



# Press Release

## Regional Conference Attracts Record Numbers

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Some one thousand co-operative leaders from across the Americas continent, as well as guests from other regions, attended this year's annual conference organised by the ICA Regional Office for the Americas in Mexico City, November 19-21, 1997.

This year's conference focussed on the problem of unemployment and the contributions which co-operatives can make, and are making, to create and maintain jobs. The conference combined plenary presentations with sectoral and thematic workshops, as well as business forums to help participants identify new business opportunities.

In a keynote presentation, ICA President Roberto Rodrigues challenged co-operatives to ensure that they have the right kind of directors and managers to deal with the intense competitive challenges facing co-operatives in all sectors.

ICA's Regional Consultative Committee also met in Mexico City on 17 November under the chairmanship of Miguel Cardozo of Uruguay.

The Committee elected Carlos Bonilla of Costa Rica as Vice-President of the Committee, filling the vacancy created by Mr. Cardozo's elevation to the regional presidency.

On the recommendation of the Regional Women's Committee, the Committee decided to recommend to the ICA Board that Belinda Portillo of Honduras be co-opted to the global Board, as decided in Geneva by the General Assembly in September.

The Committee decided that the theme of the 1998 Regional Conference, to be held in Punte del Este, Uruguay, in mid-November, will be the impact of trading blocs on co-operative business activities. The 1999 Conference will be held in Quebec City in August, just before the ICA's Millennium Congress and General Assembly.

The Committee reviewed the Regional Office's 1998 work programme, focussing on the three themes of co-operative identity, business promotion, and human resource development. Further information on these activities is available from the ICA Regional Office for the Americas in Costa Rica.

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# Press Release

## The Global Role of Co-ops

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A special seminar on the second day of the ICA General Assembly focussed on the global role of co-operatives.

Introducing the topic, the chair of the session, ICA Board Member Yehudah Paz, noted that co-operatives have an unprecedented opportunity to participate in and influence major global issues, but that to do so requires a greater commitment and a closer collaboration with like-minded allies.

Michel Hansenne, Director-General of the International Labour Organisation, stressed the importance of this type of co-operation between the ILO and ICA when he spoke at the opening ceremony and his point of view was echoed by speakers at the seminar.

John Langmore, Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, said that the United Nations and the ICA have similar core aims and the UN recognised the significance of the international co-operative movement at its inception when the ICA was one of the first three organisations to be granted Category I consultative status with the United Nations. Several of the 13 resolutions adopted by the UN's Economic and Social Council at its 1997 session call for close collaboration between the UN and the ICA, he said, and recent UN Conferences such as Habitat II, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women have equally emphasised the role co-operatives can play.

Eddy Laurijssen, Assistant General Secretary of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, said that the ICFTU, the ICA and other partners had to work together to ensure that globalization of the economy goes hand in hand with the globalization of social justice. He said it was important to ensure that both the Co-operative and the Trade Union movements remain in the forefront of change helping ordinary people to determine their own futures.

Cyril Richie, President of FIIG, the Federation of International Institutions established in Geneva, predicted that the UN organisations and non-governmental organisations would increasingly interact at the regional level and that NGOs would be increasingly called upon to intervene in matters beyond the jurisdiction of the UN Economic and Social Council, as had happened when NGOs had been called upon to monitor a number of UN-supervised elections. He said he believed that the civil society presence at the UN would evolve into a permanent body representing all the voices of civil society and that all these developments would help to renew and invigorate the UN and would assist in implementing UN resolutions. It was no longer sufficient, he said, to assume that governments would act upon their promises and commitments.

David King, the Secretary-General of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), congratulated ICA for taking the initiative in organising the seminar. Emphasising the importance of adapting to technological change, preparing for the reopening of multilateral trade negotiations in 1999 and the need to address issues of rural poverty and sustainable development, he said that ICA and IFAP had been working closely for many years with the civil society, both within the NGO community and within the private sector. He concluded by stressing that working together simply meant working well.

Following interventions by ICA Member Organisations and Specialised Bodies, Yehudah Paz summarised the discussion by noting that the ideas expressed would be used by the Board in its planning of future activities and priorities for ICA.

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# Press Release

## Roberto Rodrigues Elected ICA President

The ICA General Assembly unanimously elected Roberto Rodrigues of Brazil as ICA President at the conclusion of its business session on 16 September. Mr. Rodrigues, 55, is the first non-European, as well as the first representative from a sector other than consumer co-operation, to hold the presidency during the ICA's 102-year history.

The President of the Organisation of Co-operatives of Brazil, Dejanir Dalpasquale, officially nominated Mr. Rodrigues, describing him as a top leader in Brazilian agricultural, co-operative, political, academic and media circles for more than two decades.

In his acceptance speech, the new ICA President spoke of his gratitude to all who had supported him, of his fear in dealing with the great challenges facing ICA and co-operatives world-wide, and of his confident hope that co-operatives are the right solution for today's challenges. He said that he would continue the current direction of ICA by emphasising four priorities: strengthening the co-operative identity, strengthening and integrating the different economic sectors, fostering participation in co-operatives by women and young people, and supporting co-operative development in Africa.

Mr. Rodrigues succeeds Graham Melmoth, chief executive of the Co-operative Wholesale Society of the U.K., who did not seek re-election. Mr. Melmoth was honoured at the General Assembly for his distinguished service as ICA Board Member, first Chairman of ICA Europe and 12th ICA President.

An agricultural producer, Roberto Rodrigues became president of his local sugarcane planters' co-operative in 1973, and served two terms as President of the Organisation of Co-operatives of Brazil from 1985-91. In 1990 he founded and presided over EXIMCOOP, which is now one of Brazil's five largest soybean exporters. He subsequently served as Minister of Agriculture of Sao Paulo State, and as President of the Brazilian Rural Society. Mr. Rodrigues has been a member of the ICA Board since 1992, Chairman of the ICA Americas' region since 1993, and Chairman of the ICA Agriculture Committee from 1992-95.

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# Press Release

## ICA Elections

150 Brazilian nationals arrived in Geneva this week to honour their countryman, Roberto Rodrigues, who is expected to become the first President of the International Co-operative Alliance from South America. Roberto Rodrigues, a farmer, has been Vice-President for the Americas since 1992 and was Chairman to ICA's Agriculture Committee from 1992 to 1995. The elections will take place on Tuesday 16 September at 13:30 and, as Mr. Roberto is the only nomination for Chairman, he is expected to succeed Graham Melmoth, Chief Executive Officer of the Co-operative Wholesale Society (UK) as President of the Organisation. Mr. Melmoth has decided not to seek re-election as he needs to devote his time fully to the CWS. In April this year an attempted take-over of the Co-operative Wholesale Society by Galileo, a company headed by 31 year-old old entrepreneur, Andrew Regan, was foiled thanks to the swift response of Mr. Melmoth and other CWS officials.

There are also four nominees for the positions of Vice-President (one each for each of the four regions: Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas). Although the outcome of the election for President and the four Vice President is therefore certain at this stage, there is still some suspense about the elections for the rest of the board. This morning amendments to the rules were adopted with a view of making the ICA Board more gender balanced and members of ICA Women's Committee will doubtless be lobbying to ensure that some of the women nominees make it onto the new board. The following nominations have been advised to date:

### 1. As ICA President:

\* Roberto Rodrigues, Organization of Co-operatives of Brazil (OCB)

### 2. As ICA Vice-Presidents:

- \* Lars Hillbom, Sweden (Vice-President/Europe)
- \* Bernard Wolimbwa, Uganda (Vice-President/Africa)
- \* Yang Deshou, China (Vice-President/Asia)
- \* Miguel Cardozo, Uruguay (Acting Vice-President/Americas)

### 3. To The ICA Board:

#### From Asia:

- \* Lionel Samarasinghe, President, National Co-operative Council, Sri Lanka
- \* B.S. Vishwanathan, President, National Co-operative Union of India
- \* Hiroshi Kohno, Executive Director, JA Zenchu, Japan
- \* Yehudah Paz, Central Union of Co-operative Societies in Israel
- \* Churil-Hee Won, Chairman and President, National Agricultural Co-operative Federation, South Korea
- \* Hon. Senator Rahaiah binti Baheran, Vice-President, ANGKASA, Malaysia

**Africa** \* Ousseynou Dieng, Director, Union Nationale des Cooperatives Agricoles du Senegal

#### Americas

- \* Claude Beland, President, Mouvement des Caisses Desjardins, Canada
- \* David Miller, First Vice-Chair, National Cooperative Business Association, USA

- \* Carlos Bonilla Ayub, President, Consejo Nacional de Cooperativas de Costa Rica
- \* Alfredo Gonzalez Moledo, Vice-President, Confederacion Cooperativa de la Republica Argentina Ltda., Argentina

## Europe

- \* Jens Heiser, Bundesverband deutscher Wohnungsunternehmen e.V., Germany
- \* Stefania Marcone, Director, International Department, Legacoop, Italy
- \* Etienne Pflimlin, President, Confédération Nationale du Credit Mutuel, France
- \* Lloyd Wilkinson, Chief Executive and General Secretary, Co-operative Union Ltd., UK
- \* Valentin Ermakov, President, Centrosoyus of the Russian Federation, Russia
- \* Pancho Ivanov, President, Central Co-operative Union, Bulgaria
- \* Ivan Prikryl, President, Co-operative Association of the Czech Republic, Czech Republic
- \* Cyril Moravcik, Co-operative Union of the Slovak Republic, Slovak Republic

## 4. To the Audit and Control Committee:

- \* Wilhelm Kaltenborn, Chairman of the Executive Board, Verband der Konsumgenossenschaften, Germany
- \* Pal Bartus, President, National Federation of Consumer Co-operatives, Hungary
- \* Ivar Hansen, Deputy Director, Union of Co-operative Housing and Building Associations, Norway
- \* Carmen M. Perez Rodriguez, Treasurer of the Board of Directors, Cooperativa de Seguros de Vida de Puerto Rico (COSVI), Puerto Rico
- \* Ana T. Davila Lao, First Vice-President, Liga de Cooperativas de Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico
- \* Shigenori Takemoto, President, Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union, Japan

The ICA General Assembly is taking place in Geneva's Conference Centre (the CICG). Meetings of ICA Specialized Organisations and Committees are being held at the CICG Centre, ICA offices, the International Labour Office and other locations around Geneva starting on Thursday 11 September and finishing on 18th September.

The International Co-operative Alliance is an independent, non-governmental association which unites, represents and serves co-operatives worldwide.

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## 75th ICA International Co-operative Day 3rd UN International Day of Cooperatives



*The International Co-operative Alliance and the United Nations:  
A Partnership for Sustainable Development*

The ICA produces a press kit for use by its members, other co-operatives, the media and international organizations to assist them in publicizing the Day. This year the press kit included materials highlighting the theme of the Day, "The Co-operative Contribution to World Food Security". The materials included in the pack are listed below:

- [Message from the International Co-operative Alliance](#)
- [Message of the United Nations Secretary-General](#)
- [Message from the ILO Coop Branch](#)
- [Cooperatives and Food Security: FAO's Perspective](#)
- [Farmers Since Rio: IFAP](#)
- [COPAC Organizes Cooperative Exhibit at the UN Geneva](#)
- [What is COPAC?](#)
- [ICAO Agricultural Seminar, 17-18 September 1997](#)
- [US Farmer Cooperatives Join Public-Private Partnership to Promote Conservation](#)
- [Cooperative Development Forum Focused on Partnerships](#)
- [What is International Day of Co-operatives?](#)
- [The Origins of the Rainbow Flag](#)
- [Five Good Reasons for Co-operatives](#)



The ICA Logo

ICA: A Community of Co-operators

IFAP: Agricultural Cooperatives and Sustainable Agricultural Development

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## 75th International Co-operative Day -- Saturday, 5 July, 1997

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### Message from the International Co-operative Alliance

# The Co-operative Contribution

to World Food Security

According to the UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), ensuring food security, the basic right of people to the food they need, is perhaps the greatest challenge facing the world community. The challenge is most critical in low-income, food-deficient countries. The vast majority of the world's poor live in rural areas and are directly dependent on agriculture for employment and income. The most disadvantaged of all are women, stresses the FAO, the 'silent majority' of the world's poor. Rural women produce up to 80% of food in developing countries. Yet studies indicate that they have title only to a fraction of farmland and access to just 10% of credit and 5% of extension advice. In recent years the situation has deteriorated.

In future years, much of the responsibility for meeting the nutritional needs of a growing population will fall upon farmers and their organisations, including co-operatives. Today, the force of agricultural co-operatives is already significant. They are responsible for nearly one-third of total agricultural production with an estimated value of USD 522 billion. They are key actors in many national economies providing large percentages of domestic food products, but are equally important as food exporters. They will increasingly be called upon to provide higher yields while respecting the environment and consumer food safety concerns.

However, agricultural co-operatives are not the only co-operatives which contribute to food security. The multi-sectoral character of the Movement provides contributions to all aspects of improving food production and access. For example, fishery co-operatives provide important sources of protein; consumer co-operatives make food available in urban and rural areas - food that is safe, high quality and reasonably priced to ensure access by a majority of the population; the financial co-operatives (banks, credit unions, savings and credit and insurance co-operatives) are key actors providing invaluable services to the agricultural and consumer sectors to ensure production and distribution of food.

A common factor between them is that co-operatives help their members help themselves as jointly-owned, democratically controlled enterprises. Co-operatives provide income and employment and contribute to the development of communities.

Food availability is also linked to sustainable development as a whole. The Co-operative Movement has shown its concern to the sustainable development and environment issue for decades and has more recently taken action at a global level in support of recent UN initiatives, such as the 1992 Environment Conference and the ensuing UN Agenda 21.

In the five years since the Rio Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development, the ICA adopted a resolution on environment and sustainable development in 1992, followed by a universal declaration on the commitment of the Co-operative Movement. The movement's own blueprint for achieving sustainable development, Co-operative Agenda 21, was adopted at ICA's centennial meetings in 1995. Co-operative Agenda 21 outlines actions promoting sustainable development, noting that co-operatives, as people's organizations, are ideally placed to implement activities dealing with the protection of the environment as well as with sustainable development questions. In the Co-operative Agenda 21 document, specific

commitments are expressed by the different economic actors. Agricultural co-operatives have pledged to promote sustainable agriculture by promoting the conservation of plant and animal genetic resources, and land and water resources. Environmentally viable, socially supportive and economically sound objectives for other sectors in the Co-operative Movement were also defined for the consumer co-operatives, housing, financial, tourism, worker and energy sectors.

However, improving food security and achieving sustainable development must be part of a global process involving political and financial initiatives. It requires technical and educational actions and must be integrated into operational, coherent and innovative strategies. Partnerships between people's organizations, other elements of the civil society and governments will be needed if we are to address these challenges.

The ICA calls on its members to work with other organizations and national governments to address the challenge of providing food security to the world's growing population. It calls on co-operatives from the different economic sectors to implement the Co-operative Agenda 21, so as to provide a sustainable environment for future generations of co-operators to enjoy.

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This page also exist in the following languages:



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## Message from the ILO Cooperative Branch

*3rd UN International Day of Cooperatives and 75th International Cooperative Day*

### **Cooperative Contribution to Employment and Income Generation**

Cooperatives are generally recognized as potentially effective means of generating employment and income. They are important actors in certain sectors of industrialized economies, such as agricultural marketing, consumer retailing and banking. At a time when state enterprises are being privatized and restructured and the role of the State in economic life is diminishing, cooperative enterprises, especially in agriculture and agro-industry, are well placed to provide sustainable employment for large numbers of people.

In the past, cooperatives in many developing countries and in most countries in transition, received official subsidies and benefited from other privileges such as monopolies. Today, cooperatives are independent enterprises that are adapting to an increasingly competitive market in search of survival and economic viability. At the same time, they must work at changing the perception of others that they are largely governmental institutions, and prove that they are independent, competitive, democratic and socially responsible enterprises. However, continued governmental intervention in the operations of cooperatives in many developing countries, where they could play an important role in combatting poverty, and in countries in transition, where they could produce goods and services that are no longer considered the responsibility of the State, are hindering the ability of cooperatives to realize this potential. Lack of human resources trained in cooperative principles and practice is also contributing to the slow pace of change.

The ILO Cooperative Branch is assisting governments and cooperatives realize their potential. The objective of the Cooperative Branch is the establishment and development of viable and self-reliant cooperatives and similar participatory economic self-help organizations of small producers, consumers, workers and the self-employed, and the development of supporting structures to assist them to manage their associations and economic undertakings efficiently, effectively and democratically. This objective will continue to be achieved through the provision of technical advisory services and support for technical cooperation activities, supplemented by the collection and dissemination of information. The activities of the programme will focus on the following six major themes: cooperative reform, cooperative training networking, poverty alleviation, cooperative support to indigenous and tribal peoples, cooperative trade and cooperative social services based on the principle of mutuality.

For cooperatives to become more self-reliant and make a more effective contribution to the process of democratization, cooperative legislation has to foster the participation of cooperative members, lay the basis for democratic self-management and control and strengthen the independence of cooperative movements. The major principles guiding democratic cooperative action at the national and international levels are set out in the Cooperatives (Developing Countries) Recommendation, 1966 (No. 127). Support will be provided to member States, particularly those in the process of structural adjustment or in transition from a state-controlled to a market-oriented economy, to assist in the formulation of coherent cooperative development policies and to update cooperative legislation. This constitutes a particular challenge in countries in transition, where prejudices against formerly state-controlled cooperative enterprises have to be overcome in order to develop genuine, democratic cooperatives. These activities will take into account the conclusions and recommendations of the International Meeting of Experts on Cooperative Law, held in May 1995, and will be supplemented by the programme's extensive database of cooperative laws and bylaws, which is constantly maintained and updated.

Assistance will continue to be provided for the establishment and expansion of networks of cooperative training institutions with a view to strengthening human resources development in cooperatives and their support organizations and sensitizing policy-makers. The resulting exchange of experience and knowledge assists these institutions to train cooperative trainers, managers and members more efficiently, not only in basic cooperative principles, but also in business management.

In many developing countries, agricultural producers do not reap the full benefits of their work since, as individual small-scale producers, they do not have access to consumer markets in industrialized countries. With a view to expanding the export opportunities of producers who are organized in marketing cooperatives, activities will continue to be undertaken for the promotion of commercial exchanges, business partnerships and the exchange of know-how between cooperative producer organizations, particularly in Africa, and cooperative consumer organizations, mainly in Europe.

In line with the recommendations of the World Summit for Social Development, activities will be intensified for the development of undertakings organized on a mutual basis to provide social services in such areas as social security, education, health and housing. Support will be provided for technical cooperation activities designed to increase the efficiency and coverage of existing mutual self-help organizations through training and networking arrangements.

The ILO Cooperative Branch with the ICA and the United Nations calls upon national governments to pursue higher levels of productive and freely chosen employment with the ultimate aim of full employment.

For more information on the [ILO Cooperative Branch](#), please visit their web site.

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This information has been made available on the Internet by  
the [Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives COPAC](#).

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