members in implementing CSR programmes, was formed as a result of the launch of the National Tripartite Initiative on CSR in May 2004 by the Singapore National Trades Union Congress (SNTUC), the Singapore Business Federation (SBF) and the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF).

Most recently in May 2006, I contested the Singapore General Elections and was elected as a Member of Parliament.

Digest: In your view, what are the priorities for the co-operative movement in Singapore and also globally?

Seah: The need to enhance the professionalism of the co-operative movement as well as augment public confidence in co-operatives is important. This is because we need to continually challenge ourselves on our role, as we exist in an intensely competitive and globalised world economy – one where all co-operatives have to compete against both public and private enterprises. I dare say that for co-operatives it is ‘Hobsons choice’ – we have to take this route in order that we remain viable and relevant in this fast changing environment.

Seah Kian Peng interview...continued

There is a worldwide trend towards greater accountability and higher levels of disclosure for all types of organisations - co-operatives are no exception. In Singapore, SNCF has been actively promoting corporate governance among its affiliates. Within two years since SNCF launched the Course in Good Co-operative Governance in January 2004, more than 329 directors and managers from 40 co-operatives have been trained. It is a good sign – it shows that these co-ops are serious about putting in place a good and sound management system.

Digest: *How strong is the co-operative movement in your region?*

Seah: Although Singapore is a small country, it has a vibrant and growing co-operative movement that constitutes an important component of Singapore's social and economic structure. Our co-operatives provide services in supermarket retailing, insurance, child-care, elderly care, housing, thrift and loan, welfare facilities, health care, property development, publishing and event management, travel, training, job placement, security, campus and environmental services, and more.

Growth has been experienced across the sector in the last five years. Five years ago the total assets of co-operatives in Singapore was 12.9 billion. Today it is 15.5 billion. Similarly, turnover has increased from 2.7 billion to 3.5 billion, and total revenue is now 704 million, up from 590 million five years

ago. Today, the co-operative movement in Singapore has a total individual membership of 1.6 million. That is, one out of three Singaporeans is a co-operative member.

Some co-operatives, such as NTUC FairPrice Co-operative's chain of supermarkets and NTUC Income Insurance Co-operative, have become household names. The Far Eastern Economic Review describes NTUC FairPrice as, "A Supermarket chain with a social conscience". NTUC Income is the highest-rated domestic insurer in Asia. Its "AA" rating by Standards & Poor (S&P) reflects its dominant position in Singapore's life and general insurance industry as well as its financial stability and capacity to meet new challenges.

Digest: *Why is it important for Singapore's co-operative movement to be involved in the international co-operative movement?*

Seah: Our organisational involvement in the global movement is important in several respects. Firstly, it provides an avenue for image building for Singapore's co-operative movement. Secondly it gives Singapore co-operative leaders a first-hand appreciation of the significant role that co-ops play in people's lives in many different countries.

Further, our involvement with ICA provides networking opportunities for Singapore co-operators to explore and interact with



Sean Kian Peng addressing the 2005 ICA General Assembly in Colombia

the international co-operative movement, leading to many mutually beneficial developments for both overseas and Singapore co-operatives.

Local co-operators gain a wider perspective from the international co-operative events and activities. They also gain innovative and creative ideas from around the world. Likewise, overseas co-operators will also be able to benefit and learn more about the local co-operative movement and specifically, from the leading local co-operatives here in Singapore.

The hosting of the 2007 General Assembly in Singapore will mark a major milestone for the Singapore co-operative movement in the region. It offers an excellent opportunity for the global co-operative community to share our experiences with each other, explore and exchange views, creative and innovative ideas. Our successful bid in May last year is also an acknowledgement by the global co-operative community of the importance and strength of the Singa-

Feature Interview

"There is a worldwide trend towards greater accountability and higher levels of disclosure for all types of organisations - co-operatives are no exception"

"Local co-operators gain a wider perspective from the international co-operative events and activities"

Interview Seah Kian Peng interviewcontinued



“The hosting of the 2007 General Assembly in Singapore will mark a major milestone for the Singapore co-operative movement in the region”.

pore co-operative movement and Singapore’s excellent infrastructure and strategic location in the Asia Pacific region.

The exchange of views and ideas will collectively generate many strong and positive spin-offs for all co-operatives and co-operators who participate in this mega event. Certainly for Singapore and the co-operative movement here, we appreciate the opportunity to show, to our global co-operators, something about our country, our hospitality, our people and our small

but vibrant island state.

Digest: *What preparations are in progress for the 2007 General Assembly?*

Seah: We have already stepped up our preparation work for this big event. We are also working closely with ICA management in planning the programme. More information on the GA 2007 will be disseminated to the ICA affiliates soon. The theme is still being finalised in consultation with ICA headquarters but it is likely to

revolve around the theme of “Innovation in Co-operative Business”.

Looking ahead, as we move closer to the ICA General Assembly in 2007, we will be upping the momentum to make this international event a memorable one.

We are expecting over 1,000 participants to attend the GA 2007. We look forward to welcoming delegates from around the world and will do our utmost to make the next General Assembly in Singapore a great success.

Europe

Expert Group appointment

Cooperatives Europe reports that Lajos Varadi has been appointed to the expert group on Corporate Governance and Company Law. Lajos Varadi is from the Hungarian Association of Credit Unions

– OTSZ. A PDF copy of Cooperatives Europe position on the consultation dealing with company law can be downloaded from:



www.coopseurope.coop/article.php3?id_article=175

Youth

Asia Pacific Youth Conference

An ICA regional co-operative youth conference 2006 will be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 15–16 August 2006, in conjunction with the ICA Regional Assembly for Asia and the Pacific. It will be hosted by Sri Lankan co-operative movement (NCC, COOPFED, NICD and SANASA).

The theme of the conference is “Empowering the youth through co-



Venue for the Youth Conference

operatives”, and the participants will be youth leaders (15 to 35 years of age) from all kinds of co-operative sectors and national youth coordinators of participat-

ing countries.

Around 100 delegates from 20 countries in the region are expected.

New role for former chief of ILO's Co-op Branch

Jürgen Schwettmann has been appointed as Director of the ILO's Office for the United Republic of Tanzania, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda in Dar es Salaam as at 1 July 2006.

During his time at the helm as the Chief of ILO's Co-op Branch, Jürgen has been instrumental in further deepening the close relationship between the ILO and the ICA. The culmination of this was the signing in 2004 of the MoU between the two organisations. He was a main driver behind the adoption in 2002 of ILO Recommendation 193 on co-operatives. In it, ILO recognises the importance of co-operatives in job creation, mobilizing resources, generating investment and their contribution to the economy. Jürgen was furthermore one of the initiators of the Global Co-operative Campaign against Poverty Cooperating Out Of Poverty, and he also helped launch the Joint Meetings of Agencies together with the ICA. We will miss our daily contact with Jürgen, but we also know that our close partnership will continue with him at his new base in Dar es Salaam.

People



Long time ILO co-operator retires

Huseyin Polat retired at the end of June 2006 after 20 years of service with the International Labour Organisation.

Huseyin has for many years coordinated the ILO's INDISCO and SYNDICOOP programmes. He said recently, "It was a real privilege for me to work particularly with co-operatives and trade unions as well as different indigenous and tribal people's organisations around the world. They taught me so many interesting and valuable things".

The ICA would like to acknowledge the contribution Huseyin has made and wishes him all the best in his retirement in Turkey.



New joint ICA/ILO poverty campaign co-ordinator appointed

On 1 July 2006, Guy Tchami started work as Poverty Campaign Coordinator, a position established jointly by the ICA and the ILO and co-financed by the Swedish Co-operative Centre.

The outcomes of this arrangement will include a more visible and effective campaign with a wider range of activities - including ones designed to better sensitise and mobilise the co-operative movement, a continuously updated website, and wider use of the campaign logo. There will also be an increased flow of information to and from members and partners, and we will be able to report more extensively on the contribution of co-operatives to poverty reduction. ICA is convinced that this arrangement will make a significant contribution to our development work in general and the campaign in particular.



Co-ops at the World Peace Forum in Vancouver 2006 ...continued

Participants included youth, women, elected leaders (mayors, councillors and parliamentarians), environmentalists, people of different faiths, teachers, academics and peace educators, trade unionists, health professionals, First Nations/indigenous peoples, elders, war veterans, refugees and internally-displaced peoples, co-

operative representatives and ethical business leaders, peace advocates and NGO activists, discussing peace-related themes.

As reported elsewhere in this issue of the *Digest* ICA Director-General, Iain Macdonald was also a speaker at the associated Peace Mayors conference.

Full details of the wide range of peace events at this major global forum can be obtained from the following website www.worldpeaceforum.ca

Further details on co-operative involvement in the World Peace Forum and on the related Co-ops and Peace Forum can also be found at www.peace.coop

Peace

INTERNATIONAL
CO-OPERATIVE
ALLIANCE

ICA
15 Route des Morillons
1218 Grand Saconnex
Geneva, Switzerland
Tel +41 22 929 8888
Fax +41 22 798 4122

www.ica.coop

[Click here for further
2006 ICA and related
events.....\)](#)

Copies of the ICA
Digest are archived
on the ICA's web-
site www.ica.coop

2006 Calendar of ICA events and related co-operative activities

13-15 July	13th Conference of the International Association for the Economics of Participation (IAFEP) Mondragon University, Spain
17-21 July	ICA Americas Regional Assembly, Lima, Peru. Contact: Manuel Mariño, direccion@aciamericas.coop
17 July	ICA Americas, IV Meeting of Parliamentarians, Lima, Peru. Contact: banca@aciamericas.coop
19 July	ICA Americas Women meeting, Lima, Peru. Contact: genero@aciamericas.coop
19 July	ICA Americas, Youth meeting. Contact: genero@aciamericas.coop
19 July	ICA Americas, Universities Network meeting. Contact: genero@aciamericas.coop
27-30 July	2006 World Credit Union Conference, Dublin, Ireland. See www.woccu.coop/
14 Aug	Meeting of Regional Co-operative Banking Association for Asia-Pacific, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Contact: Shil-Kwan Lee, sklee@icaroap.coop
14 Aug	Meeting of ICA Consumer sub-committee on University/College Co-operatives for Asia-Pacific; Colombo, Sri Lanka. Contact: Shil-Kwan Lee, sklee@icaroap.coop
15 Aug	ICA Regional Women's Committee for Asia and the Pacific, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Coordinator: Ms. Savitri Singh, savitrisingh@icaroap.coop
15 Aug	3rd ICA Asia Pacific Regional Youth Seminar, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Contact: P. Nair, nair@icaroap.coop
15 Aug	ICA Asia Pacific HRD Seminar and HRD Committee Meeting, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Coordinator: K. Sethumadhavan, sethu@icaroap.coop
15-16 Aug	ICA Asia-Pacific Co-operative Research Conference, Colombia. Sri Lanka. Contact: Akira Kuri- moto, akira.kurimoto@jccu.coop
16 Aug	ICA Asia Pacific Standing Committee meeting, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Contact: Shil-Kwan Lee sklee@icaroap.coop
16 Aug	ICA Consumer Committee for Asia and the Pacific, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Contact: Tsubasa Nakamura tsubasa@icaroap.coop
17 Aug	ICA Asia Pacific Co-operative Forum, Contact: Shil-Kwan Lee, sklee@icaroap.coop
18 Aug	7th ICA Asia-Pacific Regional Assembly, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Contact: Shil-Kwan Lee, sklee@icaroap.coop
30 Aug	ICA Housing Board meeting by teleconference. Contact: Mike Doyle mdoyle@chfinternational.org
4-5 Sept	ICA Board, special strategic planning meeting, Stockholm, Sweden. Contact: Iain Macdonald, macdonald@ica.coop
6-7 Sept	ICA Board meeting, Stockholm, Sweden. Contact: Iain Macdonald, macdonald@ica.coop
6-8 Sept	International Conference, Reclaiming the Economy: the Role of Co-operative Enterprise, Own- ership and Control, Cardiff, Wales. www.uwic.ac.uk/ubs/conferences/#Sugg
14-15 Sept	ICA Latin American Research Conference - El Cooperativismo Latinoamericano: ¿visión inte- grada de lo económico y lo social? Rosario, Argentina. Contact: Mirta Vuotto en- caci@econ.uba.ar
16-17 Sept	ICA Housing Board meeting plus meeting with UN Economic Commission for Europe's Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network Contact: Mike Doyle mdoyle@chfinternational.org
20-21 Sept	Cooperatives Europe European Council Meeting, Brussels, Belgium. Contact: Rainer Schluter, r.schluter@coopseurope.coop
2 Oct	Annual Executive Meeting of ICFO, Singapore. Contact: icfo@zengyoren.jf-net.ne.jp
2 Oct	Annual Plenary (General) Meeting of ICFO, Singapore. Contact: icfo@zengyoren.jf-net.ne.jp
2-6 Oct	ICA Africa Regional Assembly, Arusha, Tanzania. Contact: Ada Suleymane Kibora, skibora@icaafrica.coop