

**4th Asia-Pacific Conference of
Cooperative Ministers' on
"Cooperatives in a Changing
Socio-Economic Environment"**

Chiangmai (Thailand) : 18-22 March 1997

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS



**International Cooperative Alliance
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
New Delhi**

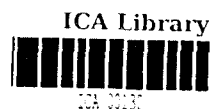
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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OF THE

4TH ASIA-PACIFIC CONFERENCE
OF COOPERATIVE MINISTERS'
ON
"COOPERATIVES IN A CHANGING
SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT"

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International Cooperative Alliance

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

Bonow House, 43 Friends Colony (East)

New Delhi-110065. India.

Conclusions and Recommendations
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CONTENTS

Background	01
Preamble	03
Resolution	05
<i>Conclusions and Recommendations</i>			
* For ICA and its Member Cooperatives	...	...	05
* For Government Authorities	...	...	08
* Gender and Development	...	...	10
* Sustainable Development	...	...	11
Conference Agenda and Programme	...	...	12
List of Participants	...	...	16

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE
FOURTH ASIA PACIFIC CONFERENCE
OF COOPERATIVE MINISTERS'
ON
“COOPERATIVES IN A CHANGING
SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT”**

Chiangmai, Thailand, 18 - 22 March 1997

BACKGROUND

The International Co-operative Alliance, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ICA ROAP), organized the Fourth Asia Pacific Co-operative Ministers Conference in Chiangmai, Thailand from March 18 to 22, 1997. Ministers responsible for Co-operative Development representing China, Fiji, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam participated at the Conference. 124 delegates from 22 countries in Asia and the Pacific, namely, Brunei, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, and Vietnam, attended the Conference. In addition, 34 representatives from international organizations, namely, AARRO, ACCU, ACO, CCA, DID, FAO, ICMIF, ILO and ICA took part in the Conference as well.

Recommendations adopted by the Regional Consultation held in Yangon, Myanmar from December 2 to 6, 1996, summary of the Background Papers, and Statements from member country governments and other national and international organizations, became the resource documents for the deliberations at the Ministers' Conference in Chiangmai.

The following are highlights of the Conference proceedings.

The Conference was inaugurated by His Excellency Sukavich

Rangsitpol, Deputy Prime Minister of the Royal Thai government. The Deputy Prime Minister in his speech emphasized that the "ICA should commit to create the co-operative spirit in the region to acquire community support from all nations. The role of the trade and industry committee of ICA should be viewed in such a way that in the future a co-operative trade organization can be established as a trade forum for the co-operative movement".

At the inaugural function, the ICA Director General, Mr. Bruce Thordarson, gave his greetings to the Conference on behalf of the ICA, and Mr. B.S. Vishwanathan offered his welcome speech on behalf of ICA ROAP. The Director General of ICA then presented an award to Mr. G.K. Sharma, former Regional Director of ICA ROAP, which plaque was officially presented by H.E. the Deputy Prime Minister of the Royal Thai government. A report and a vote of thanks were offered by Mr. Robby Tulus, Regional Director of ICA for Asia and the Pacific, prior to the formal inauguration by the H.E. the Deputy Prime Minister.

Immediately after the Opening Ceremony, the Deputy Prime Minister inaugurated the Trade Exhibition held at the Westin Chiangmai hotel, with co-operative products displayed by co-operative organizations in Thailand and other countries in Asia and the Pacific.

The Conference convened its first session at the Ballroom of the Westin Chiangmai Hotel. **Hon. Shucheeep Hansaward**, Minister of Agriculture and Co-operatives of the Royal Thai government was unanimously elected as Chairperson of the Conference. The Chair proposed the formal agenda and clarification about the methodology of the Conference, and they were duly adopted. A **Drafting Committee** was proposed by the Chair and then unanimously approved.

Members of the Committee are as follows :

(a) Committee Members

Dr. Yehuda Paz (Israel, ICA Board member)	Chairperson
Mr. N. Kohashi (Japan)	Member
Mr. J. William Harris (Tonga)	Member

Dr. Mohd. Ali	(Malaysia)	Member
Mr. B.D. Sharma	(India)	Member
Mr. Mohd. Reza Motavassely	(Iran)	Member

(b) Resource Facilitators

Mr. Robby Tulus	(ICA ROAP)
Mr. Claes Thorseiius	(ICA Geneva)

Afterwards, two speakers were invited to present specific topics, namely **Mr. Churll Hee Won** on "The Role of Co-operatives in Food Security" and **Mr. Robby Tulus** on "The Co-operative scene in Asia and the Pacific, a joint statement by member organizations of ICA ROAP".

Following the above presentations, STATEMENTS were delivered by ministers, co-operative delegates and representatives from international organizations. Subsequent to the presentation of Statements, three work groups were formed and separate discussions took place on 21st March 1997 to review the recommendations emanating from the Regional Consultation in Myanmar. These recommendations underwent some modifications following the group work and were finally adopted by the Conference on 22nd March 1997.

The following Conclusions and RECOMMENDATIONS have been adopted by the Chiangmai Conference :

PREAMBLE

Contemporary co-operative organizations should be perceived as economic enterprises operating in a new socio-economic environment. Cooperatives must project a distinct corporate identity to ensure the same acceptance and support as public and state enterprises. As such, the corporate philosophy, culture and business practices of co-operatives must represent a unique set of values in the competitive marketplace. The **Statement of the Co-operative Identity** as adopted by the ICA Centennial Congress in Manchester in 1995 provides the best guidepost for the creation of such a model.

It is therefore incumbent upon the co-operative movements and their respective governments to have a clear and common understanding of the Co-operative Identity to better promote genuine co-operatives in the changing marketplace. Emphasis must be given to the right of members-cum-users to raise and control their own internal resources in an economic and efficient manner, to optimize services to members, to empower members to participate actively, and to introduce a cost-effective and quality-conscious management approach. Their organizational structures must be flexible enough to enable them to diversify the entrepreneurial activities to capture new emerging ventures and as such to secure a special niche in the marketplace. To facilitate the needed transformation governments must be willing to reform existing policies and modify legislative arrangements in order to empower co-operatives to become more competitive.

Towards this end, a series of activities have been undertaken by the ICA ROAP and its member organizations in close consultation with corresponding governments in this region. A critical study on "Co-operative Legislation and Competitive Strength" was undertaken by an expert team. This indepth study provides an analytical overview on some of the strength and drawbacks arising from current government policies on co-operative development, and suggested innovative ways for cooperatives to advocate policy development strategies with governments using the existing platform, namely the **Regional Consultation and Ministerial Conferences**. Inasmuch as the study gave sharp focus to Co-operative Banking and Financial Intermediation, as well as to Agri-business Co-operatives, two successive Symposia were conducted on these sectors as well. In addition to the Study and the two Symposia, a region wide survey was also conducted by ICA ROAP to determine the extent to which actions have been undertaken by both ICA member countries and their respective governments as follow up of the Third Ministers' Conference in Colombo.

All the above activities led to the **Regional Consultation** held in Yangon, Myanmar, from December 2 to 6, 1996, attended by 39 delegates from 17 countries in Asia and the Pacific, and 21 observers from Canada and Myanmar, who adopted a

Resolution that was presented and discussed at the **Fourth Asia-Pacific Conference of Co-operative Ministers on “Co-operatives in a Changing Socio-Economic Environment”**, held in Chiangmai from March 18 to 22, 1997. The Resolution adopted by the “Chiangmai Conference” is as follows :

RESOLUTION

On the basis of the above Preamble, and taking note of the results of the Regional Consultation held in Yangon, Myanmar, from December 3 to 6, 1996, the Fourth Asia Pacific Conference of Co-operative Ministers held in Chiangmai, Thailand, from March 18 to 22, 1997, resolves to adopt the following **RECOMMENDATIONS** :

1. FOR ICA AND ITS MEMBER COOPERATIVES

- 1.1 To identify other Government entities in member countries which play key roles in cooperative development and consider their representation in future dialogues.
- 1.2 To advocate among major multi-lateral agencies (e.g., ADB, the World Bank) the adoption of “Policy on Cooperatives” which should have a shared vision on accepted principles.
- 1.3 To ensure consistency in implementing the Statement of the Cooperative Identity as adopted by the ICA Centennial Congress in Manchester in 1995 given the following considerations:
 - 1.3.1 the political and bureaucratic realities of the Region.
 - 1.3.2 the pressures of competition due to trade globalization.
 - 1.3.3 diversity of needs and impact of technology in operations.
 - 1.3.4 rapid growth which could result in the erosion of cooperative values and principles, as well as favour full market orientation.

- 1.4 To promote sustainability of cooperatives, appropriate collaboration between the government and cooperatives should be ensured along the following areas:
 - 1.4.1 service to members;
 - 1.4.2 member education and information;
 - 1.4.3 professional and efficient management;
 - 1.4.4 cost and quality consciousness;
 - 1.4.5 incorporation of the ICA Coop Identity Statement in Cooperative Legislation; and
 - 1.4.6 support to cooperatives to enable them to adjust to global and open market economies, including fair access to capital.
- 1.5 To provide or advocate technical assistance (e.g., from cooperatives in developed economies) to the Regional country members' apex organizations and cooperative training centers to enable them to cope with the diverse and specialized training needs of rapidly expanding cooperatives.
- 1.6 To continuously advocate for appropriate legislation and policies that will enable cooperatives to develop themselves as autonomous and democratic people-based associations, while preserving their true identity. The cooperative movement must seek methods of advocacy that are persuasive, appropriate, and done in the spirit of cooperation.
- 1.7 To avail of government support and assistance in a manner that will consistently maintain the cooperatives' attributes as self-help and self-reliant economic units.
- 1.8 To solidify its structural and financial base while maintaining the flexibility to mobilize the full potential and active participation of members, not just as passive "shareholders" but as concerned "stakeholders".
- 1.9 To further promote co-operative enterprises in areas such as insurance, trade, etc., for which national or international alliances could be promoted, preferably on a co-operative

to co-operative basis, in accordance with the fourth Co-operative Principle of "Autonomy and Independence".

- 1.10 To revitalise the ICA Banking and Financial Coops Committee in the Asia-Pacific region and for the said Committee to study the feasibility of a Regional Co-operative Development Bank and draw the support of existing international financial institutions for coop development.
- 1.11 To consider education and training as a vital and strategic factor to ensure sustainable cooperative development. A network of cooperative institutes and other centers of excellence must be created. The movement must take advantage of the vast educational experiences and systems already developed in selected member countries.
- 1.12 To commission a study on Cooperative Taxation schemes and recommend an appropriate tax treatment for cooperatives.
- 1.13 To identify potential exchanges and strategic alliances on trade and investment, technology transfer, joint projects and to commission a study on expanding trade among member organizations.
- 1.14 To develop and support an appropriate role for government by collating the Country Development Plans incorporating the role of cooperatives from the government of each member country. ICA, together with the member organizations will analyse the same for the purpose of making it consistent with the Cooperative Identity Statement and assisting the National Governments in ensuring the implementation of the Plans.
- 1.15 To strengthen collaborative efforts of the ICA with the United Nations, bilateral and multi-lateral funding agencies.
- 1.16 To enhance relations with government, private sector and selected social development organizations.
- 1.17 For the ICA and the Oceania-Pacific countries to discuss

ways of maximizing the participation of Oceania-Pacific National Cooperative Movements in ICA ROAP affairs and activities.

- 1.18 To monitor the progress of implementation of the recommendations adopted at the last three Cooperative Ministers' Conferences, and to disseminate the results to member organizations periodically.

2. FOR GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

- 2.1 To advocate for and ensure a Common understanding of the Cooperative Identity Statement among government agencies which play key roles in cooperative development.
- 2.2 To formulate laws and policies consistent with the Cooperative Identity Statement.
- 2.3 To advocate for macro and sectoral policies and programs deemed vital to the development and competitiveness of cooperatives.
- 2.4 As Agricultural Cooperatives play an important role in national development, the ICA urges National Governments to:
 - 2.4.1 support agricultural cooperatives as they play an active role in agri-business;
 - 2.4.2 give priority to farmer cooperatives in the agri-business industry by providing:
 - 2.4.2.1 concessionary loans based upon business feasibility;
 - 2.4.2.2 infrastructure, research and development and other pre-conditions of agri-business in the public domain;
 - 2.4.2.3 concessions on imports of technology relating to agri-business;
 - 2.4.2.4 education and training relating to business operations;

- 2.4.2.5 regulatory conditions to ensure a free and fair market;
 - 2.4.2.6 fair price policies; and
 - 2.4.2.7 otherwise, make it possible for cooperatives to adjust to global and open market economies.
- 2.5. The Conference also urges national governments to :
- 2.5.1 ensure that cooperatives or small and medium industries are not disadvantaged by industry and trade regulations;
 - 2.5.2 abolish multi-level taxation on cooperatives in countries where co-operatives are taxed¹⁾;
 - 2.5.3 extend to cooperatives incentives and concessions granted to the private and public sectors;
 - 2.5.4 withdraw assistance to cooperatives, if such withdrawal is necessary, gradually rather than abruptly;
 - 2.5.5 recognize cooperatives as partners in regional accords and agreements regarding cooperative business;
 - 2.5.6 in case of change of ownership of co-operative shares, consideration should be given to the possible re-evaluation because of the changing value of the co-operative shares, and that a provision to that effect should be made in the co-operative law; and
 - 2.5.7 in countries where co-operatives are taxed, and before tax exemption is granted, appropriate

¹⁾ *While there was agreement that co-operatives should pay income tax, there was also a consensus that governments need to consult with the co-operatives to determine that if the co-operative pay income tax then members should not be paying income tax on their respective dividends, or on paying value added taxes on sales, and any other taxes.*

policies should be created so that some or all of income derived from taxation of co-ops, if there is any, be used for re-investment in co-operatives, for the development of new co-operatives, for the promotion of Human Resource Development in co-operatives, and for other similar purposes.

- 2.6 Allow cooperatives to invest surplus funds in other countries, particularly through joint ventures with cooperatives in those countries.
- 2.7 To call on the governments to allocate funds from their official development assistance budgets to support ICA development activities and to promote co-operatives in developing countries.

3. GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

For Governments at all levels and Co-operatives to :

- 3.1 review, identify and eliminate all legislation, regulations and policies which hinder the full participation and leadership of women in leadership roles in cooperatives.
- 3.2 create and provide training opportunities to ensure that gender issues in cooperatives are properly recognized by government officials, cooperative members and leaders.
- 3.3 set up gender disaggregated data base and carry out proper gender analysis in collaboration with ICA and other partner organizations.
- 3.4 allocate funds for gender and women's activities such as data collection and training (e.g., gender sensitivity training, women leadership training, women's entrepreneurship development programmes, etc.) where such funds do not yet exist.
- 3.5 create a conducive environment in which women could gain access to, and control over, resources - such as credit business opportunities - within the co-operative.

4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 To call upon cooperatives to establish strategic alliances among themselves and with government agencies for the purpose of :
- (i) sharing of research information and resources, and technology;
 - (ii) working towards creating public awareness on ecosystem management, sustainable livelihood and food security;
 - (iii) providing incentives for labour contribution to sustainable development; and
 - (iv) introducing environmental accounting and other measures for development projects, including entrepreneurial activities.
- 4.2 To call upon governments at all levels to pursue poverty alleviation programmes following the “principle of sustainable development”²⁾
- 4.3 To call upon co-operatives to take appropriate steps to pursue the principle of sustainable development as part of “concern for community,” which is the seventh cooperative principle.
- 4.4 To encourage cooperatives and governments at all levels to pursue green consumerism and fair trading practices.

²⁾ *Sustainable development is defined as development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs”.*

CONFERENCE AGENDA AND PROGRAMME

18th March 1997, Tuesday

Arrival of Hon'ble Ministers, Cooperative Leaders and Conference delegates in Chiangmai.

1500-1800 Registration of Participants

19th March 1997, Wednesday

1000-1100 *Inaugural Session*

- * Welcome address by the Hon'ble Shucheeep Hansaward, Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives.
- * Welcome and greetings from the Director-General of ICA, Mr. Bruce Thordarson.
- * Welcome address by Mr. B.S. Vishwanathan, Chairman of ICA ROAP Executive Council.
- * Greetings by ILO on behalf of international organisations.
- * Award presentation ceremony to Mr. G.K. Sharma.
- * Report on the Conference by Regional Director of ICA ROAP, Mr. Robby Tulus.
- * Inaugural address by His Excellency Sukavich Rangsitpol, Dy. Prime Minister of Thailand.

1100-1120 Official Opening of Cooperative Exhibition

1120-1200 Tea/Coffee Break

- 1200-1300 **Working Session-I**
 Welcome address by the Chairman of
 Cooperative League of Thailand.
Agenda Item-1
 Election of Conference Chairman
Agenda Item-2
 Election of Drafting Committee
Agenda Item-3
 Adoption of Conference Procedures and
 Conference Agenda
Agenda Item-4
 Report from the ICA ROAP Secretariat on
 follow-up steps taken since the Third
 Conference held in Colombo 1994.
- 1300-1400 Lunch Break
- 1400-1430 *Agenda Item-4 (contd.)*
- Working Session-II**
- 1400-1445 "The Role of Cooperatives in Food Security"
 by Mr. Churll Hee Won.
- 1445-1530 "The Cooperative Scene in Asia & the Pacific
 - a Joint Statement by Member Organisations
 of ICA ROAP" by Mr. Robby Tulus.
- 1530-1600 Tea/Coffee Break
- 1600-1730 *Agenda Item-5*
 "Review of Cooperative Development Situa-
 tion in the Region in light of the recommenda-
 tions of the Third Conference held in Colombo
 1994".
 - Presentation of Country Statements (10
 minutes each).

1830 Dinner/Cultural Show hosted by the Royal Thai Government at Westin Chiangmai Hotel.

20th March 1997, Thursday

Working Session-III

0900-1000 Presentation of Country Statements (contd.)

1000-1030 Tea/Coffee Break

1030-1230 Presentation of Country Statements (contd.)

1230-1400 Lunch Break

Working Session-IV

1400-1500 Presentation of Country Statements (contd.)

1500-1530 Tea/Coffee Break

1530-1730 Statements by International Organizations.

1830 Dinner hosted by the Cooperative League of Thailand and Cooperative Federations at Westin Chiangmai Hotel.

21st March 1997, Friday

Working Session-V

Agenda Item 6

0900-1030 Work Group on Recommendations 1 = ICA & Member Co-operatives.

Work Group on Recommendations 2 = Government.

Work Group on Recommendations 3 = Thematic Issues.

1030-1100 Tea/Coffee Break

1100-1230 Discussions on Work Group Results.

1230-1330	Lunch Break Drafting Committee in Session
1330-1700	Study Visits to Huai Hong Khrai Royal Development Study Center.
1830	Reception/Cultural Show hosted by the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives at Westin Chiangmai Hotel.

22nd March 1997, Saturday

Working Session-VI

0900-1000	<i>Agenda Item-7</i> Adoption of Conference Conclusions and Recommendations.
1000-1030	Tea/Coffee Break
1030-1045	<i>Agenda Item-8</i> Consideration of Venue and Dates for the 5th Conference.
1045-1100	<i>Agenda Item-9</i> Vote of Thanks to the Hosts, Participating Countries and International Organisations.
1100-1200	Closing Ceremony
Afternoon	Free time and departures.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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