



ICA Digest

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ICA president honoured

The University of Bologna has honoured ICA president Ivano Barberini, with its most prestigious award.

The *Sigillum Magnum* is given to outstanding individuals in culture and politics, usually heads of state. This award recognises the invaluable work of Mr Barberini in his role as president of ICA, and his contribution to the co-operative movement as a whole.

Barberini was presented with the award at a public ceremony in Santa Lucia, Bologna, Italy on the 14 October 2008.

Barberini joins the honour roll of past recipients that includes such luminaries as Shimon Peres (*Nobel Peace Prize* recipient); Jacques Delors (president of the European Commission); Rudolf Emil Kalman (one of the scientists involved in the Apollo II lunar landing); Pope John Paul II; and Jean Marie Lehn (*Nobel Prize* for chemistry).



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Co-ops remain solid during the financial crisis: How are co-ops responding to the global financial crisis?

This Christmas, as businesses around the globe are forced to close shop or let go of their workforce in the face of the world's worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of 1929, co-operative financial institutions are throwing open their doors to an avalanche

of customers in search of a secure and sustainable, safe haven, and business values beyond the bottom line.

Turn to **Page 4** for a special report on how co-operatives are responding to the financial crisis.





Maria Elena Chavez Hertig, Deputy Director-General

From the Editor's desk

This issue addresses the question that many co-operators and international institutions are asking—how is the co-operative movement faring in the financial crisis? Reports are showing that many financial co-operatives around the world are growing as other institutions fail. However, we must monitor the situation. Credit will become more difficult to access for all and this will have consequences in co-ops ability to get the funds they require to operate and grow. We will endeavour to report on how the 6th co-operative principle, “Co-operation among co-operatives” can be ap-

plied during the financial crisis in future issues.

This issue also announces the change of venue for the ICA General Assembly to Geneva, Switzerland home of the Central Office. The new dates for the Assembly and related meetings will be 16-20 November 2009. See the article below and the calendar for a provisional listing of events and further information.

Reports from the recent Africa, Americas and Asia-Pacific regional assemblies are also contained. All held elections and so we congratulate the new regional elected leaders.

Other regional news on how ICA is working on ensuring the visibility of co-operatives is also included as well as updates on policy and legislative issues.

Finally, we provide updates on members and co-operators in the final section of the Digest.

As the year ends, we hope that the Digest has been a valuable information tool and we look forward to bringing you news on ICA and highlight co-operative trends again in 2009.

We wish you all the best in the New Year!

Latest news

Geneva to host 2009 ICA General Assembly

The 2009 ICA General Assembly and related events will be held in Geneva at the International Convention Centre or CICG, from 16-20 November, instead of Glasgow, Scotland, as previously planned.

The Assembly will be convened to discuss issues relating to sustainability and responsibility and will address how co-operatives are coping and addressing today's challenges whether it be the financial or food crisis, climate change and economic security issues showing the relevance of the co-operative model of enterprise.

The ICA Research Committee also plans a seminar on the 17 November on “Co-operatives and Sustainability” and will feed into the Assembly bringing co-operative research from around the globe.

Nearly all the sectoral organisations and a number of the thematic committees have also planned on holding both statutory meetings as well as seminars and conferences. These include:

- International Co-operative Agricultural Organisation (ICAO)
- International Banking Co-operative Association (ICBA)
- Consumer Co-operatives Worldwide (CCW)
- International Co-operative Fisheries Organisation (IFCO)
- ICA Gender Equality Committee
- International Co-operative Health Organisation (IHCO)
- ICA Housing
- CICOPA

Other groups are also taking the opportunity to meeting including the ICA International Accounting Standards

Working Group which will meet on the 18th just prior to the start of the General Assembly itself which will be held on 19-20 November.

More information will be made available on the ICA website at www.ica.coop/calendar/ga.html.



ICA General Assembly venue, the CICG

Co-operatives UK and Co-operative Development Scotland (CDS) have supported the decision to relocate the venue to Switzerland. CDS and Co-operatives UK will work with ICA to ensure the event is a success. They look forward to the opportunity to host future ICA events in the UK.



The 'Jet d'eau', Geneva's fountain on the Lake of Geneva

Global recession presents an opportunity for co-ops

ICA Director-General reviews recent global gatherings and suggests that co-operatives have a unique opportunity to increase their visibility and get the recognition they deserve.

"I've done a lot of travelling since the last Digest was published, most of which is covered in this issue — but here are my thoughts on the last few months of activity.

The ICA's first global Expo in Lisbon worked very well and our evaluation showed a lot of satisfied customers. For those of us in attendance, it was great to see it happening. It presented a very professional image of the ICA and emphasised the size and scale of the movement. Although we would have liked greater representation from Northern Europe and North America, we will work on this for the next one in 2010 as the Board approved its continuation. Not all colleagues believed the concept could work, but now that we have shown it can be done, I hope those more sceptical, will be at the next ICA Expo in 2010.

The African Regional Assembly in Abuja, Nigeria

showed that the African movement is in a period of revival. With nearly 400 delegates, the Assembly elected a new board and adopted a strong and participative four-year plan.

In Hanoi, the Asia-Pacific region, as usual, presented a competent, engaging and impressive show. Our Vietnamese hosts looked after us very well, proudly showcased the economic and social progress made by their country in the last 30 years, often through co-operative enterprise.

At the same time the ICA Board completed its restructuring considerations—all we have to do now is implement them! Finally, we approved the 2009 to 2012 four-year plan, under the auspices of the global strategic plan previously accepted.

We now have a jointly planned programme for the entire ICA - globally,

regionally, sectorally and thematically. I would like to thank all my colleagues for achieving this impressive result.

All of this is being carried out at a time of global financial crisis—a point not lost at the Board and regional assemblies. We have already written to the G8 governments pointing out how the co-operative movement could contribute to the resolution of the crisis. We are extending this communication to include the G20 and indeed US President elect, Barack Obama.

The ICA is committed to a more forthright campaign highlighting the success and achievement of co-operative enterprise and its relevance to the world economy.

So let's not waste this serious opportunity to get our message out."

DG's Report



Iain Macdonald

"Let's not waste this serious opportunity to get our message out."

Iain Macdonald,
ICA DG

Read the DG's previous monthly reports:
www.ica.coop/directorpage/



Co-operative Seasons Greetings

The ICA would like to take this opportunity to wish all our readers a happy festive season and a prosperous New Year.

We look forward to bringing you more co-operative news in 2009.

Global financial crisis

“...despite the dire financial situation co-operative financial institutions report strong performance. Many are even experiencing unprecedented growth...”



Shaun Tarbuck, Chief Executive Officer, ICMIF

“Co-ops are top survivors in global financial meltdown”: The financial crisis and its impact on financial co-operatives

The global financial crisis is set to worsen according to the latest forecast from the World Bank. World growth will be negative in 2009 and a deep a global recession looms.

Emerging economies are likely to face serious challenges, including bank failures and currency crises. Job losses and cuts in export markets will further impact with the onset of recession.

Yet, despite the dire financial situation co-operative financial institutions report strong performance. Many are even experiencing unprecedented growth as a ‘flight to safety’ phenomenon unfolds.

“Contrary to current global financial trends, credit union development around the world is prospering in growth and member service.” said Pete Crear, President and Chief Executive Officer of the World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU).

Credit union saving deposits were up by USD 22 billion (representing movement of around one third of all deposit funds into co-operatives), while the rate of bank failures in September/October was around one per week.

“Neither in the Great Depression nor in the current crisis have US credit unions received a cent of taxpayer money to bail them out,” said Crear.

Shaun Tarbuck, Chief Executive of International Co-operative Mutual Insur-

ance Federation (ICMIF) agrees, “Some CEOs describe it as a ‘flight to quality’ as customers look for a secure and trusted home for their savings and for their general insurance products. Mutuality and Co-operation are being equated with trust, in the same way that brands were, in the past,” he said.

With many lenders having failed or pulled back from markets, opportunities have emerged for co-operative banks to grow business. Newsweek magazine (24 November 2008) reported that the mortgage crisis had created opportunities for “ethical subprime lenders”: Even in the worst housing crisis since the 1930s, they had healthy payback rates. Why? They haven’t bankrupted their customers or their shareholders, nor have they rushed to government for bailouts. But, they have had to be profitable just like any business. They have to charge appropriate rates and manage risk properly. They have to be profitable, not profit maximising.

The importance of ethical business practices is underscored in those few cases where investment risks were higher or more marginal in pursuit of stronger growth – and the strategy backfired.

However, when investment strategies do turn bad, ethical values inform how the co-op behaves. When Canadian financial co-operative, Desjardins Group, decided to pull out of hedge fund-linked products, its reserves were made available to its investors: Their principal was guaranteed.

“In many countries, co-operative institutions have fared better in the present crisis because their main banking activities take place in the real economy, at a local or regional level. Nevertheless, in our globalised world, where all the economies are connected, even co-operatives with no financial activity abroad, will eventually be impacted,” said Jean-Louis Bancel, Executive Vice-chair of Crédit Coopératif of France and President of the International Co-operative Banking Association (ICBA).

Echoing this word of caution, Pete Crear noted, “People are defaulting on their loans because they have been hit by unemployment and rising commodity prices – they are not defaulting because they were risk capital in the first place. Co-operatives did not see it necessary to chase profits by exploiting customers in the same way”.

“Because they are not listed on the market, co-operative banks don’t have an obligation to maximise short-term profit to distribute to their shareholders,” said Bancel.

This did not mean that co-operatives had low rates of return. “Many academic studies have shown that co-operative banks had similar, sometimes better returns, than non co-operative banks. The main difference is the way the co-operative distributes its reserves—there is intergenerational solidarity between the former members and the future ones, and the co-operative is more sustainable”, said Bancel.

Global financial crisis (cont'd)

That co-operative institutions are weathering the financial crisis extremely well, is evident around the globe: "Co-operative banks' de-centralised structure and their heavy reliance on deposits made them more immune to global stock market turbulence than other credit institutions," said Germany's BVR co-operative banking association president, Christopher Pleister.

Swiss co-operative financial institutions, Raiffeisen and Migros Bank, have seen a surge of new members since the beginning of the year. Migros reported 46,000 new accounts, and Raiffeisen over 100,000, as customers question the stability of large Swiss banks and their failure to keep clients informed about investment risks.

India's co-operative credit societies had also come to the fore as private banks retreat into fiscal black holes and shun consumers due to lack of liquidity or fear of defaults. Smaller neighbourhood lending co-ops, like Shree Saidat Co-operative Credit Society in Mumbai, are emerging as the true people's bank. "While the interest rates for most banks have increased, ours have remained stable," said Naik Rajendra Shridhar, Secretary of Shree Saidat.

The UK's Co-operative Bank believes its focus on member benefit is key in helping it weather the financial storm embracing the banking sector. Its savings balances were up 11 per cent and its term savings had grown by 87 per cent.

David Anderson, Chief Executive, The Co-operative

Financial Services, said: "You can't help but notice that in the UK a lot of the difficulty has arisen from the former mutuals that have demutualised. ... A return to mutual ownership ... is the best way to improve standards in the banking sector".

"One of the key reasons for the current crisis is the short-termism of the capital markets. This is not a problem for the mutual sector, it can take a long term view," said Tarbuck.

"Most co-operative and mutual insurers now run their businesses to be at least as efficient as a stock company. In the UK, these produced average returns of more than 25 per cent on savings products and have done so for the last 10 years."

"Credit unions work with the same 'efficiency of the market'," said Crear: "It is simply not possible to sustain a business by just being ethical – you must always be competitive. The success of credit unions shows that they are competitive.

"The average family will save about USD 500 a year banking with a credit union – the fees make the difference. We never got into linking loans to profit. The same is true with management bonuses," said Crear.

"As long as remuneration packages are linked purely to financial gains of the shareholders we will have these problems. Compensation packages need to be linked to other key performance indicators such as customer service and sustainable practices", added Tarbuck.

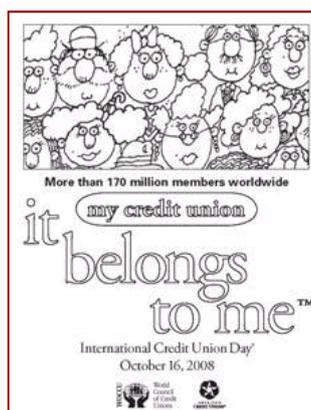
The difference with co-operative banks, is that they don't give stock options to their employees, which reduces the incentive to generate short-term profit by excessive risk taking: However, we are right to address this issue. I believe it is of utmost importance in co-operatives to ensure good governance and transparency towards members, which bonds us to our pledge to democracy," said Bancel.

Co-operatives have responded to the deepening financial crisis as an opportunity to reassert the co-operative difference. Financial co-operatives are exploring what they can do to differentiate themselves.

The theme of this year's International Credit Union Day, "It Belongs to Me" (celebrated annually on the third Thursday in October) recognised credit unions' identity as member-owned financial co-



Jean-Louis Bancel, Chair, International Co-operative Banking Association (ICBA)



operatives and celebrated the concept of member ownership. "Co-operatives do brilliantly in an enabling environment. We need to share information and research, such as we do with our G7 group made up of representatives

Global financial crisis (cont'd)



Pete Crear, Chief Executive Officer and President of the World Council of Credit Unions

“We are not the perpetrators of the current crisis, but in addressing the solutions, legislators might harm the sector if they insist on a regulatory environment that disadvantages co-operatives...”

from the regions with the highest per capita credit union membership,” said Crear.

“We are not the perpetrators of the current crisis, but in addressing the solutions, legislators might harm the sector if they insist on a regulatory environment that disadvantages co-ops. They are talking about a ‘super regulator’, and requiring any bank with one billion plus assets, to list. We have fought this in the past because the co-operative structure serves us so well”.

WOCCU wrote to the all finance ministers of the G20 countries, ICMIF and World Bank, alerting them to the threat to co-operatives, if legislation was enacted that did not treat them as a distinct business form. Co-operatives Europe’s ‘Hands Off Our Co-ops’ campaign, also calls on the European Commission to recognise the co-operative difference.

“All mutual and co-operative bodies should be pointing out that our governance model is different and highlighting our strengths vis-à-vis the current crisis. We have been doing this in the UK and the government is interested to hear more,” said Tarbuck.

“The reality is that national campaigns are more likely to succeed in arriving at a joint message, but it would be good to have a global awareness raising campaign. I believe it is the responsibility of our industry leaders to make this happen and to not let politics and personal issues get in the way of this opportunity to push our sector to the fore”.

ICA’s open letter to the

governments of the G8, issued on 22 October 2008, called on political leaders to protect people from the worst effects of the global recession that are being faced as a result of the corporate mismanagement of the investor led model of business. (More: www.ica.coop/)

ICBA also issued a statement on 20 October 2008 asking that the institutions in charge of building a new international regulatory system take into account the interest and the contribution of the co-operative banking model. “The future system must ensure a level playing field between countries or banking models.” (More: www.icba.coop/)

“ICBA has decided that it must be at the forefront in 2009 on the issue of ensuring that the numerous standard-setting institutions (International Accounting Standards Board IASB, Federal Accounting Standards Board of the United States FASB, Basel Committee, etc) are familiarised with the co-operative model, so that they do not marginalise it by adopting inappropriate rules or standards,” said Bancel.

In its public communiqué issued 6 November 2008, Co-operatives Europe, asked the European Commission to look to the co-operative sector of the global economy for the business model that reflects trust and confidence. Rainer Schlüter, Director of Co-operatives Europe, said, “Now, is an historic opportunity to insist on the values of the co-operative model – to mainstream co-operatives.” (More: www.coopseurope.coop/)

The main challenge going forward is to manage busi-

ness through a long recession: “There will be a focus on cost cutting as companies and customers tighten their belts, but this is the same for all businesses,” said Tarbuck. Although, we might expect better outcomes from co-operatives. For example, when Cyprus Co-operative Central Bank (CCB) had to merge its societies to comply with European Union harmonisation it managed to downsize to 210 (from nearly 400) with no forced redundancies.

“The question for co-operatives now is ‘where is safe?’,” said Crear. “Credit unions are already tightly regulated with strict prudential codes on capital, liquidity and credit risk – but this downturn is so unprecedented that even Triple A rated investments have fallen over. In the end, because we are service based; if the member is happy – we make a profit,” said Crear.

If there is any doubt that the world is swinging back to member owned businesses, let Crédit Mutuel have the last word. France’s second-largest retail bank, Crédit Mutuel CIC - one of the largest member-owned banks in the world - has just purchased the German branch of the troubled American financial conglomerate, Citigroup - one of the largest investor owned banks in the world, for 5.2 billion Euro – cash. Imagine - a community owned business; and, a successful co-operative picking up the assets of a failed private corporation!

ICA Expo hailed a success!



The first world co-operative fair, ICA Expo, has been hailed as a success with more than 190 co-operatives exhibiting a range of products and services. Attracting more than 6000 visitors over the three days of the trade fair, the ICA Expo ran from 23-25 October in Lisbon, Portugal. The majority of participating co-operatives reported that they had concluded business transactions at the fair itself or had established contacts for follow-up sales.

Wine, coffee, dairy, olive oils and other agricultural products featured high on the list of goods represented, in-

cluding a wide range of organic produce. In addition, co-operative handicrafts, tourism, financial and technology services were also on display. A number of ICA members operated institutional stands as a way to reach out to other co-operators, sharing knowledge and information.

As the representative of the Prime Minister of Portugal said at the opening of the Expo, "This is an opportunity to develop closer links and generate business for the co-operative movement which itself addresses the economic and social needs of millions of people around

the world". It proved that there are business opportunities for co-operation among co-operatives as well as opportunities to widen business contacts.

The next ICA Expo will be held in 2010. Please check www.icaexpo.coop in the New Year for dates and venue.



Visitors and exhibitors at the ICA Expo in Lisbon



2008 listing of *Global 300* among new ICA publications

ICA has issued a series of new publications including the 2008 **Global 300 List**. It shows that the 300 top co-operatives are responsible for an aggregate turnover of 1.1 trillion USD which makes it the size of the 10th economy of the world—nearly that of Spain. The list also shows that co-operatives are growing in terms of turnover—14% over the turnover of top 300 co-operatives reported in 2007.

A list of the top co-operatives in developing economies – the **Developing 300 List** - is also available. Both can be downloaded at www.global300.coop.

ICA Asia-Pacific publication on gender will be available soon at www.icarop.coop/ (See page 9).

ICA Africa has published a series including the printed report on the ICA Africa Gender Co-operative Forum

and *Profile of Products & Services offered by Savings & Credit Co-operatives*. More information: www.ica.coop/africa/publications.html



ICA Asia-Pacific

ICA-AP Regional Assembly urges global response to crisis

A statement urging politicians in the Asia-Pacific region to form partnerships with co-operatives to minimise the effect of the global financial crisis on the most economically vulnerable populations, was an important outcome of the **8th ICA Asia-Pacific Regional Assembly**,

hosted by Vietnam Co-operative Alliance (VCA) from 3-6 December, in Hanoi.

ICA President, Ivano Barberini, (see www.ica.coop/presidentpage) welcomed delegates to Hanoi on 3 December. The event was officially inaugurated by H.E. Mr Nguyen Phu Trong, Hon Chairman of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

The 5th Asia-Pacific Co-operative Forum held on 4 December addressed the theme, “Co-operative Advantage in the Global Economic Crisis”, focussing the critical

global economic meltdown.

ICA Director-General, Iain Macdonald, addressed the Forum (see: www.ica.coop/directorpage) along with Chan Tee Seng of the Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF). Other speakers at the Forum were Paul Hazen, National Co-operative Business Association (NCBA); Dr Sanjiv Chopra, Secretary of Agriculture, Government of West Bengal; Bruno Roelants, CICOPA; Chan-Ho-Choi, National Agricultural Co-operative Federation (NACF), Korea; Jiro Ito, Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU); and Shil Kwan Lee, Regional Director, ICA Asia-Pacific.

Speakers drew attention to a clear crisis of values and ethics in business and examined how to respond to the new conditions presenting co-operatives with a challenging reality.

Co-operatives need to reaffirm and strengthen the commitment to their values; strive for better co-

operation between co-operatives at all levels; strengthen the ICA as the agent of global co-operation and guardian of the Co-operative Principles; expand education, training, research and programme development; and enable co-operatives to compete equally with other business structures.

A statement was adopted, aimed at containing the ill effects of the global economic recession, and calling on political leaders to recognise the important role that co-operatives can play in today's crisis.

Delegates also heard that co-operatives must train leaders, managers and members, and plan for future leadership by engaging young people in the movement.

The Forum concluded that now, more than ever before, there needs to be strong leadership to ensure co-operative relevance and importance is communicated.



Opening ceremony



Dr Saxena, newly elected Chair of Regional Research Committee reporting to RA



Tien Quan, Chairman, VCA

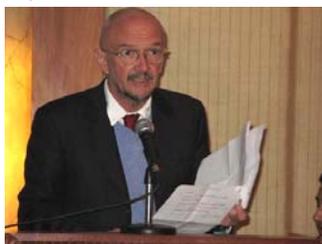
Excerpt from ...

Statement adopted on 5 December 2008 at the 8th ICA Asia-Pacific Regional Assembly in Hanoi on “Increasing Role of Co-operatives in Recent Global Economic Crisis”

“We the representatives of co-operatives from the Asia-Pacific region strongly recommend that the significant role of co-operatives in the process of economic recovery should be given due recognition by the policy makers at global and national level, and therefore urge upon the governments to establish good partnership with co-operatives to protect economically vulnerable populations so as to minimize the impact of global economic meltdown at the ground level”. [More: www.ica.coop](http://www.ica.coop)

Friendly tourism through co-operatives

Seventy co-operators from across Asia-Pacific, Iran, Italy, the Maldives, Norway and UK met in Jaipur, India on 14-15 October for the ICA Asia-Pacific and Rajasthan Institute of Co-operative Education and Management (RICEM) International Conference on Co-operative Tourism. Sponsored by the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Co-operative Ltd (IFFCO), the event examined the theme “Friendly tourism through co-operatives”.



Maurizio Davolio, Chair, TICA.

Speakers included: Sudhansh Pant, Rajasthan registrar for co-operatives; Shil Kwan Lee, Regional Director, ICA Asia-Pacific; Maurizio Davolio, chair of the International Co-operative and Associated Tourism Organisation; Rajiv Agrawal, managing director, National Co-operative Development Corporation (NCDC); and Dr Gurjar, the Rajasthan minister of co-operatives. Delegates focussed on trends, policies, strategies and challenges to position co-operative tourism as a reliable and responsible brand.

Recommendations flowing from the conference include: Certification of co-operative tourism and strategies for capturing a niche market for co-operative tourism, focusing on models of best practice.

Student action on campus co-ops

More than 110 students and faculty members from Kerala, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh attended the seminar on University/Campus Co-operatives on 24-25 October at Kerala Agricultural University in Trissur, India to discuss youth involvement in co-operatives.

Topics included strategies to strengthen student co-operatives in India, and student action aimed at strengthening existing co-ops and setting up new co-operatives on university campuses.



International Conference on Co-operative Tourism in Jaipur, India

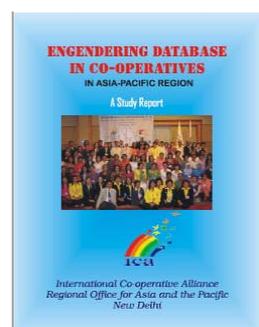


Left to right: Dr Ramachandran, Kerala Agricultural University; Mr Prasad, NCU, India; Mr Narayanan, Kerala State Co-operative Union; P. Nair, ICAROAP, lighting the inaugural lamp.

Sex-disaggregated data for co-ops in Asia-Pacific

ICA Asia-Pacific office in New Delhi has conducted the first project on sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis for co-operatives in the region. Dr Hirway, director of the Centre for Development Alternatives of Ahmedabad, India, has been engaged to implement the project and prepare a road map to establish the database in co-operatives.

A report titled “Engendering Database in Co-operatives in Asia-Pacific Region”, was prepared by Indira Hirway and Shital Lodhia with support from Savitri Singh, advisor-gender programme of ICA A-P. Full report available soon at: www.icarop.coop



ENGENDERING DATABASE
IN CO-OPERATIVES
IN ASIA-PACIFIC REGION
A Study Report
ICA
International Co-operative Alliance
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
New Delhi

ICA Africa

Renewal—theme of Africa Regional Assembly



The theme of the ICA Africa 8th Regional Assembly held in Abuja, Nigeria, from 10-14 November was, “Revitalising member commitment and involvement for improved sustainability of African co-operatives”.

“Close to 400 enthusiastic participants made it a memorable event. Hundreds of Nigerians provided tremendous energy at the Assembly. The new strategic plan was approved, a new regional board was elected and the launch of the endowment fund raised approximately USD 20,000,” said Jan-Erik Imbsen, Regional Director for ICA Africa.



ICA Africa Regional Director, Jan-Erik Imbsen, and ICA Director-General, Iain Macdonald, with delegates at ICA Africa Regional Assembly.

At the gender conference held during the Assembly, two new ICA reports were presented: *Promoting Gender Equality in Co-operatives to Enhance Sustainable Economic Development*, a report from the previous ICA Africa Gender Forum in Lesotho (12-16 November 2007), and the report on *Gender Status in Co-operatives in Africa: The Case of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi*. The Regional Assembly agreed to produce the ICA Africa Strategic Framework for Promoting Gender Equality.

The ILO COOPAfrica information session, a joint presentation by COOPAfrica, The Co-operative College UK and ICA, was also well attended.

The RA statutory agenda delivered the key outcomes including: the re-election of Mr Muchiri as chairperson of the new regional board; the election of four new members representing Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Nigeria; extension of membership to include representatives of the other sub-regions and the regional board. The membership also pledged greater responsibility for the continued rebuilding process—the regional board pledged to recruit two new members each and current ICA members will recruit new members from bordering countries.

Professor Chambo, who facilitated the session on the new four-year strategic plan, said that the renewal of ICA Africa is inextricably linked to the revival of the African movement. The Plan was approved at the members’

forum and a sensitisation session will be held in the New Year.

A proposal for a feasibility study to establish an endowment fund for ICA Africa was enthusiastically received at the members forum, leading to an impromptu launch, where delegates pledged in excess of USD 17,000 to the fund.

Representatives from twelve organisations attended the Africa Co-operative Development Agencies Forum (a joint SCC/CCA/ICA event), in Nairobi on 20-21 November. The key objectives were: Understanding and building best practice among co-op development agencies; sharing learning and challenges in strengthening co-operatives and communities in Africa; and contributing to existing, and increased collaboration and information sharing.

Participants worked towards solutions to: sustainability of co-operatives; co-operative leadership and leadership development in co-ops; co-operative advocacy and policy development; development agencies value adding; gender equality in Africa; and communication and co-ordination among development agencies.

Co-operative advocacy and the web portal development are important for future collaboration. It was agreed that annual meetings in Africa were of great value and that ICA Africa would continue as convener and co-ordinator of co-operative development agencies.

More: www.icaafrica.coop

Cooperatives Europe to assist Australian sector

Rainer Schlüter, Director of Co-operatives Europe was invited as a keynote speaker to the *Co-operative Progress Conference 2008*, hosted by the Co-operative Federation of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, from 27-28 November.

Schlüter assisted delegates from across Australia and New Zealand to develop a road map for future co-operative development in the region. Drawing on the European experience he said, "Europe has a surprising amount in common with Australia when it comes to co-operatives. We have also been fighting for co-operatives in an unfriendly institutional environment. The global financial crisis and failure of free-market capitalism is a new opportunity to mainstream the co-operative model. The question is, how we capitalise on this reality?"

Schlüter stressed that what had been critical to the development of Co-operatives Europe was to build a common voice for co-operatives

and cross sector apex organisations in Europe. Public campaigns for the recognition of the co-operative difference in European Union (EU) legislation, such as the current 'Hands Off Our Co-ops' campaign had also been integral to building a modern image to halt co-operative decline. Other developments included gaining political support from a majority of commissioners and members of European Parliaments, and the submission of the first public communiqué recognising the co-operative business model at EU Commission level. Co-operatives Europe had also obtained an agreement to work on a EU doctrine with guidelines for interpretation of the co-operative difference in the EU legislative framework.

Schlüter urged the Australian co-operative movement to invest in capacity building and advocacy to reverse the decline in co-operative development. He suggested Co-operatives Europe could help build capacity in the Australian sector.

Co-ops Europe



Left to right: Dr Nikki Balnave, University of Western Sydney, Professor Greg Patmore, University of Sydney, Rainer Schlüter, director, Cooperatives Europe and Helen McCall, CEO Co-operative Federation of NSW

NEW ADDRESS

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Campaign has target in sight

The online 'Hands Off Our Co-ops' petition co-ordinated by Co-operatives Europe for the recognition of the co-operative difference in European Union Competition Law has attracted around 90,000 of the target 100,000 plus signatures.

The petition will remain open with the hope of reaching the target, or until

the European Commission takes any further action.

Those interested in learning more about the campaign, or adding their name to the petition can visit the "What the co-op members say".

See website:
www.handsoffourcoops.tumblr.com/

COOPERATIVES Europe



ICA Americas



Ramon Imperial, ICA Americas President and ICA Board Vice-President for the Americas

Imperial elected ICA Americas President

Ramon Imperial Zuñiga is the new president of ICA Americas. He was elected from a field of four candidates from member organisations in Argentina, Colombia, Mexico and Paraguay at ICA Americas Extraordinary Regional Assembly held in Bogota, Colombia on 21 November 2008.

Mr Imperial replaces Carlos Palacino Antía, ICA Americas president since 2002. He will be formally elected as ICA Vice-President at the ICA General Assembly in November 2009 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Imperial has 20 years experience in the co-operative savings and credit sector and has held several positions in the Caja Popular Mexicana since 1987 and where he currently holds the position of Director-General. Caja Popular Mexicana is a co-operative financial institution with more than 1.3 million members and assets of approximately USD 1.9 million.

Mr Imperial is also currently board secretary of the Mexican Federation of Savings and Credit Institutions (FMEAC); president of the Mexican Council of Savings and Credit Co-operatives

(COMACREP), the apex organisation representing the savings and credit co-operatives of Mexico.

He was previously president of the Mexican Association of Savings and Loans Societies (AMSAP); president of the Latin American Confederation of Savings and Credit Co-operatives, (COLAC); a member of the Consultative Council of the ICA Americas; and a member of the board of directors of the International Raiffeisen Union (IRU).

Imperial has been an ICA Board member since 2005.

Co-operative legislation update in the Americas

New Framework law for co-operatives in Latin America: "Ley Marco"
Drafted by ICA Americas, the *Framework Law for Co-operatives in Latin America* was approved by ICA Americas Regional Board on 22 July. This new law is currently being translated into English, French and Portuguese.

The law is in line with International Labour Organisation, Recommendation 193 on the Promotion of Co-operatives and this is supported by the ILO. It will be discussed with parliamentarian in Latin American as of December. The first discussion will take place in Peru's Congress on 3 December.

Uruguay: New co-operative legislation
The Uruguayan Parliament adopted *Co-operative Law No. 18,407*, on 24 October 2008. The law includes an annual allocation of USD 500,000 to support co-operatives.

Paraguayan members promote co-operative learning in schools

ICA members, Cooperativa Universitaria and Panal through its foundation and in partnership with the International Union of School Co-operation and Mutualism in Schools (UICE) organised the 2nd General Assembly of UICE, the Fourth Meeting of the Latin American Teachers

of Co-operation and Student Mutualism and the 1st meeting of Paraguayan student, school and youth co-operative committees on 27-29 September.

Themes addressed included teaching co-operation around the world, training of

teachers in co-operation and value-based education, co-operation and entrepreneurship, the role of leaders in promoting the teaching of co-operatives and the impact of providing such education. More information: www.aciamericas.coop/spip.php?article1595

Corrigendum (Digest 63, page 11)

INFOCOOP is the Instituto Nacional de Fomento Cooperativo *not* 'Instituto Panameño Autónomo Cooperativo' as incorrectly stated in the new members section, Page 11 of the last issue of *ICA Digest* (no. 63). Our apology to INFOCOOP and to the Instituto Panameño Autónomo Cooperativo (IPACOOOP), both member organisations of ICA.

ICA welcomes new board member

ICA News

Thomas Tar is Executive Secretary of the Co-operative Federation of Nigeria (CFN), the national co-operative apex organisation. He has 20 years experience in the co-operative movement in Nigeria. During this time he has developed extensive skills in co-operative

education and training, especially on-the-job training and grassroots-based member education; design of needs-based training materials; and gender equality and co-operative policy issues.

Tar was co-opted by the ICA Board at its October 2008 meeting in Lisbon.



Brazilian co-operators visit ICA Central Office in Geneva

A delegation of 22 Brazilian co-operators visited ICA Central Office in Geneva on 18 September. The delegation from Mato Grosso, was chaired by Celso Regis, president of Mato Grosso do Sul State Organisation of Co-operatives. The delegation consisting of representatives from the agriculture and credit sectors, made the visit to learn about the important work ICA is doing to promote co-operatives throughout the world.



Members of the Brazilian delegation and ICA Central Office staff

ICA Research Conference 2008: Report available

The role of Co-operatives in sustaining development and fostering social responsibility was the theme for the ICA Research Conference 2008 held from 16-18 October in Riva del Garda (Trento, Italy).

The conference addressed the current lack of information on the contribution of the co-operative sector to community development. It addressed issues of solidarity and social responsibility with papers demonstrating that

co-operatives are actors in sustaining local development and fostering social responsibility. Copies of a summary report and the full set of papers can be found at:

www.euricse.eu/en/node/199



ILO training course on co-op policy & legislation in French

The International Labour Organisation's International Training Centre (ITC) is offering a course in French on *Co-operative Policy and Legislation* in Turin, Italy from 26-30 January 2009.

development or implementation of policies and co-operative legislation including representatives of government, co-operative organisations, and others involved in the legal formation of co-operatives.

Places are limited. For information, see: learning.itcilo.org/entdev/COOP/pub/home.aspx?l=Eng&IdSezione=2 or contact: fioravanti@itcilo.org

The course is intended for people with responsibility for

Cooperative Policy and Legislation



Member news

Excellence in CSR awarded to co-operative in Puerto Rico

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is not new to co-operatives. Cooperativa de Seguros Múltiples de Puerto Rico (CSM), a co-op insurance company was recently bestowed with *The American Psychological Association's National Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award*. The award programme is designed to recognise

organisations that make a commitment to programmes and policies that foster employee health and well-being while enhancing organisational performance and productivity.

CSM was judged to provide an exemplary work environment that promotes the personal, professional and financial well-being of employees, as well as the social and cultural growth of Puerto Rico. For 45 years, CSM's focus on human dignity has remained

a valued source of direction. In a recent company video, past President, Mr Rene A. Campos said: "As a co-operative, we are a people centre. Therefore our employees' well-being is a vital company value. Both our customers and the organisation are better served by productive, efficient and healthy people."

More information: www.phwa.org/awards/nationalwinnerview.php?id=17



Crédit Coopératif supports transitioning companies to co-ops

On 15 December, French co-operative bank, Crédit Coopératif signed an agreement with the Confederation of Workers Co-operatives SCOP and an association supporting SMEs APERE, to provide assistance to retiring business leaders who are seeking successors to consider the co-operative form of enterprise and transition ownership to their

employees. Crédit Coopératif sees this as way to maintain jobs, but also to ensure the transmission of entrepreneurial knowledge.

Given the demographic changes in France, thousand of SME business leaders will be retiring in the next 10 years. Worker co-operatives are seen as an option that retiring business leaders

should be sensitised to consider. Crédit Coopératif will provide the financial assistance to these new co-operatives, while other partners will provide technical expertise.

Transitioning companies to co-operatives has a bright future in France. See www.scop.coop/pl176_FR.htm

Record turnout for NZ Co-operative Association AGM



There was a record turnout at the New Zealand Co-operatives Association's annual general meeting in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 21 November, according

to Association chair, Peter Macdougall.

"We had almost 50 people there in the room. Not only were more than half of our members represented, but we also had guests from six non-member co-operatives," he told *ICA Digest*

"In the early days, when we were called the Agricultural Co-operatives Association," he told the meeting, "I can remember an Annual General Meeting which had just eight farmers in the room. Now we have 50 member co-operatives from all types

of business, and not just the rural sector." Co-operatives in New Zealand are responsible for over 20 per cent of the country's GDP.

Alastair Hercus, partner of the law firm Buddle Findlay, spoke about the legal challenges co-operative business had faced over the past year and what can be expected from the new national-led government. Hercus was one of the NZ Co-operatives Association team who wrote the Co-operatives Companies Act 1996.

The new chairperson of Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF) is **Chan Tee Seng**.



Chan Tee Seng was elected at the 10th Triennial General Assembly held on 24 September. He re-

places Seah Kian Peng, who served as chairperson for two terms and remains on the board of trustees. Chan Tee Seng is currently the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the NTUC Child-care Co-operative, the largest single provider of quality and affordable childcare in Singapore.



New president and CEO of Desjardins Group, **Monique Leroux**, is the recipient of the prestigious award for 'economic personality for French-speaking countries', presented at the French-speaking Forum of Business on 16 October 2008. The award underlines her commitment to the co-operative movement and leadership and aspirations for all women in the French-speaking world.

Dr. Rosario Altieri was elected president of the Associazione Generale Co-operative Italiane (AGCI) of Italy replacing Dr Maurizio Zaffi.



Estanislau Simón, Director-General of the Espriu Foundation of Spain and secretary of

International Health Co-operative Organisation (IHCO) is retiring at year-end. ICA wishes him all the best his future endeavours.

People & Member updates

Inspirational Japanese co-operator passes away

Highly respected co-operative veteran, Dr Shouji Kato, died on 6 November at the age of 82.

A graduate of Nagoya University School of Medicine, Dr Kato devoted his life to

healthcare at Minato Health Co-operative in Nagoya. Since 1991, he was chair of the Health Co-operative Association of Japanese Consumer's Co-operative Union (HCA-JCCU). He was also the founder of the interna-

tional health co-operative network and the first chairperson of International Health Co-operative Organisation (IHCO) as well as of the Asia-Pacific Health Co-operative Organisation (APHCO).



New members

The **Indian Farm Forestry Development Co-operative Ltd (IFFDC)** joined ICA on 19 November 2008. IFFDC represents primary farm forestry co-operative societies and primary livelihood development co-operative societies. It works on projects in wasteland development, integrated farming systems, women's empowerment and other financial, technical and

agriculture extension services. IFFDC has 164 member societies with 28,287 individual members and 186 employees. See: www.iffdc.org

Unimed do Estado de São Paulo - Federação Estadual das Cooperativas Médicas (FESP) of Brazil joined ICA on 2 December 2008. FESP is one of the member federations of

UNIMED do Brasil (the National Confederation of Health Co-operatives). FESP has 79 members, including federations and individual co-operative societies. It provides more than 10% of all health services at the state level and 32% of the population receives health services (approximately 17.7 million users) from FESP. See: www.unimeds.com.br

ICA Membership statistics as of 15 December 2008 are 221 member organisations from 87 countries — 211 Members and 10 Associate Members.

Member updates

The **Conseil Canadien de la Coopération (CCC)** of Canada changed its name to **Conseil Canadien de la Coopération et de la Mutualité**. See: www.ccc.coop

Co-operatives UK launched an online events diary in October for the co-operative movement in the United Kingdom. The objective is to establish a central diary for people

involved with credit unions and co-operatives to plan for and promote new events. The diary can be accessed at: www.events.coop

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More events:

Calendar of ICA events
& related co-operative
activity:

www.ica.coop/calendar/

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

2009 Calendar of ICA events and related co-operative activities

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 26-30 January | ILO course - <i>Co-operative Policy and Legislation</i> , Turin, Italy (in French) fioravanti@itcilo.org |
| 25-26 March | ICA Board Meeting, Krakow (Poland) |
| June | ICA Asia-Pacific Standing Committee Meeting, Tokyo, Japan |
| 2-3 June | ICA Board Meeting, Tokyo, Japan |
| September | ICA Americas Regional Conference, Guadalajara, Mexico |
| September | ICA Board Meeting, City to be confirmed (Norway) |
| 1-3 October | The ICMIF 2009 Biennial Conference, Toronto, Canada |
| 15-16 November | ICA Board Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland |
| 16 November | International Fisheries Co-operative Organisation, Executive and Plenary Meetings, Geneva Switzerland |
| 17 November | ICA Asia-Pacific Standing Committee Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland |
| 17 November | ICA Research Symposium, Geneva, Switzerland |
| 17 November | CICOPA Executive Committee, Geneva, Switzerland |
| 17 November | ICA Housing Board, Geneva, Switzerland |
| 17 November | ICA Gender Equality Committee, Executive, Plenary and Seminar, Geneva, Switzerland |
| 17 November | International Co-operative Banking Association, Europe and Global Executive Meetings and General Assembly, Geneva, Switzerland |
| 18 November | International Co-operative Agricultural Organisation General Assembly and Seminar, Geneva, Switzerland |
| 18 November | CICOPA General Assembly, Geneva, Switzerland |
| 18 November | DotCoop Board of Managers Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland |
| 18 November | ICA Africa Executive Committee, Geneva, Switzerland |
| 18 November | Consumer Co-operatives Worldwide, Executive Committee, Geneva, Switzerland |
| 18 November | International Co-operative Banking Association Seminar, Geneva, Switzerland |
| 18 November | International Co-operative Health Organisation Executive Committee, Geneva, Switzerland |
| 18 November | ICA International Accounting Standards Working Group, Geneva, Switzerland |
| 19-20 November | ICA General Assembly, Geneva, Switzerland www.ica.coop |