



Seize the moment; embark on renewal

For the past three years I have had the honour of being the president of ICA. During my extensive travel to over 70 countries, I have had an opportunity to learn how co-operatives live and work in different sectors. I have had a chance to meet and discuss with a great number of co-operators, but also

Lobby global bodies

Promote the co-operative difference

Offset threats to peace and democracy

Build new alliances

A more equitable world

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with the highest-ranking government officials. In all these countries, I have observed two common features:

One is that the tragic marriage between economic globalisation and trade liberalisation continues to increase the concentration of wealth and social exclusion, both of which are enemies of democracy and peace.

The second is that co-operatives seem to have grown into organisations that can address these issues, both in industrialised and developing countries. While promoting employment in all sectors and braking the further concentration of wealth, co-operatives serve as bridges between the market and the welfare of people and communities, thus accomplishing their major objective of serving their members.

Based on this observation, I can only reconfirm my conviction that the co-operative movement, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, is no longer the third way of social and economic development. It has assumed the incontestable role as the defender of peace and democracy in the second wave of its history.

However, to fulfil their role, co-operatives must abandon conservatism and embark on a process of renewal.

The time is right for making changes and we must have the courage to act. We need to change if we want to adapt to this new reality, both as individual co-operatives as well as their organisations including ICA. We will need to make investments to make progress to build and grow.

ICA is changing with the aim of improving its services to members and strengthening its position as the globally recognised representative of the co-operative movement.

One of the areas that we must address is the important task of promoting co-operation and the co-operative difference in these new times. We want to be more active in United Nations organisations and other international bodies including the World Trade Organization. We will forge new alliances and strengthen our existing ones. We will improve our communication and management to ensure the best use of our financial and human resources. Above all, we want all members to know and feel that they are represented by ICA at various world fora and that they can count on ICA to defend them when they need its assistance.



Abandon conservatism: Rodrigues

We are changing with the aim of accomplishing this new, remarkable role, which is to help defend democracy and peace and thus build a more equitable world.

ICA is all of us - members, specialised bodies, regional and head offices and in fact all our 760 million individual members. Together we can advance in all confidence without a crisis and without fear, knowing that we will achieve our primary objective of building a better future.

Let's believe in this dream. Let's make this dream a reality. We can change the world!

Roberto Rodrigues
ICA President

Comings and goings



Bruce Thordarson, director-general of ICA since 1988,

resigned in July. Before joining ICA in 1985 as associate director and director of development, Bruce Thordarson was executive director of the Co-operative Union of Canada (as the Canadian Co-operative Association was known then). At the helm of the head office when ICA entered its second century in 1995 in a strong position, he also saw the organisation through a comprehensive strategic review in 1999 to get set for the 21st century. Said Roberto Rodrigues, president, in his announcement: All Board members want to thank Bruce Thordarson for his commitment to the co-operative movement during his years of service with ICA and sincerely wish him all the best for his future life and activities.



'The most pressing issue of today is where we can have the biggest impact'

The co-operative mode of working together for a common aim is perhaps even more relevant today than it was in the early days, says Karl-Johan Fogelström, newly appointed director-general of ICA, and tells Alliance what else is on his mind.

Alliance: When you were offered this job, what contributions did you feel you could make ?

Fogelström: First, ICA is not new to me. As long ago as the early 80s I participated with the former director-general, Dr Suren Saxena, in an assessment of ICA's regional offices in Asia and Africa. In the Swedish Co-operative Centre (SCC), where I worked from 1985 until I took up the assignment with the ICA on 1 September, we have had a long affiliation with ICA – in fact since the start of the SCC in 1958 and it is still on-going.

Secondly, I worked for three years, 1990–1992, in the ICA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

In other words, I know the organisation fairly well. I strongly believe that ICA has an important mission in the world of today. I hope that I can make a useful contribution.

What in your view would be the most important areas where ICA could have an impact?

This is a rather complex question. But I will give it a try. I have been working with co-operative development for 26 years: 13 years in the field and 13 years with the Swedish Co-operative Centre in Stockholm. I have seen what co-operatives can do to improve the living conditions for disadvantaged groups of people. I have seen that economic and social co-operation in democratic forms – the very essence of the co-operative idea – is a powerful and efficient way for poor and disadvantaged people to improve their living conditions through their own efforts, to get a voice and to speak up for themselves.

The most pressing moral, political and economic issue of our time is Third World poverty. ICA and its affiliated co-operative organisations can and should make a contribution, by supporting and promoting co-operative development in developing countries.

This is the area where I believe the world co-operative movement would have its biggest impact.

There is a lot of talk about the co-operative difference. What is your perception about this?

Certainly, co-operatives are different from stock companies and other similar actors on the market. As I see it, the major difference lies in the values and the objectives (or missions) of co-operatives, as spelled out in the Rules of ICA. Co-operatives are inherently value-based organisations. A genuine co-operative is a democratic, user/member-led organisation – not investment-led. This means that the very purpose of a co-operative organisation is to fulfil members' needs – that is why they are formed in the first place – not solely to optimise return on invested

capital. However, while fulfilling its purpose a co-operative must be at least as efficient and have at least as good a return on its invested capital as its competitors. A co-operative must be competitive.

A second difference is, as I mentioned earlier, the role that the co-operative mode of operation can play in the development process.

That's a good lead-in for one last question: What is your vision for ICA?

Without a vision there is no real organisation. Mine for ICA may not yet be a full-fledged vision but at this stage I would formulate it as follows:

First, that ICA and its network of affiliated organisations will make a decisive contribution in supporting co-operative development, thus helping to eradicate world poverty, for democracy, justice and peace – for the good of the mankind.

Secondly, that the co-operative mode of operation, the difference, will become increasingly visible, appreciated and recognised. (There is a market out there for this difference.) And, that ICA, and the whole network of ICA affiliated organisations, will be perceived and identified as value-based organisations contributing to society's good.

Thirdly, that ICA will be a globally recognised and leading body for the co-operative mode of operation.

In Memoriam



Yvon Daneau, a past ICA Vice-President and member of the ICA Executive Committee (the predecessor of

the ICA Board) passed away on 22 September 2000.

Mr. Daneau had held a number of positions in the Desjardins group, including the post of secretary-general of the Confédération des Caisses Desjardins of Canada.

ICA appeal saves housing co-operatives in Poland

President of Poland His Excellency Alexander Kwasniewski on 11 September blocked the enactment of a new law that would have dissolved housing co-operatives in the country.

The move came after ICA President Roberto Rodrigues and ICA Vice-President for Europe Lars Hillbom addressed a letter to him requesting him to not sign the proposed Act of Parliament.

The letter was the result of discussions held in Geneva between Lars Hillbom, who is also president of ICA Europe, Claus-Jürgen Hachmann of ICA Europe's Co-operative Housing Committee, and Jerzy Jankowski, president of the National Co-operative Council of Poland, on what actions ICA could take to protect the Polish housing co-operative movement.

A major factor for the success of the appeal



With President of Poland His Excellency Alexander Kwasniewski (far right), from left: Roberto Rodrigues, president, ICA; Mr Domagalski, president, National Co-operative Council of Poland; Chief of Cabinet, Government of Poland; Adam Piechowski, National Co-operative Council of Poland; and Gabriella Sozanski, director, ICA Europe.

was Mr Rodrigues call on Poland's President Kwasniewski last year. At that time, Mr Rodrigues took the opportunity to present and explain the significant role that co-operatives play in various economic sectors throughout the world.

NTUC Income wins two awards

NTUC Income was named Insurance Company of the Year for the second consecutive time and its CEO, Tan Kin Lian, won the Financial Personality of the Year award at the Financial Awards 2000 ceremony in Singapore 30 August. Sponsored by the Financial Planner magazine, the awards recognise excellence in financial services in Singapore. NTUC Income is the insurance co-operative founded by the National Trade Union Congress. Tan Kin Lian is also the current chairman of Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF).

We did not expect to win it a second time round, as we expected more active competition from the other life insurance companies. So, it was a pleasant surprise that we won, said Mr Tan.

There are two possible reasons. First, we must have received good support from our policyholders and agents who nominated us for the award. Second, the judges must have been impressed with our performance over the past year. We achieved excellent financial results and were able to distribute S\$153 million in additional bonus to our policyholders."

Established in 1970 with a modest capital of S\$ 1.2 million, NTUC Income has grown to be an industry giant today, with more than one million policyholders and total assets exceeding S\$5.2 billion. NTUC Income was last year awarded the A A rating by Standard and Poor's (S&P) – the highest rating for a locally owned insurer in Asia outside of Japan. The rating testifies the company's financial strength.

For the first half of this year, Income is the number one seller of life insurance policies in Singapore. It sold S\$498 million worth of life insurance policies with a market share of 24.7 percent. Income is also the leader in general insurance with a market share of 12.8 percent.

On being named the Financial Personality of the Year, Mr Tan added, I was surprised and honoured to be selected for this personal award, as the competition is from personalities in the entire financial sector – banks, life insurers, stockbrokers and others. In his speech he paid tribute to all those who work in the life insurance industry. From next year, the life insurance industry is expected to go through great changes in the way that products and advice are delivered. We should all face the challenges positively.

The top four candidates in each of four categories – insurance, banking, credit cards and securities – were selected in an internet survey organised by Financial Planner magazine in conjunction with SingTel Yellow Pages between March and August this year. The winners were selected by a panel headed by Speaker of Parliament Tan Soo Khoon.

Argentina has a new co-operative telecommunications enterprise

A new telecommunications enterprise, TECOOP, formed by the Argentine co-operative movement in the wake of the sector's deregulation, was officially announced at a seminar on

Cooperativas 2000, Empresas Argentinas y Nuestras held in Buenos Aires in conjunction with the International Co-operative Day. Organised by the Co-operative Confederation of the Republic of Argentina (COOPERAR) under the auspices of the ICA Project Office for the Southern Cone of Latin America, the seminar was declared by the President's Office to be of national interest and was chaired by ICA President Roberto Rodrigues and COOPERAR President Juan Carlos Fissore. More than 800 persons participated. Dejanidir Dalpasquale, president of the Organization of Co-operatives of Brazil (OCB), made a presentation on the ICA Global Forum Co-operative Identity in the New Millennium to be held in Rio de Janeiro in conjunction with the ICA Americas Regional Assembly and the 12th Brazilian Co-operative Congress 4-8 December.



At the seminar on "Enterprises that are Argentine and Belong to Us," from left: Dejanidir Dalpasquale, president of OCB; Roberto Rodrigues, president of ICA; and Cristina Simone, director of the ICA Project Office.

Co-operative image on the internet

It's time to raise our heads above the parapet and stake a distinctive co-operative claim to some of this new territory.

ICA supports a .co-op identity

Leveraging co-operative e-loyalty

Issues of consumer confidence and trust are paramount for the emerging e-commerce world. Meanwhile the co-operative world is waking up to the fact that people trust co-operatives more than purely commercial businesses. In this article Malcolm Corbett, of Internet co-operative Optel, argues that the time is right to create a co-operative identity on the Internet with a new .co-op global domain name.

For those of us who are both Internet and co-operative practitioners it is fascinating to see how well the concept of Co-operation and the Internet go together. It is not simply that at a fundamental level the creation of the Internet has been a mutual and co-operative endeavour; just as important, co-operative business models seem to have huge opportunities for success on the Internet – for doing business and developing relationships with our members. What is surprising is the extent to which parts of our sector still have to wake up to how much this new communications tool has to offer. It's time to raise our heads above the parapet and stake a distinctive co-operative claim to some of this new territory. In this article I suggest that we should seek a specifically co-operative identity on the Internet. Furthermore, our co-operative philosophy and practice should make that identity one of the most trusted places on the Net for people to do e-business.

On the web, e-loyalty is our secret weapon. In a major article in the July-August edition of Harvard Business Review Frederick Reichheld and Phil Scheffer argue that the unique economics of e-business make customer loyalty more important than ever. Online, customers can't look a sales clerk in the eye, can't size up the physical space of a store or office, and can't see and touch the products... Price does not rule the web; trust does. In both B2B (business-to-business) and B2C (business-to-consumer) e-commerce, those companies most likely to succeed are those that successfully leverage their brand values of consumer trust, loyalty and affinity.

Of course this is not a new argument. Management consultants have long been aware of both the potential and the ramifications for business of the Internet and emerging interactive channels like digital TV and mobile services. The first real wake-up call was the book *Net Gain* by Hagel and Armstrong – who put the case that the Internet makes the consumer king. If a world of alternative suppliers is no more than a mouse click away, how does a vendor prevent customer promiscuity? How do they keep the people coming back to their site, and their services? Those that succeed build highly successful and valuable businesses. Once the customer has been acquired, the costs of servicing are comparatively low and long term profits are high.

Part of the answer is to increase customer confidence in issues like security and privacy of personal information. Another aspect is to enrich the customer's experience by seeking feedback and involvement. Amazon.com, and its system of reader reviews, is an early example of what later came to be talked about as virtual communities – groups engaged in issues of common concern, unbounded by the constraints of time or geography. The notion of virtual community has long been familiar to non-profit organisations working online. And in the co-op sector, good examples of virtual communities have emerged with the advent of forums and discussion lists like cooperative-bus and co-opnet.

Another attempt to tackle the problem of loyalty has been the development of portal and hub websites. These sites aggregate members and content, providing a range of news and other services in the hope of keeping the eyeballs returning. Some are very successful – at least in attracting attention and investment. What is less clear is whether the commercial portals will fulfil their ultimate aim, to be a profitable channel for selling goods and services.

It is clear that in many senses the e-business world is searching for that Holy Grail of consumer loyalty, affinity and trust. These are issues that affect everything in the B2C arena from the marketing of a pure-play dot.com, to the often faltering steps of established bricks-and-mortar brands in this new arena. Perhaps most dramatically the search for viable business models affects the volatility of technology stock as investors try to figure out how to value new measures like hits, or new concepts like stickiness, against real-world profit and loss, assets and liabilities.

Meanwhile, co-operative businesses often have a level of brand loyalty to die for. At the 1999 ICA Congress and General Assembly in Quebec and again at this year's British Co-operative Congress, the star turn was Tom Webb, over from Canada, promoting the concept of Marketing Our Co-operative Advantage (MOCA). Underpinning the MOCA concept is some solid research. This research shows that on the whole people believe that co-operatives are more trustworthy than their capitalist counterparts, that they do try to serve their communities better and, although they may not be as fast to respond to changes in the business world, they are worthy of support. In short, people tend to trust co-operatives. Even more desirable for any Internet entrepreneur is the fact that co-operatives have members; members with a



genuine sense of ownership, who spend real cash buying goods and services, or who offer their products or labour to the co-operative. Indeed in the UK retail co-op sector recent research shows that (unsurprisingly) members are their best customers. From a new economy perspective that is somewhere close to nirvana.

If co-operatives have the confidence to build on the lessons of MOCA; if we start devising clever strategies to exploit these new digital channels, and start using the new tools to engage with our greatest asset – our members – we have the potential to be very big winners in this new economy. If we seize the moment we could be on the verge of a revolution in Co-operation on a global scale. We have the possibility of taking our fundamental co-operative principles into a 21st century business setting, a setting that could almost have been designed for us.

At this point it is worth raising a sceptical voice. It all sounds very good but how can we separate the sense from the hyperbole?

Undoubtedly an enormous amount of hype surrounds the Internet and the social and economic changes that will supposedly follow in its wake. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that this technology is revolutionising communications.

(Most of this article

was written on a laptop computer on an aircraft. It was emailed from a hotel in San Francisco to colleagues back in London. The background research was done on the Web. These are facts that are hardly worth mentioning today.)

For those with the technology and resources clearly the Internet supports international business lifestyles of dubious sustainability. But it is also supporting new ways in which people can co-operate for a common purpose. Social movements have been quick to pick up on the Internet's potential to communicate and to publish on a global scale. Whether an organisation is large or small, tightly organised or a loose coalition, the Internet makes global action possible – as we saw in London, Seattle, Washington and Prague. It is as revolutionary as the invention of the printing press or the telephone.

For our sector, the Internet is being used to create new forms of business with co-operative characteristics. A good example is LetsBuyIt.com, an Internet service which aggregates consumers to get the best possible price for products they want. LetsBuyIt.com calls this co-buying, and describes the business model as member-driven. It isn't part of our co-operative family, but it has used some of the key features of the Internet to create a business with many attributes of a consumer co-operative.

Within the co-op sector itself there are some startling success stories of the Internet being used

to create exciting new businesses. In the UK the best of breed Internet bank is smile.co.uk – set up by the Co-operative Bank. In the United States, just down the road from Amazon.com, is Recreational Equipment Inc (REI), a consumer co-operative successfully exploiting the Internet as well as its bricks-and-mortar stores. REI's aim is to engage with customers when they want, where they want and how they want. The Internet is completely integrated into its business operations.

Looking around we can see many co-operatives experimenting with the Internet, and some extraordinary examples. Like the e-commerce site of the Gujarati dairy co-op Amul. Amul brings together one million farmers and is today one of India's premier brands. Its e-commerce site allows customers to buy the complete product range for home delivery. Even the British Co-operative Union, not normally thought of as a hotbed of radical technical ideas, has developed an Internet portal site for UK co-ops. Meanwhile others are building Internet business models with some co-operative characteristics because they are more likely to be successful. It comes down to affinity, trust and membership.

Arguably the time is right for the co-operative movement to distinguish itself in the new economy. One way to do this is to establish a .co-op or .coop global Internet identity challenging the .com hegemony over e-business. In August the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names & Numbers (ICANN) – the global body for assigning Internet names – announced a process seeking applications for new global top level domains (gTLDs). The US National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA) working with Internet co-op Poptel, and the ICA are seizing the initiative and promoting the idea of a .co-op gTLD. NCBA is in touch with other ICA member organizations in Canada, Japan, Uruguay and the UK to raise support. Technical help has been provided by Poptel, the UK Internet co-op and NRIC, the US telecoms co-ops. If the application succeeds the new Internet domain could come into existence as early as 2001. Co-operative organisations around the world will be able to use the new domain to announce their co-operative identity in their Internet names and website addresses.

Assuming that Marketing Our Co-operative Advantage makes sense, and assuming that on the Internet we can leverage our core values of trust, affinity and membership, a .co-op address could easily become one of the most popular destinations for people seeking to do business on the Web. We will have created an incredibly powerful brand identity leveraging e-loyalty and challenging the .com hegemony.

Winning .co-op (by no means guaranteed) is a small step. But if we get our co-operative strategies right, and we share our experience and knowledge, it could prove to be one of the crucial steps we took early in the new century.

ICA draws on its network to support .co-op

Facilitating collaboration among co-operatives is one of the ICA's prime membership services. The .co-op initiative shows how the ICA can help its members and promote the co-operative movement. Poptel, a Co-operative Internet Service, approached ICA to explore the possibility submitting an application to ICANN to create a new top level domain name. ICA consulted with a number of members and found that all were supportive and enthusiastic. In fact, it found that the US co-operative movement was also considering submitting an application. Links were made and discussions began. The National Co-operative Business Association (NCBA) was selected to take the lead and submit the .co-op application which describes why the Internet community would benefit from a .co-op domain and how the .co-op domain would be authorized to ensure that usage be restricted to true co-operatives. ICA identified potential partners and provided input to strengthen NCBA's application which was submitted on 2 October. Will the application be successful? We are confident of the strength of the .co-op application; however, the decision lies with ICANN. ICANN has already indicated that it will only introduce a limited number of new domains and there is no information on how many applications will actually be submitted. What happens if .co-op is not selected? ICANN has not indicated if and when it would again take applications for new domains, but if and when it does, ICA and its members will be ready to renew its bid to establish a .co-op top level domain.

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First Asia Pacific Co-operative Forum

Governance, management, alliances and IT among strategic issues to be addressed

ICAR OAP recognises that the process of globalisation creates predictable pressures on post-crisis countries in Asia and the Pacific, particularly the developing ones. Co-operatives, still considered small and medium-sized enterprises, must cope with change by working closer together, or otherwise be left behind by the dominant private sector in the new economy. In addition to making structural reforms to meet the challenge of competition, co-operatives must also continue to reach out and bring benefits to the poorer segments of its membership. Hence change is imperative.

In an attempt to seek the appropriate responses to these challenges, ICAR OAP convened its First Asia-Pacific Co-operative Forum on 27-28 June in Singapore in collaboration with the Singapore National Co-operative Federation. The main purpose of the Forum was to enable co-operative leaders, managers, professionals, experts, researchers, policymakers and co-operators to share their views on strategies for change, and the adaptation necessitated by the changing

environment as we enter this new millennium. Titled *Co-operatives in the 21st Century: Are we changing?* the forum addressed strategic themes of co-operative governance, capital mobilization, globalisation, co-operative trade, co-operative legislation, and innovation.

The keynote speech was by the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, H.E. Megawati Soekarnoputri, who emphasised the need for socio-economic reforms by co-operatives as well as policy reforms by governments. The thematic address was by Honourable Lim Boon Heng, Minister without Portfolio, Republic of Singapore and Secretary-General, National Trade Unions Congress (NTUC), stressing the opportunities for creative destruction of the old economy as we moved into the new one. No less than 350 participants from the region and other countries participated.

Primary issues and responses that emerged were

Issues: professional management; uncertain board/management relations; restructuring; stagnation; undercapitalization.

Responses: keep identity; keep focus; improved governance; government partnership; alliances; information technology; professional management; poverty eradication.

Presentations and the synthesis of discussions at the Forum have been put on the ICAR OAP website www.icar.oap.org.sg; 24 speakers, both co-operative professionals and practitioners, as well as scholars from Asia, Europe and North America, contributed to the rich dialogue which ensued.

Prior to the Asia Pacific Co-op Forum 2000, the 1st Asia-Pacific Co-op Research Conference was successfully conducted. It noted the need to bridge the gap between co-operative leaders and researchers under two main themes: how to put the co-operative principles into operation; and the co-operative response to present and future challenges in the changing environment, including best practices, that would help the movement to find solutions.

Among other important meetings was the Second Regional Women's Forum on the theme *Transcending Glass Ceilings and Glass Ladders in the New Millennium*, with the attendance of more than 120 delegates and observers, and inaugurated by Madam Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Senior Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Community Development and Sports. She said that co-operatives need good people to run the business enterprises and they can ill-afford to neglect the potential contributions of women. Lydia Johnson from VanCity Credit Union showed what best practices can be learned in women leadership.

The week-long events culminated with the successful completion of the Fourth ICA Regional Assembly for Asia and the Pacific.

Making a success of co-operative business in the New Europe

Europe, too, has experienced severe problems, including increased poverty and concentration of wealth, as a result of globalisation, and co-operative development is one way in which we can address these issues and make a difference, said Lars Hillbom, president of ICA Europe, as he spoke to delegates at the ICA European Regional Assembly held in Bratislava, Slovakia, 4-5 October. Deputy Prime Minister of Slovakia Ivan Miklos echoed the concern over rapid globalisation and expressed his support for co-operative development in his opening statement to the Assembly. The 186 participants focused on best practices for addressing concentration and cross-border co-operation in the agricultural and consumer co-operatives, partnerships in the financial sector to meet globalisation, and co-operatives as models for implementing new initiatives in various sectors, such as workers housing, social co-ops, tourism and others. The Assembly also adopted a four-year Development Strategy for Co-operatives in Central and Eastern Europe. The highlight of the meeting was a guest speaker from the European Commission, Lorimer D.M. Mackenzie, director of the Enterprise DG in charge of the promotion of entrepreneurship and SMEs. He shared his perception of the co-operative movement and noted the common ground on which collaboration between the Commission and ICA could be founded. He encouraged ICA to lobby more actively and outlined the mutual advantages of the Commission working with the co-operative movement.

Europe, too, has poverty and exclusion. Co-operative development can make a difference.

Message from the Chair, ICA Global Women's Committee

Unequal access to resources is evident on World Rural Women's Day 15 October



As we all know peace and development are inextricably linked. There can be no lasting peace without economic and social development, just as the development process cannot be implemented without first

establishing a climate of peace. Yet today, women in agriculture face widespread inequality. This is far too evident in their unequal access to resources and raw materials (land, credit, agro-inputs, etc), to education, trade opportunities and as a result, to technology and services that facilitate their everyday work. In the long term, these inequalities are leading to significant uncertainty in food supply and enable malnutrition and poverty to continue. While there has been considerable progress, even today many agricultural development programmes have not addressed the real needs of rural women. Rural women are and must be integral partners in development. The establishment of genuine dialogue between women and men will substantially contribute to bringing lasting peace and sustainable development.

Furthermore there is an urgent need to change those attitudes that hamper the achievement of human equality through the implementation of truly participatory democracy, i.e., equal rights and opportunities, access to education, employment, decision-making process, resources, healthcare services, etc.

A recent United Nations report emphasised how many women in a number of countries are still suffering from abuse and violence. This, as the report underlined, is a socially unacceptable cost paid by the whole mankind. Peace can only be established through a culture of respect for others and solidarity, the common basis of any human relationship.

Co-operation, by nature, is based upon these values. It also is about strengthening the social and economic development in all countries, thus contributing to the peace processes in the various areas of the world affected by conflicts. We believe that the co-operative movement will be urged to play an ever-increasing proactive role in promoting lasting peace and sustainable development in order to fulfil its task and make a better world to live. Let us remember that rural women are and will be key actors in any lasting development and peace.

ICA asks members to support UN Guidelines



Creating and maintaining a supportive and enabling environment for co-operative development is the basis for co-operative success. Time and again, we have seen that good co-operatives struggle and fail as a result of legislative and

administrative provisions that fail to recognise the co-operative character and do not create a level playing field for co-operative enterprises. That is why ICA through the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC) has ensured that the government-co-operative relationship is examined in international fora. One initiative is that of UN Guidelines aimed at creating a supportive environment for the development of co-operatives.

In 1996 the General Assembly of the United Nations, in its resolution 51/58, encouraged governments to keep the legal and administrative provisions governing the activities of co-operatives under review. In response to the same resolution, COPAC elaborated, circulated within the co-operative movement for comment, and then submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations a set of draft guidelines on co-operative development. Specialists from the co-operative

movement as well as from governmental and intergovernmental organizations agreed that Guidelines were needed and would be useful. At the end of 1999, the draft guidelines were included in the report of the UN Secretary-General (A/54/57) and were submitted to governmental review as per UN resolution A/RES/54/123 of 17 December 1999. A revised version of the guidelines will be submitted to the UN General Assembly in the autumn of 2001 for adoption.

The opportunity exists for the co-operative movement to have a strong policy document issued by the United Nations which outlines how government can provide the conditions necessary to enable the co-operative movement to better serve their members. It outlines the delicate relationship between co-operatives and government and underlines the need for co-operative autonomy.

ICA calls on its members to raise awareness on the draft guidelines within its movement and to the greater public and ensure that their governments will support the adoption of these guidelines at the UN.



800 million deprived on World Food Day 16 October

A Millennium Free from Hunger, theme of this year's World Food Day highlights the fact that there are still 800 million men, women and children who are chronically hungry. Ending hunger will require actions that not only increase agricultural productivity but that also raise the incomes of rural communities, improve access to food by those most in need, and ensure that developing countries have full access to markets, research and investment. The co-operative movement must mobilise its strengths to ensure that it addresses the needs for those in need. As ICA members know, Co-operation is a powerful tool for improving the economic and social lives of people the world over. Hunger can be eradicated if we eliminate the underlying causes of hunger including poverty, war, environmental degradation and discrimination. Co-operatives can help make this a reality.

2000

16-17 November

ICA Global HRD Committee Consultation Meeting:
Creating a Co-operative Virtual Education Centre, Geneva,
Switzerland

3-7 December

Rio Cooperativo 2000, Rio Brazil (Please check
<http://www.coop.org/rio/> for the latest meeting
schedule)

3 December

¥ International Health Co-operative Organisation (IHCO)

Board Meeting

¥ ICA-Americas Executive Committee

¥ ICA-Americas Consulting Council

4 December

¥ ICA Regional Assembly for the Americas
(by invitation only)

¥ Consumer Coop International-CCI Executive & Joint
Global and Regional seminar on co-operative business
crossing borders

¥ ICA Global Women s Committee Plenary Meeting

¥ International Co-operative Agricultural Organization
(ICAO) Seminar on Agriculture/Cattle Raising –
Industry Co-operative

¥ CICOPA Americas

¥ IHCO Joint Global and Regional seminar on Health
co-operatives

¥ Meetings of the ICA regional sectors: Tourism, Housing,
Youth, Gender, School, Credit, Forestry, Insurance

Panel Meetings:

- Co-operative System and Communication
- Legal Aspects and Juridical of the Brazilian
Co-operative System
- University, Technology and Co-operatives –
Integration for Knowledge
- Fishing Co-operatives

¥ III EXPOCOOP – Exhibition of Products and Services of
Brazilian Co-operatives and
International Fair of Products and Services of Co-
operatives

¥ Official Opening of RioCooperativo 2000 (evening)

5 December

Global Forum How Co-operatives are Dealing with
Globalisation

¥ Co-operative Business and the Internet

¥ When a co-operative needs capital, is demutualisation
the only alternative ?

¥ Co-operative Services: Alternatives when the Public
Sector is Privatised

¥ Women and Youth: Where are they?

¥ Co-operative Leadership: Is there a Difference?

6 December

IberoAmerican Regional Conference

7 December

Organization of Co-operatives of Brazil 12th Congress
ICA Finance Committee Meeting

2001

18-20 April

ICA Board Meeting, Rome, Italy

12-13 October

ICA Board, Seoul, Korea

14-15 October

ICA Specialized Body Meetings, Seoul, Korea

16-17 October

ICA General Assembly, Seoul, Korea