

Cooperative Ministers

Conference

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

8-11 FEBRUARY 1990

Conclusions



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International Co-operative Alliance
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
New Delhi

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CONCLUSIONS

The Ministers responsible for Cooperative Development and Cooperative Leaders in Asia and the Pacific Region met at Sydney from 8-11 February 1990 and discussed the theme of the Conference, namely, "Cooperative-Government Collaborative Strategies for the Development of Cooperatives during the 90s". The conclusions, declaration, recommendations and observations of the Conference are given in the following pages.

I. Declaration

The Conference declares the following :

Noting : the constructive development role played by the co-operatives and their healthy and wholesome impact on the communities as a whole in the Asian and the Pacific countries;

Recognizing : the vast potential of Cooperation as a self-help and mutual-aid movement in transforming economic and social condition of the people for a better and happier society based on democratic and moral values, social justice and peace;

Accepting : the suitability and essentiality of cooperatives as one of the most appropriate agencies for accelerating economic development and social advancement, and in meeting the aspirations of the peoples;

Taking into Account : government assistance as an important factor in the development of cooperatives;

Affirms : governments' continuing support :

- i. to cooperatives to grow as a vital instrument of socio-economic change through developmental plans and programmes based on self-help and mutual-aid;
- ii. to facilitate the development and functioning of cooperatives in accordance with the ICA Cooperative Principles.

and further

Requests : the national governments to take necessary steps for the implementation of recommendations of the Conference; and

Appreciating : the activities and contribution of the ICA in assisting the governments and cooperatives;

Solicits : further continuance of the ICA assistance in all possible ways in the growth of genuine and strong cooperatives;

to be known as "**Sydney Cooperative Ministers Conference Declaration 1990**".

II. Recommendations

The Conference considered the suggestions made by the Singapore Consultation of the Secretaries of Cooperation and resolves as given below :

Role of Government

1. The Conference notes that the governments and the cooperative movements have common objectives of improving the socio-economic conditions of the people and national development. They should support each other to achieve these common objectives on the basis of mutual trust, confidence, respect and social justice.
2. Cooperatives by their nature are autonomous institutions. The government should play the role of a facilitator through policy initiatives and should nurse and nurture them to play their full role as people's organisations. Giving and receiving of assistance - financial, managerial or otherwise - itself is not infringement of autonomy, provided it is done on mutually agreed terms.
3. The Conference suggests that keeping the above principles in view, the government should provide the following support to the cooperative movement :
 - 3.1 incorporation of the role and importance of cooperatives in the Constitutions of the respective countries;
 - 3.2 formulation of national policy in consultation with cooperatives;
 - 3.3 creation/building of environment for cooperatives to play their full role;
 - 3.4 extending support in building a self-reliant strong cooperative sector to supplement the public and private sectors;
 - 3.5 enactment of progressive cooperative law in conformity with Cooperative Principles;

- 3.6 taking steps for de-officialisation and de-politicisation of cooperatives;
- 3.7 assisting cooperatives to generate and build their resources;
- 3.8 assisting cooperatives to build their professional management personnel;
- 3.9 transfer of functions of audit, inspection, supervision and responsibility for elections etc. to cooperatives;
- 3.10 promotion of cooperative values/spirit;
- 3.11 encouraging development of dedicated cooperative leadership from within the movement and giving public recognition to distinguished/dedicated cooperators by conferring appropriate national distinctions and awards for their contributions towards cooperative development;
- 3.12 strengthening of cooperatives as a system by establishing integrated inter-cooperative linkages;
- 3.13 promotion of democratic participation of members in decision-making;
- 3.14 supporting cooperative education and training;
- 3.15 supporting the involvement of cooperatives in community development;
- 3.16 providing or arranging financial assistance to cooperatives in the form of soft loans/guarantees, grants and subsidies, tax exemptions etc. in a manner as would not infringe upon the autonomy of cooperatives. Financial aid to cooperatives should be given to the maximum possible extent indirectly and through their federal institutions so as to prevent formation of pseudo cooperatives and abuses;
- 3.17 regarding cooperatives as community institutions and consulting them on matters involving them e.g. fixing the prices of agricultural commodities, manufacture of consumer goods and measures for consumer protection as well as giving due weightage to their views;
- 3.18 involving cooperatives in planning from village upwards for

- achieving more realistic and committed planning;
- 3.19 discontinuation of the practice of ex-officio holding of elective offices by government officers;
 - 3.20 instead of dissolving the entire elected board for any irregularities, erring individual members of the board of directors/office bearers should be brought to book. In the event of inevitability of removal of board, the management should be entrusted to the concerned federal organisation;
 - 3.21 encouraging and assisting cooperatives to develop their own key/top management personnel instead of seconding government officers;
 - 3.22 introducing curricula on Cooperation in general education courses in schools, colleges and universities; and
 - 3.23 ensuring that competition between the public sector and cooperative enterprises is avoided. The working of public sector enterprises should be such as would strengthen the cooperatives.
4. In some countries governments have set up Cooperative Development Corporations to have more flexibility in assisting cooperative development. Other countries may also study the working of these Corporations to assess desirability of establishing similar institutions in their countries. However, care should be taken that these Corporations do not duplicate the functions of the national cooperative organisations.
 5. The Conference is of the opinion that the main strength of the cooperative movement lies in the members who have the right and the duty to elect competent people to board of directors. In view of this the Conference suggested that it was essential that a massive programme of education of members and their elected leaders should be carried out by cooperative movements and governments should render needed assistance for the purpose.
 6. The Conference feels that it is necessary to continue to develop positive attitudes and skills in government personnel to support cooperatives. It was, therefore, essential that adequate programmes of training of government personnel in cooperative concepts, principles, implementation of coopera-

tive law and cooperative operations should be established.

7. The Conference was of the view that there is also need for orientation programmes for top level policy makers to keep them aware of the changing environment and the needs of co-operative movement”.

Role of National Cooperative Organisations

8. In regard to role of cooperative organisations at the national level, the Conference makes the following suggestions :
- 8.1 to evolve continuing dialogue between cooperatives and the government;
- 8.2 to strengthen training and education of employees, members and leaders of primaries;
- 8.3 to represent problems of primaries to the government;
- 8.4 to involve intelligentsia in the process of cooperative development;
- 8.5 to undertake supervision and auditing and provide guidance to the members;
- 8.6 to build accountability of elected management and office-bearers;
- 8.7 to develop innovative approaches to face new socio-economic challenges;
- 8.8 to organise orientation programmes for policy-makers and senior government officers;
- 8.9 to promote inter-cooperative trade within the country and at international level;
- 8.10 to project the achievements of cooperatives;
- 8.11 to develop strong links, unity and integration among the cooperatives both vertically and horizontally for building an effective performance-oriented cooperative system;
- 8.12 to formulate and adopt a code of conduct for the office bearers/board of directors to prevent the misuse of cooperatives;

- 8.13 to enhance and monitor from time to time the share of cooperatives in various sectors of the national economy; and
- 8.14 to develop effective and adequate arrangements for conducting on-going research in various aspects of the cooperatives including government / cooperative relationship.

Role of International Organisations

9. The Conference feels and recognizes the need of an arrangement at the international level, having representatives of governments and cooperative movements, and international agencies interested in cooperative development, for dialogue and discussions on matters pertaining to cooperative policies and development, keeping in view the following objects :
 - (a) to sensitize governments for the need to recognize potential of cooperatives role in various sectors;
 - (b) to provide forum for exchange of information;
 - (c) to promote Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC); and
 - (d) to demonstrate and disseminate success stories in regard to innovative interaction between governments and cooperatives.
- 9.1 The Conference ~~suggests~~ suggests a 'Net Work' with secretariat, to begin with, in the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific at Bangkok with the membership of :
 - (a) Government Departments/Bureaus for Cooperatives at national level;
 - (b) National Cooperative Organisations; and
 - (c) National level organisations concerned with cooperative development.
10. The Conference recommends that the ICA ROAP may periodically convene on regular basis meetings of top level policy makers in the government and cooperatives.

11. The Conference suggests that the ICA ROAP should, inter-alia, undertake the following activities :
 - 11.1 conduct studies on impact of cooperatives on economic development, production and pricing;
 - 11.2 carry out a yearly review of cooperative developments in the Asian region for information of and use by the Movements and the governments;
 - 11.3 expand its cooperative development programme with the assistance of donor agencies. Concerned Ministries of the governments and national level cooperative movements should be fully kept informed about such programmes; and
 - 11.4 formulate and carry out "Exposure Programmes" for the cooperative policy makers in the governments of countries of the region to acquaint them with the developments and working of cooperatives.
12. The ICA/ICA ROAP can persuade the governments to a considerable extent through constant dialogue, and convincing arguments, based on actual facts in the field, etc.
13. The ICA may be increasingly used by the international agencies and the developed countries for channelling of international assistance to countries, as has been done by the Government of Japan.
14. The Conference welcomes and supports the proposal for setting up an "Asia-Pacific Centre for Training, Research and Development" in Australia and appreciates the positive response of the Australian Federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, Hon'ble John Kerin and his assurance that the proposal will be given serious consideration.
15. The Conference takes note of the recommendation of the *"ICA Committee for Trade and Industry"* on the arrangement for the promotion of international trade on cooperative to cooperative basis.
16. The Conference recommends that national governments may encourage and support such international cooperative trade.

III. Action for 1990s

1. The Conference recommends that national governments in collaboration with the national cooperative organisations should develop clear perspective for the development of cooperatives in specific areas during the 90s. In the identification of the target groups small farmers, artisans, workers, women and unemployed youth and other down-trodden people should be given special attention.
2. The Conference recommends that the strengthening of cooperative values by building up self-reliant cooperative movements should be given priority during the 90s.
3. The ICA should work out guidelines to evolve a practical system of cooperative-government relationship to combine cooperative values, socio-economic objectives and competitive strength.
4. The ICA should organise national workshops and other relevant activities to take up follow-up action on the above declaration and recommendations in collaboration with national cooperative organisations and national governments.
5. The Conference recommends that the ICA, along with its member organisations and international agencies, should take measures to develop skills and transfer of technology to facilitate cooperative trade.
6. The Conference recommends that the ICA ROAP should organise Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conferences periodically to review the development of cooperatives in the region and to promote regional collaboration.
7. The Conference appreciates the invitation of the Minister of Cooperatives, Government of Indonesia, for hosting the next Conference in Indonesia. The Conference requests the ICA ROAP secretariat to finalise the dates and other arrangements in consultation with Government of Indonesia and the Indonesian National Cooperative Organisation - DEKOPIN.

IV. Appreciation

The Conference expresses its appreciation to the ICA ROAP for convening the Conference. It also expresses thanks to the Government of Australia for its support. Finally, Conference conveys its gratitude to the Australian Association of Cooperatives for hosting it.

PROGRAMME

Thursday, 8th February

- 1600 Registration
Venue : Harbourside Room and Foyer.
- 1830 Reception - Venue : Harbourside Room and Foyer.

Friday, 9th February

- 1000 Opening Ceremony :
- Programme Opening : AAC General Manager, Mr. Geoff Ayres.
 - Welcome : AAC Chairman, Mr. Ray Everingham.
- Greetings :
- Lord Mayor of Sydney, The Rt. Hon. J. Bingham.
 - ICA Regional Council Chairman, General A.S. Lozada.
- Fraternal greetings :
- Representative of World Council of Credit Unions, Mr. Stephen Birt
 - AARRO Secretary General, Mr. B.C. Gangopadhyay.
 - Senior Regional Rural Development Officer of FAO, Mr. D.H.J. Abeyagoonasekera.
 - Director, Sectoral Activities Department of ILO, Mr. Jurgen Von Muralt.
 - Welcome : ICA President, Mr. Lars Marcus
 - Inaugural address : Leader of the Government in the Senate and Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce, Senator The Hon. John Button - on behalf of the Prime Minister.

Appreciation : ICA Regional Director, Mr. G.K. Sharma.

- 1130 Tour of Exhibition
- 1400 Key-note address : ICA President, Mr. Lars Marcus.
- 1430 Australian response : The Hon. John Kerin, M.P. Minister for Primary Industries and Energy.
- 1500 Refreshments
- 1530 Conference procedure, adoption of programme, election of Conference Chairman and Drafting Committee.
- 1545 "*Cooperatives in Profile*" - A preliminary look at issues of Cooperative thought and practise in the Asia-Pacific Region, giving particular emphasis to the opportunities facing the International Cooperative Community.
- 1700 Conference adjourns.
- 1900 Dinner Harbour Cruise (Venue : Harbourside Warf).

Saturday, 10th February

- 0800 Morning tea
- 0845 "Cooperatives and Government : Collaborative Strategies for Social and Economic Development" - Director, ICA Geneva, Mr. Bruce Thordarson.
- 0930 Presentation of background paper : Regional Consultant, Dr. R.C. Dwivedi.
- 0945 Refreshments
- 1015 Country statements on the theme and background paper : Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Japan and USSR.
- 1200 Lunch break
- 1330 Country statements to continue : Iran, Japan, Fiji and Malaysia.
- 1500 Refreshments

- 1530 "ILO and Cooperative Development" - Director, ILO Geneva, Mr. Von Muralt.
- 1540 Country statements to continue : Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Canada.
- 1730 Conference adjourns.
- 1930 Gala Dinner (Venue: Harbourside Room - Level 2).

Sunday, 11th February

- 0800 Morning tea
- 0900 "Collaborative Strategies for International Trade and Finance" - Regional Director, ICA ROAP, Mr. G.K. Sharma.
- 0930 Refreshments
- 1000 Country statements to continue : Thailand, ACCU, Pakistan, Vietnam, Ghana and Australia.
- 1200 Lunch break/Drafting Committee to meet.
- 1400 Presentation and adoption of resolutions/recommendations and adoption.
- 1630 Closing.

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