

Mr. Robby Tulus

First Meeting of the ICA Regional Assembly for Asia and the Pacific

New Delhi (India) : 5-6 January 1995

MINUTES



International Cooperative Alliance

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

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Minutes of the First Meeting of the ICA Regional Assembly for Asia and the Pacific

New Delhi, January 5-6, 1995

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The First Meeting of the ICA Regional Assembly for Asia and the Pacific was held in New Delhi, India, on 5th & 6th January, 1995. 112 delegates/observers from 15 countries viz. Bangladesh, China, India, Israel, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Turkey and ACCU attended the meeting. In addition, representatives of SCC and ILO also attended the meeting. The list of participants of the meeting is annexed.

The Meeting was inaugurated by Hon'ble Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar, Union Minister of Agriculture, Government of India, and presided over by Hon'ble Mr. Arvind Netam, Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Cooperation, Government of India.

The inaugural session was also addressed by Mr. B. S. Vishwanathan, President, National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI), Mr. Yang Deshou, Chairman, ICA Regional Assembly for Asia and the Pacific, Mr. M. Horiuchi, ICA's Vice President for Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Lars Marcus, President, ICA, Dr. Jurgen von Muralt, Director - Enterprise Development & Cooperatives, International Labour Office, and Mr. G.K. Sharma, Regional Director, ICA ROAP.

Welcoming the delegates, Mr. B.S. Vishwanathan, President, NCUI, said : "Visualising intense competition for the cooperatives in the face of privatisation, the five point strategy for cooperative development has been adopted. The strategy involves specific policy enunciation by the Government for cooperatives; amendment of cooperative law to democratise the functioning of cooperatives; strengthening of base level structure; reorientation of the working of federal cooperatives to strengthen their primaries and enhancing active involvement and; participation of members, especially of rural poor in cooperative sector".

Mr. Yang Deshou of China said "some of the governments in Asia and the Pacific region had obtained better understanding of the role and need of cooperatives in the new social and economic situation and are already reviewing and revising cooperative laws. This indicates that governments have come to realise the effectiveness of cooperatives in ameliorating the economic condition of the weaker sections of society. The present dramatic changes characterised by marketing and economic conditions, provide a new situation for most of the developing countries of this region. The situation however, also provides an opportunity to the cooperatives to sort out their problems and strengthen themselves with a view to facing the competition".

Mr. M. Horiuchi, Vice President of ICA, in his greetings emphasized that the ICA has been restructured to meet the new challenges. He complimented the Indian Cooperative Movement in hosting the ICA Regional Assembly.

Mr. Lars Marcus, President, ICA, in his remarks observed that there are great challenges ahead for cooperatives in the context of the changed economic scenario. The strength of cooperatives lies in their capacity of solving the problems through mutual sharing.

Dr. Jurgen von Muralt, Director - Enterprise Development & Cooperatives, spoke of the growing collaboration between ICA and ILO.

Mr. G.K. Sharma, Regional Director, ICA ROAP, said: "The cooperative movements in the region is passing through a crucial period, particularly in view of the market economy being adopted by most of the countries. It gives new challenge to cooperatives. While on the one hand it provides opportunities and scope to operate it would also result in many cases lesser patronage from the governments. In market economy, it is the survival of the fittest and no one is

weaker sections of the society. The importance of cooperatives, therefore, gets much more significant in the market economy as they must provide a vehicle particularly to those who are not much fortunate to have larger capital resources and contacts. The Assembly will consider issues which will help the cooperatives in the region to march forward in this fast changing global scenario.”

Appreciating the role of the International Cooperative Alliance in promoting cooperatives in the Asia and the Pacific region, Hon'ble Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar stated that in the present context the ICA has greater responsibility as it has to work for regional integration of cooperatives and development of human resources. It has to be a resource centre for cooperatives of the region. It should also assist to establish International Trade Relations on cooperative basis and economic collaboration.

Presiding over the inaugural function, Mr. Arvind Netam, Minister of State for Agriculture and Cooperation, said that the cooperative movement has been able to provide quite a strong shield for the weaker sections of the community against the middlemen and the exploiters. He was hopeful of further development of cooperative movement, in the region and pointed out that there was every possibility of bringing power and energy sectors under cooperative fold.

Mr. B.D. Sharma, Chief Executive, NCUI, expressed his thanks to the hosts and organisers of the Regional Assembly for their support and collaboration.

Full text of the speeches are annexed to the minutes.

Agenda Item No. 2 : Approval of the Agenda

The items listed in the were approved.

Agenda Item No. 3 : Confirmation of the Minutes of last Regional Consultation in Beijing, April '93

The Minutes of the ICA Regional Meeting for Asia and the Pacific held in Beijing, China, on 21 & 22 April, 1993 were confirmed.

Agenda Item No. 4 : Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Mr. B.S. Vishwanathan, India, was elected as Chairman of the Regional Assembly for the next two years, and Prof. Ungku Aziz, Malaysia was elected Vice-Chairman.

Agenda Item No. 5 : Consideration of the amendments to the Rules of the ICA Regional Assembly

The meeting approved the recommendation of the Executive Council in its meeting held in Colombo in July 1994 regarding addition of clause 4 (c) to Rule 4 of the ICA Regional Assembly as under :

“c. Associate Members

- i. National level cooperative organisations from the region which are not members of the ICA could be admitted as Associate Members of the Regional Assembly on payments of subscription fee as decided by the Regional Assembly.

Observers

- ii. Parastatal organisations and others at national and regional levels directly concerned with the promotion and support to the cooperatives could be admitted as observers on payment of subscription fee as decided by the Regional Assembly;

Special Invitees

- iii. Special invitees like international organisations and others whose presence may be useful and desirable could be invited as a special invitees. For special invitees no subscription fee will be applicable.

The Associate Members, Observers and Special Invitees will be entitled to submit written papers in advance and present their views in the meetings, but will not be entitled to vote or contest in elections.”

The meeting also approved to modify Rule 7 to include ICA Congress, General Assembly and Board as also to modify the word “Regional Council” with “Executive Council”. Accordingly, the amended Rule 7 will be read as under :

“7. Elections

The Regional Assembly shall elect at its first session a Chairman, normally from the host organisation, who shall preside over the meeting.

The Assembly may elect one or more than one Vice Chairman as deemed necessary.

The Chairman and Vice Chairman will continue till their successors are elected in the next meeting of the Assembly.

The Regional Assembly shall also nominate one candidate for election as ICA Vice-President by the General Assembly. Each member organisation, and international member, in the region is entitled to submit nominations. Candidates must have served on one or more ICA governing bodies for at least two years. The Governing Body shall include : ICA Executive Committee, Regional Assembly, Executive Council. If there is no unanimity, voting is to be conducted by secret ballot. The Regional Director shall be responsible for communicating the name of the regional nominee to the ICA Secretariat not less than three months prior to the next General Assembly.

The Vice President shall serve a four-year term and is eligible for re-election if nominated again by the Regional Assembly.”

Agenda Item No.6 : Approval of the Rules of the Executive Council

The draft rules of the Executive Council, including an amendment regarding membership of the ICA Vice-President from the region in the council, were approved.

Agenda Item No.7 : Presentation and consideration of the Third Draft of the “Cooperative Charter”

The ICA Director-General, Mr. Bruce Thordarson, described the background and process of the current review of the cooperative principles. Dr. Y. Paz, member of the Resource Group working with Dr. Ian MacPherson, highlighted in detail the proposals contained in the third draft of the “Cooperative Identity Statement”.

Mr. Y. Kato, Vice President of JA-ZENKYOREN, Japan, said on behalf of Japanese JA-Group that he would like to say a word about the proposed revision, there are several points we want to see modified, as a matter of fact. However, in light of the limited time available today, he would confine his address my address only on the issue of cooperative capital.

He said that under the current Principles of 1966 share capital shall only receive a strictly limited rate of interest, if any. The proposed revision, instead says that “cooperatives might pay interest on capital” and keep silence about “limited” interest.

Behind the proposed line of revision, is a situation where for some cooperatives the principle of limited interest rate on share capital is a hindrance to raising capital. Such a problem could be approached by introducing more diverse ways of raising capital; ways which would stall limited interest rate and protect the governing right of the cooperative by not allowing capital contributors other than members to have any say in the affairs of the cooperative.

He further stated that it is an issue of adaptation to reality; it has to be our fundamental principle that “members mutually contribute shares to capital of their cooperative, for which there is a limit

placed on interest.” To provide that “cooperatives might pay interest on capital without providing for any limitation could well; drive cooperatives to run the business for the purpose of raising income to pay return on capital. Danger there is that the business of cooperative will start to be run for a wrong purpose where the means become the end.

JA-Group thinks that a revised principle should stipulate the concept of limited rate of interest on share capital. He emphasised that a well considered thought be given by ICA authority on this important point.”

Mr. Shigenori Takemoto, President, JCCU, Japan, highly appreciated Dr. Macpherson’s definition of cooperatives, in which he states clearly ‘that a cooperative is an autonomous association of people united voluntarily’. He mentioned that this definition was stated properly in the contemporary context. In addition, he would like to pay respect to MacPherson’s proposal since he has reflected their comments in formulating the new principles with regard to the different roles of members and employees in the participatory democracy, the significance of reciprocal education among cooperators and so on. He believe that these viewpoints were crucial not only for Japanese cooperatives but also for the Asian Cooperative Movements.

In Japan, he believed that consumer cooperative movement has developed through practising cooperative principles. The notable characteristics of Japanese movement is the practice of participatory democracy and autonomy. The participatory democracy can be exercised by members in three factors as investment in cooperative capital, utilisation of cooperatives facilities and participation in the cooperative business operation by members. He understand that the trinity of these three factors has enhanced members’ sense as main actors in consumer cooperative movement and it has brought a good result to cooperative business as well. Besides, they have made strenuous efforts to organise autonomous and viable consumer cooperatives. Although Japanese movement has never received any subsidy from Government and it has evolved to be a socially and economically independent movement. However, it is needless to say that independence from Government doesn’t mean isolation. Consumer cooperatives have always tried to realise their ideals by collaborating with consumer organisations, women’s and the other citizen’s groups.

Lastly made a short comments concerning the “Declaration for the Cooperative Movement in the twenty first Century”.

“It has been fifty years since the World War II ended. Now that the cold war has come to an end, we are seeking a new global order. However, we are still confronting such problems as regional conflicts, starvation, poverty and environmental destruction. It is imperative for us to ask ourselves how we can contribute to the everlasting peace of the world.

Japanese cooperators have learned the “importance of peace” from the bitter experience of the World War II including that of the atomic bombing. Japanese consumer cooperatives plan to conduct the following three activities in these three years;

1. Promote study meetings and international exchange activities among members and double the fund raising to contribute to the UNICEF programs for children and mothers in the world.
2. Study about the history of Japanese fore’s invasion of Asian countries during the World War II in order to enhance public opinion not to repeat the same fault and to promote the friendship with the Asian people.
3. Promote members’ peace campaigns and raising public opinions for the elimination of atomic bombs which will destroy the mankind and the global environment.

In this conjunction, I would like to strongly urge the ICA and its member organisations can take initiatives for building the lasting peace.”

Mr. S. Chandra, India, emphasised” Literally ‘Principle’ means ‘Fundamental Truth as basis of reasoning or ‘General law as guide to act’. If this interpretation of the world ‘Principle’, which is

universally accepted, is also applicable to the cooperative movement, every cooperator should base the working of cooperatives on the fundamentals set by the pioneers of the movement. Fundamentals do not change, despite the changing socio-economic conditions. The fundamentals of cooperation were that it stood for, 'honesty and for such virtues that count for so much in the whole lives of people'.

The Rochdale Pioneers had never conceived of propounding any principles of cooperation. They had formulated certain rules which were understood by all members and whose application was successfully demonstrated.

The background paper of Dr. Macpherson captioned, 'Cooperative Identity in the 21st Century' denotes that some prediction might be made about the structure and role of cooperatives in the next century. The identity of cooperatives as such is well known from the beginning. It is because of their identity based on certain rules of business that they were identified distinctly from other forms. The caption also does not indicate that an attempt is being made to re-structure the principles of cooperation. Vol.87, No.3, 1994 of the Review of International Cooperatives says that Dr. MacPherson, "is also responsible for the ICA project on the re-definition of the Cooperative Principles". Earlier, in this paper it has been shown that an attempt to codify the principles in 1921 was found to be hasty as it affected the membership of cooperative other than consumer cooperatives in the ICA and something was immediately done to make them more practical and universal.

The ICA Commission on Cooperative Principles, which codified them for acceptance by all, in my opinion, was a marriage of convenience. On the one hand, it was to be seen that the countries of both the capitalist and communist blocks accepted them. the acceptance of Non-aligned nations was equally important. The big question was "Can there be common concept of cooperative organisation which would be valid in America as in Russia and in India and many countries of Africa and Asia?" The concern of the commission was whether it could work out a common set of principles acceptable to all or formulate different principles for Western countries, under developed countries and the socialist countries. The opinions were sharply divided. The Western countries had a strong feeling that there could not be cooperation in socialist countries.

He said that he used the term 'marriage of convenience' for acceptance of the principles by all the member countries of ICA because not only the net result of the work of the Commission but the composition of the Commission itself represented a balance between the capitalist countries, socialist countries and developing countries.

It is an exaggeration when it is said that acceptance of the reformulated principles as Vienna Congress of the ICA held in 1966 was a near miracle. Now when we are talking about the cooperative identity in the 21st century, in the last decade of 20th century, we find whole hog changes in the economies of the world. The bi-polar world with an additional pole of developing countries has now become uni-polar. Those who still feel that they practise their own ideologies have also adopted in big measure the process of liberalisation of their economies.

The legal framework for cooperatives has undergone changes which include assumption of powers by Government/ Registrar of Cooperatives to supersede elected board of directors, to nominate the board including the chairman, to merge, amalgamate and divide cooperatives and so on and so forth. In the developed world also things have changed and it is difficult to presume as to what shape the work of 21st century is going to take politically and economically. One may hazard a guess but based on such a guess it would be rather fatally hazardous to pre-determine the cooperative identity in the 21st century.

In the Asia-Pacific Region, the role of the Government in the cooperative movement has been accepted even by the ICA. The Sydney Declaration, which was followed up by consultations organised by ICA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and the conferences of Ministers of Cooperation have very clearly brought out the fact that in some of the countries, the Governments have overstepped their legal powers in respect of cooperatives. The organisation of these events resulted in a growing consciousness in some of the countries, the Governments have over-stepped their legal powers in

respect of cooperatives. The organisation of these events resulted in a growing consciousness in some of the governments of the Region to reformulate their cooperative laws to make them more democratic, providing for more autonomy for the cooperatives. However, in some countries this still remains to be done.

Thus the shape of the cooperative movement to come in the 21st century in some of the countries is still fluid. In what shape it is moulded will depend on many factors including the type of polity that ultimately takes from there, and whether the process of liberalisation of the economy takes root all over the world or some countries reverse the process in the 21st Century. Keeping these in view, one has to think as to how the cooperative identity could be maintained.

Dr. MacPherson has prepared a draft Charter (Declaration). All said and done the movement must have the perspective for the 21st century but the perspective should that may be universally accepted without resorting to marriage of convenience or acceptance by diluting the fundamentals. For this it is suggested that ICA should not define any principles because principles as they exist today, were the rules of business of earlier cooperatives. In the diverse situations, as exist in the world today and some diverse situations in different cooperatives within a country, within a region, and in the world, it would be better if they are left to work out their own rules of business which one may like to term as principles. The Declaration may contain some details about the situation and for this purpose I feel that the efforts of Dr. MacPherson are commendable. They talk about the weaker sections, the role of government, etc. but it should confine itself to two things viz : (i) The fundamental values, and (ii) The definition of Cooperative. If we leave the entire issue to these two things and allow each cooperative to formulate its own principles, as per the local situations and needs, we would have more autonomous cooperatives because they would not be judged by certain codified principles, but would be judged by their performance vis-a-vis their own rules based on the definition of a cooperative and the fundamentals set by the Rochdale Pioneers.”

Mr. Kidai Uchida, President, Japan Workers Cooperative Union, said : “ First of all, I wish to express my greetings of solidarity to the cooperators of ICA office and the colleagues of Asian and Pacific regional cooperatives.

At this moment, it become more and more important to promote solidarity among the cooperative movements in the world, especially in Asian and Pacific region. Because, in order to gain good future for people, it is indispensable to establish a new economy system based on people against the control by the multinational companies for attaining people’s controlling future. In this context, we have been interested in the process of modification of ICA cooperative principles and the charter. I wish to speak recent activity of our organisation and to comment on the draft of the principles and charter, on behalf of the Jigyodan, Japan Workers Cooperative Union, wishing to make better principles and charter.

Jigyodan held “’94 National Meeting on Cooperation” last November, on the subjects of “creating new jobs useful for citizen and community - What is new job style and cooperative work?”

Mass unemployment and uneasiness to lose job are now haunting over the Japanese society and people. An overwhelming money first principle and bureaucracy and easiness to lose job are now haunting over the Japanese society and people. An overwhelming money first principle and bureaucracy are controlling Japanese society, and are throwing out the necessity of job creating which people really need to.

On the other hand, we can find a small but a new wave of creating good work and community by “new cooperatives “ in Japan.

Our national meeting which gathered grass roots movements discussed a new direction of cooperation, especially with local governments and public sectors.

Many new types of cooperatives gathered in our national meeting, for example, such as follows:

- A safety and high quality foods producer cooperative tying up with urban citizen.

- A community development cooperative controlled by citizen, not depending on big business and Central Government.
- Senior aged persons cooperatives to create jobs and social services.
- Women cooperatives to create useful social work to the community.
- Education or school cooperative to promote human development of the children against educational bureaucracy and conformism.
- A culture cooperative combining artists and audience to protect a living of performer and develop good culture.

We believe in that this new movement will grow as an important sector to change broad skirts of Japan's economy and society.

I would like to mention my view on the principles according to the first version of final draft made by the Macpherson group.

First point is to clarify "good work" as a basic character of the cooperative business is desirable. We welcome a phrase of commitment to service in the 4th principle (commitment to service) and at the same time we think it would better to add "good works" next to "services". The reason why we assert is that cooperative business are being required as their mission to create new production and new living system by transforming traditional mass production and mass consumption system.

Secondly, we suppose that its is better to insert a phrase something like "to seek democratic change of enterprises as a whole and market" in the 8th principle, as a responsibility of cooperatives to the external community. I think Cooperatives should have a will to give effectiveness to private companies and public sectors as one of their objects in the 21st century.

Cooperatives can and must promote cooperation among producers and consumers and citizens in order to create high quality and safety products and serves and employment and a faithful social standard for labour. To create a democratic controlled market becomes also a basement of fair international economic order.

Third point we stress is that it is important to recognise of the social and public character of cooperatives. Cooperatives also realise public interest. So cooperatives should have power to promote a democratic law making and social policy of the Government in order to develop community. We think "Public interests oriented character" of cooperatives should be inserted in the 5th principle (Autonomy)

Finally, how cooperates contribute to overcome the modern world crisis and problems such as global environmental pollution, monopolistic control of multinationals, exploitation of labour and resources, widening the difference of the rich and the poor, unceasing of wars and ethnic violence.

It should insert any adequate expression that cooperative is a entity of seeking the development and survival of the humankind.

Dr. R.C. Dwivedi, India, said : "I would only confine my views on certain recommendations which was made by Sydney Conference. One very important recommendation was government and cooperatives relationship to combine basic values, social economic objectives and competitiveness. The credit goes to Mr. Lars Marcus that he initiated discussion on basic values in Stockholm Congress and he used the word "basic values". Let us be very clear what are the basic values and what are values which are not basic. I gave a lot of thought to it and I am preparing a document for the Manchester Congress. I feel basic values are those which are above time, which are above space, which are above individual. I do not agree with my friend Mr. S. Chandra that values and principles are to change according to the diversification of cooperatives....Therefore this subject is so vast and I am happy that the finality will be done in Manchester. We should be very clear as to what the basic values are which will remain the same....These values must reflect in the cooperative principles. You cannot have the principles which will weaken the values. The principles are to strengthen the values and the

instrument which is very influential in strengthening and making cooperative principles and values operative is the cooperative law. At least in this part of the world every country has a law and the provisions of the law should be such that they should reflect the cooperative principles and the values of which the principles are the best. In the Indian Cooperative Laws we have now defined what are the cooperative principles. In the new laws, it reflects in every provision of the Act, the cooperative principles and also the values and therefore my submission in short is that we should be very clear what are the values, what are the cooperative principles."

Prof. Ungku Aziz, Malaysia, said : "Honesty is universal value, conflict of values and cooperatives are 99% involved in business. We must examine the question whether they are really universal values in the areas where cooperatives are practising."

Mr. Lars Marcus, President, ICA, said: "I will not talk about basic values and principles. I will talk about the ideas behind the process that started in the late 80's are now arriving to the final stage. There were political thinking behind this work of the ICA. We have clarified the understanding of our work with a wide membership when I say that the cooperatives in Asia are in my eyes. You have engaged into discussions about the true nature of cooperatives, discussions about our economic efficiency, about right to become more successful in business. Some cooperatives tend to move according to the post-era thinking than other movements we have identified. The matter returns to the Board and it is upto the Board to decide upon how this should be presented at the Congress in Manchester. The initiative in 80s came from the Board and now the Board will go back to the Congress and present the results of the work that has been done.

Agenda Item No. 8 : Three Year Development Programme of ICA ROAP and Work Programme for 1995-96 and reports by Specialised Committees

The ICA Regional Director and Project Advisers described the Regional Office's development programme and its eight technical projects : Policy Development and Legislation, Development Planning and Coordination, Agricultural Cooperative Development, Consumer Cooperative Development, Human Resource Development, Gender Integration, Agricultural Management Training, and Rural Women Leaders' Training. Other activities are undertaken in the areas of environment and worker-owned enterprises.

Mr. K. Fogelstrom of the Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC) said that a recent SCC-sponsored evaluation of the ICA's development programme was generally positive but that weaknesses existed in the areas of planning, establishment of performance indicators and donor coordination. He said that SCC's future approach towards ICA would involve supporting activities rather than institutional development, and that this approach would include a gradual shift of SCC's support from Asia to Africa.

In addition, the Chairmen of the Consumer and Fishery Specialised Committees briefed the RA about their respective committee meetings.

Mr. B.D. Sharma, India, made the following suggestions : (1) ICA should document a study on the Taxation Laws in Cooperatives, (2) Technical cooperation in the field of insurance cooperatives (3) Structural Reforms - specific study or specific experiences should be documented, (4) ICA ROAP Data Bank - It would be difficult for one person to undertake the entire activity. That division requires strengthening, (5) Strengthening of National level Consumer Cooperative Federation (6) Gender Integration - NCUI had held a workshop in collaboration with ILO in which ICA was represented and in that workshop a very specific set of policy norms were recommended. Future work programme of gender integration could be modelled on those policy norms. The Indian Cooperative Movement has decided that NCUI could formulate some sort of training modules on women cooperatives, women employees in cooperatives and personnel management policies in relation to gender integration in cooperatives, (7) Room for closer collaboration between HRD Project of ICA and NCUI - HRD Project should operate through only NCO so as to avoid anomalies. There is no coordination between INCOTEC and HRD Committee, (8) India should be allotted more seats in the ICA/Japan Agricultural

Management Training Course, (9) In the SCC Leadership Programme, NCUI would like to have collaboration on this.

Mr. Hakaru Toyoda, President, JA-ZENCHU, Japan, made the following statement :

“First of all, let me offer our sincere congratulations upon success of the first regional assembly and let me thank President Marcus, Mr. Vishwanathan, Mr. Yang and Mr. Sharma and other host cooperators for the great efforts.

Last September, JA-group held its 20th National Congress, and passed a resolution on “Re-structuring of Japanese Agriculture, and Reformation of JAs towards the 21st century.

It contains three main points:

1. ”restructuring agriculture and revitalisation of rural communities;
2. ”strengthening of cooperative activities and promotion of rural development;
3. ”reformation of JA business activities and organisational structures.

It was also mentioned that JA-group establish closer relationship with overseas cooperative movements and international organisations like ICA.

As it will be reported in the next agenda, JA-group established IDACA 30 years ago and has been collaborating with ICA in promotion of agricultural cooperatives. In recent years, JA-group has done projects in Thailand and the Philippines having support from the Government of Japan. We are hoping to activate more of such cooperation activities including Women-In-Development projects in the region. Thank you for listening.

Agenda Item No. 9 : Report on IDACA Activities

The Regional Director, Mr. G.K. Sharma, described the nine courses completed during 1993 by IDACA, including three that were carried out in collaboration with ICA ROAP.

He informed the meeting that Mr.Y.Nakaoka has taken over as Managing Director, IDACA, in place of Mr. Shiro Futagami.

Mr. Riazuddin Ahmed, Pakistan, wished that IDACA should organise a special study tour programme of 10-15 days for policy-makers in Japan, India, Korea and other countries which have something to show about the cooperative movement so that they come back more motivated in promoting the cooperative movement. The RD informed the meeting that we were trying to get some donor for this programme including Japan, but somehow we have so far not succeeded. In this regard JA-ZENCHU may perhaps be able to persuade the Government of Japan to consider including this in the programme.

Dr. V. Kumar, India, was highly appreciative of the training programmes being conducted by IDACA. He felt that the time is right now where we can have better exchange to the Indian Cooperative Movement on the training aspect and we can have participants from countries like Japan, Korea, Malaysia, who are better off in terms of agro-business enterprises. We could provide some sort of facilities for inter-acting kind of programme that could also be in curriculum exchange with IDACA.

Agenda Item No. 10 : To consider the paper : “The Conversion Syndrome - A Review of the Conversion of Australian Cooperatives into Investor Owned Firms”

The Regional Director introduced the paper prepared by Mr.Garry Cronan, Manager (Cooperative Development), Department of Local Government & Cooperatives, New South Wales, Australia, concerning the tendency for Australian Cooperatives to convert into investor-owned firms.

Interventions were made by Dr. S.S. Sisodia, India, Mr. Han Seung Hee, Korea, Prof. Ungku Aziz, Malaysia, Mr. Yehuda Paz, Israel, Mr. B.D. Sharma, India, Mr. Riazuddin Ahmed, Pakistan, who strongly opposed to the idea of any conversion syndrome. They felt that this issue has been raised on

account of lack of capacity of cooperatives to mobilise their resources. We should improve our efficiency and we should have structural integration from grass root level upto the national level. We should concentrate our efforts on structural integration, mobilise resources through adoption of practical measures etc. It will not be fair to the cooperative movement to allow cooperatives to be both cooperatives and capitalistic company at the same time. The cooperative movement should maintain their cooperative identity and sustain their competitive strength into the 21st century.

Mr. Ravi Shanker, India, said that there is a need for greater integration among state and national cooperative laws. Many members very much appreciate the paper which they considered logical and thought providing.

Based on the discussions, it was felt that cooperatives must maintain their identity. Every country has to find their own solution to maintain their identity. We have to be alert, cautious, adopt ourselves to the changing times and maintain our identity.

Agenda Item No. 11 : Report on the Third Cooperative Ministers Conference held in Colombo, Sri Lanka

Mr. Robby Tulus, Senior Policy Adviser, ICA ROAP, summarised the conclusions and the recommendations of the July 1994 Ministerial Conference, held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in four major areas : government-cooperative relationship, cooperatives in the market oriented economy, regional coordination, and international operation. The next conference is scheduled to be held in Thailand.

The RD informed the meeting that the full report containing all the papers will be issued in 4-6 weeks and will be sent to all the members of the RA.

Agenda Item No.12 : Consideration of the Report on draft proposal for recognition of Cooperatives by ICA

The Regional Director reported that the Executive Council had recommended the appointment of a small committee to examine the proposal for recognition of cooperatives by ICA.

The Committee met on 4th January and after detailed discussions, came to the following conclusions :

1. The Committee, in principle, agrees with the proposal with the suggestion that it should be called "Recognition of the genuine and efficient cooperatives".
2. The criteria laid down in the Agenda need reconsideration and readjustment. It would be desirable not to have three criterias but one criteria should be there on weightage basis. Based on weightage, they could be graded for recognition award.
3. The criteria may be re-examined by Mr. B.D. Sharma, Chief Executive of the NCUI and Mr. G.K.Sharma, Regional Director, ICA ROAP together and a revised proposal would be sent to all members of the committee for their comments and advice.
4. The proposal should be implemented on pilot basis in select countries where member organisations are interested to implement it.
5. A report on the progress made in this regard may be submitted in the next Regional Assembly Meeting

The above recommendations of the committee as circulated were agreed.

Agenda Item No. 13 : World Summit for Social Development convened by the U.N., March 1995, Copenhagen - Role of ICA and Coops in Social Development

Dr. Daman Prakash of ICA-ROAP described the background to the United Nation's March 1995 Social Summit and the role which the cooperatives could play in influencing and implementing the meeting's themes of poverty alleviation, employment creation, social integration.

In response to a question from Mr. B.D. Sharma, India, about cooperative participation at the Social Summit, Mr. Bruce Thordarson reported that ICA would be represented both at the official meeting and at the parallel NGO forum in Copenhagen.

Agenda Item No.14 : Presentation on a “Profile of Cooperatives in India”

The National Cooperative Union of India provided information on the cooperative movement in India, which officially includes some 350,000 cooperatives with a membership of 164 million.

Agenda Item No.15 : Any other item with the permission of the Chair

1. Letters from Mr. M. Horiuchi, Vice President, ICA, to President, ICA, and RD, ICA ROAP, about the position of President from Asia-Pacific Region

Mr. M. Horiuchi announced his intention to retire as ICA Vice President at the Manchester Congress in September 1995. He proposed that Mr. Hakaru Toyoda, President of JA-ZENCHU, be nominated by the region to succeed him for the remaining two years of his term. This was supported by Mr. Vishwanathan, seconded by Dr. Paz.

The RA unanimously nominated Mr. H. Toyoda for election to the post of Vice President of ICA in next General Assembly.

The RA also appreciated the services rendered by Mr Horiuchi to this region.

2. Letter of Mr. M. Ohya, Executive Director, JCCU, Japan on the establishment of a Advisory Committee on the direction of ICA Asia & Pacific Region

Mr. M. Ohya, Executive Director, JCCU, suggested a proposal to establish an ad hoc Advisory Committee that would review the structure and operation of the Regional Office, and make recommendations to the Regional Director. Mr. Yang spoke in favour of this proposal, which was accepted.

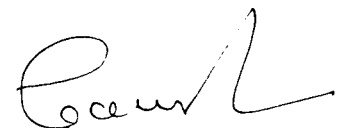
3. Mr. Kyu-E Lee, Chairman & President of the Korean Federation of Community Credit Cooperatives (KFCCC), after the election of Chairman thanked ICA for letting them join the ICA family and introduced his organisation, KFCCC has been admitted into ICA membership in 1994.

4. Mr. Yang Deshou, China, informed that the All-China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives had been separated from the Ministry of Agriculture at the beginning of 1995, and that plans were underway for the first Chinese Cooperative Congress, to be held in May or June of this year, in order to finalise the restructuring of the movement. He invited all participants to attend the Congress and indicated that in the future the Chinese cooperatives would be able to place more emphasis on international activities. Mr. Yang also expressed thanks for the support he had received as Chairman of the Regional Assembly.

Agenda Item No. 16 : Venue and date of the next meeting

Prof. Ungku Aziz, Vice Chairman of the Regional Assembly proposed that the 1996 Regional Assembly be held in Malaysia, this was accepted by the RA. The date will be finalised by Secretariat in consultation with host movement.

The meeting terminated with a vote of thanks to the Chair.


G. K. SHARMA
Secretary

New Delhi
10 February, 1995

**First Meeting of the ICA Regional Assembly
for Asia & the Pacific
New Delhi, 4-7 January, 1995**

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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**Welcome Address by
Mr. B. S. Vishwanathan
President, National Cooperative Union of India
at the Inaugural Function
of
First Meeting of ICA Regional Assembly for Asia & the Pacific
5th January, 1995**

Respected Chief Guest Bal Ram Jakhar, Hon'ble Union Minister of Agriculture, President of the function Mr. Arvind Netam, Hon'ble Union Minister for State for Agriculture and Cooperation, Mr. Lars Marcus, President, ICA, Mr. Horiuchi, Vice-President, ICA, Mr. Yang Deshou, Chairman, ICA Regional Assembly, Mr. Bruce Thordarson, Director-General, ICA and Mr. G.K.Sharma, Regional Director, ICA ROAP, distinguished delegates from abroad, my colleague cooperators from India, Ladies and Gentlemen !

1. At the outset may I convey very warm and respectful greetings to all of you, who have assembled here on the first meeting of ICA Regional Assembly after the restructured organisational system of ICA. We feel greatly happy and privileged in hosting this first meeting of the distinguished cooperative leaders. This meeting would not be a merely routine international get together of cooperators, but, I hope, could be a milestone in promoting cooperative solidarity within the ICA fraternity, in general, and Asia and the Pacific region in particular.
2. On this occasion we have amongst us a veteran cooperator and Union Agriculture Minister Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar. Himself a progressive farmer, horticulturist and scholar of distinction he is a great advocate of cooperative values and ideology. His presence on this occasion is matter of great satisfaction and encouragement to all of us in furtherance of the objective of cooperatives. I extend him a very respectful and warm welcome on behalf of members of ICA Regional Assembly, and on my own behalf.
3. Mr. Arvind Netam, who is the Minister of State in charge of Cooperation in the Government of India has kindly agreed to preside over the inaugural function. Mr. Arvind Netam basically is a cooperator and a very renowned champion of the weaker sections of the community. He is a leader of tribal and indigenous people in our country with longstanding public life. He was also Chairman of a national level Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India. I also extend a very friendly and warm welcome to him.
4. Mr. Lars Marcus, President of ICA, Mr. Horiuchi, Vice-President of ICA; Mr. Yang Deshou, Chairman, ICA Regional Assembly, Mr. Bruce Thordarson, Director General ICA and Mr. G. K.Sharma, Regional Director, ICA ROAP are inseparable part of ICA family. On behalf of Indian Cooperative Movement and my own behalf I extend very warm welcome to them.
5. I welcome their excellencies from embassies of different countries; representatives of ILO; AARRO; FAO who have kindly graced the function. I extend very sentimental and emotional welcome to all the delegates who have come to India in spite of their travel hazards and pre occupations at home. I also accord warm welcome to all the distinguished invitees and representative of national cooperative federations.

6. Friends, as you know cooperation is intrinsically woven into the social and cultural fabric of our country “Vasudhaivkutumbham” i.e. “whole world is one family” is our cultural motto. This was the philosophy which influenced our founding fathers and the great leaders namely Mahatama Gandhi and Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru to assiduously promote cooperation as an important instrument of development after independence. In our development strategy cooperation was accepted as an important vehicle of socio-economic transformation particularly that of the rural people and the weaker sections of the community. It was made incumbent upon States to provide multifaceted support to cooperatives.
7. As a result of the collective efforts of the people and the Government we are having a very strong cooperative sector consisting of 353000 cooperative societies of all kinds with the membership of 164 millions and a total working capital of more than 800000 millions. There is no segment of our economy which has been left and untouched from the influence of cooperatives. In some of the segments particularly agriculture and agro processing, the cooperatives have acquired commanding position. However, presently our cooperative movement is passing through a period of transition as cooperative movements of other countries of the world.
8. Our national economy is being subjected to extensive privatisation, marketisation and globalisation by dispensing away with the control of State in economic activities. Obviously, cooperatives can not remain unaffected from these changes. The greatest challenge before them, therefore, could be how to ensure their distinct identity and their organisational values. Discouraged with State sponsored and supported cooperatives, some cooperators have started thinking to go for cooperative companies. However, this concept does not have acceptance of the cooperative movement as a whole.
9. In September, the National Cooperative Union of India organised an Expert Consultation in collaboration with ILO to formulate an action programme in regard to positioning of cooperatives in market oriented economy. The consensus opinion that emerged in Expert Consultation was that cooperatives must maintain their distinct identity and values. The Government was also called upon to recognise cooperatives on different footing as they are the organisation of persons of limited means. The Government should create a conducive environment where cooperatives function as self-regulated, self-managed and self-reliant units.
10. We have adopted a five point strategy for cooperative development. The strategy involves a specific policy enunciation by the Government for cooperatives; amendment of cooperative laws to democratise the functioning of cooperatives; strengthening of base level structure; reorientation of the working of federal cooperatives to strengthen their primaries and enhancing active involvement and participation of members, especially of rural poor in cooperative sector. In line with this strategy the movement has taken a number of initiatives for structural adjustments and to establish cooperatives in new areas. We have set up “National Cooperative Bank of India” to remove the systemic gaps within the cooperative banking and financing sector. Now, we are organising a cooperative insurance system. We also propose to set up an International Cooperatives Trade Promotion Organisation for providing trade and technology support to the cooperatives particularly in the field of agro-processing. I call upon the international community, particularly the cooperative community, to support our endeavours so that one of the largest cooperative sectors in the world could withstand the forces of market oriented economy.
11. I hope this Assembly meeting would also give serious consideration to the issue of positioning cooperatives in the market-oriented-economy.
12. In eighties ICA Regional Office had difficult times, which reached a critical stage where the Regional Office was likely to be wound up and building sold. However, with the timely support of Indian Cooperative Movement and prudent decision of the ICA Headquarters, it was saved. Today ICA Regional Office in India has stabilised well. Much credit goes to the vision, far-sightedness and action-oriented approach of Mr. G.K. Sharma, the Regional Director.

13. The ICA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific has done tremendous cooperative developmental work practically in every field of cooperative activities. New strategies suggested by ICA Regional Office have been very useful to the movement in the region particularly in the spheres of human resource development, agricultural cooperatives and consumer cooperatives. Indian cooperative movement also contributed to ICA's endeavours whatever it could. We feel emotionally involved and identified with the efforts of ICA in furtherance of cooperative values and philosophy. I hope this meeting would further strengthen our solidarity and resolve to preserve, protect and restore cooperatives in the service of the poor who may be worst victims of market orientation during the transition period.

With these words I once again welcome all of you.

Welcome Speech by Mr. Yang Deshou

Chairman, ICA Regional Assembly for Asia & the Pacific

Hon'ble Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar, Union Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Arvind Netem, Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Cooperation, President of NCUI, Mr. Vishwanathan, President of ICA, Mr. Lars Marcus, Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Cooperators :

First of all, as the Chairman of the Asia Pacific Regional Assembly, I would like to express my warm welcome to all of you for coming to this Regional Assembly Meeting and I would also like to convey my heart-felt thanks to NCUI and all other Indian cooperative organisations as well as all staff of ICA ROAP for their great efforts made for this conference.

This Regional Assembly marks that the establishment of our new regional governing body has been preliminarily completed, which is of great importance to the cooperatives not only in our region but also in the world. Asia and the Pacific Region is a growing area and an area enjoying the fastest economic development throughout the world. With its long history, vast land, abundant resources, big population and great potentials, our region has become the focal point of the world's attention. It is all the same for the cooperatives in this region. The cooperatives in our region consist of 62.5% individual membership and 28% institutional membership of the ICA, and they are widely scattered in middle-east, south, west, south-east, far-east and the pacific region. The cooperatives in this region have a big potential and bright future.

Through the joint efforts of ICA ROAP and all our member organisations, the relationship between cooperatives and the governments in our region has been largely improved and strengthened to our satisfaction. As of last July, three cooperative ministerial conferences had been convened, through which we exchanged views with the government and expressed our hopes. And positive impacts have been in many countries. The government has obtained a better understanding on the role and need of cooperatives in the new social and economic situation and some of the governments in this region have already taken up to review and revise cooperative laws. This indicates cooperatives as the organisation of the weak are becoming more and more concerned by the people and the governments.

Obviously, cooperatives are also confronted with some problems. The world economy is experiencing a deep and dramatic changes. The market economy characterised by competition and the world economic integration are becoming the main trend of the world economy. For most developing countries in Asia and the Pacific region, this is a new issue.

The cooperatives are not exception. How to grasp the opportunity and face the new challenges under this new situation is an overhead problem for us. And it is for the very reason that ICA adjusted its structure to attach more emphasis on regional works. That is why we gather here today to discuss the Rules of our Regional Assembly for making it more adaptive to the social and economic situation of our region and to consider our development programme and work for making our regional structure play its full role in the course of promoting the cooperatives in this region to develop into healthy, self-reliant and strong-ones. Therefore, I hope all distinguished delegates present here to actively contribute your talent and ideas to the conference and to the cooperative development of our region.

Finally, I once again express my welcome and thanks to you for coming to this conference, and I wish this Regional Assembly a great success.

Thank you.

Opening Remarks by Mitsugu Hori-uchi ICA Vice President for Asia & the Pacific

Thank you, Chairman Yang !

Honorable Speaker. Honourable Ministers ! President Marcus ! Mr. Viswanathan ! Dear Cooperators ! Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am Mitsugu Horiuchi, the Vice President representing our region on the ICA.

On behalf of ICA member Organisations in the region, let me first of all, thank National Cooperative Union of India, and other ICA members in India playing host to this first ICA assembly of our region.

Then, I welcome you all, ICA members, to the first assembly meeting.

Today, your Vice President have two points to submit.

1. That it is, indeed, commemorable, that we have come to be able to be meeting in the first of our Regional Assembly, and I would like to share with you all, this special jubilee.

That we, the cooperators, in the region of Asia and Pacific are gathered together for a Regional Assembly is a crystallization of our past efforts towards restructuring and regional structuring of our ICA. As we all remember, the Stockholm Congress of 1988 instructed to have “the organizational and management structures of ICA” reviewed. It was taken up by the Structure Committee. The committee report of 1991 recommended, among other things, “the establishment of 4 new regional assemblies (including one in Asia and Pacific) in recognition of the growing importance of regional issues and trends within the ICA”, which was adopted by the Tokyo Congress of 1992.

Following that decision, we met in Consultation Meeting in the spring of 1993 at Beijing to pave the way for a regional structure including adoption of the Rules of the Regional Assembly under the Chairmanship of Mr. Yang Deshou of China. On the occasion of the first Assembly meeting of today, let us hope that we shall see all our movements to make further progress based on “collaboration among the ICA member organisations at regional level and provide a forum for discussion” for which our new regional structure is meant to become an effective instrument.

2. Now, let me say a word about how members are expected to support the ICA.

Last September, the President, Vice Presidents including myself gathered in Geneva and discussed about future activities of ICA. Some proposal will be submitted from the Board to the General Assembly in Manchester.

I want to borrow this occasion and appeal that members in Asia and Pacific Region may also stand to support the International Cooperative Movement as it enters the second century at the next Congress.

With these two-point message as Vice President for your region, let me conclude by wishing a great success of our first Assembly Meeting.

Thank you.

Speech by Mr. Lars Marcus

President, ICA

At the Inaugural Session on January 05, 1995

Mr. Chairman, Hon. Minister of Agriculture, representatives of cooperative organisations, honoured guests, cooperators and friends,

ICA has a long history. This year, it celebrates its centennial. This could offer a very good reason for a look at times which have passed.

I believe, history could be of interest but of importance only if you understand the present and are prepared to analyse the future in order to change. This is the simple and only safe way to cooperative success. However, this could be a problem. Please accept that my message, for this reason, will be incomplete, I will omit the historic aspect in my message.

How then shall present times be understood by cooperators? In comparison with previous generations, no one amongst us can today claim lack of information. Let me sort out from the affluence four trends, I believe, to be of special importance to the cooperators.

The first is about the discussion on a globally free trade and the formation of multi-national markets on all continents. The consequences are already there and will change the situation for us who serve a national, regional or generally local membership. Those of you who do not understand that they need international networks are wrong, completely wrong. The ICA offers one, but commercial alliances you have by yourselves. Look for partners inside ICA.

The second is about the rich, the global capital and the OECD on one side and the poor every where, but not least in Africa, Central America and South East Asia on the other. Will cooperatives, again and again, be a force to strengthen those with the right claim for a decent life and safer future? Times will be tough for us, but cooperative solutions will be more and more frequent.

The thirds are the strong and increasing immigration waves due to pressing economic, social and political but unfortunately also more and more military conditions. Literacy and modern communications move people away to uncertain futures. It is fair to describe this as a brain drain, increasing impoverishment of the South and strength of the North.

My fourth point is this, a divided world. An isolate - an island of rich and intelligencia, in an ocean of poverty, illness and illiteracy - offer an unbearable thought. It means a world of unrest, setbacks and wars. In the frontline of victims you will find, more than 700 million cooperators and their families, whom we in the ICA represent.

More than half of us live in Asia and the Pacific, the majority under severe economic pressure. It is not to say too much that a tremendous responsibility stays with you, the Asian leaders, and by that also with this Assembly.

It is true that our main responsibility is due to the economy in local societies. But to defend the interests of members, we can not afford a near-sightedness caused by geography as well as by racial, ethnical and political prejudices. We have to reach out for our neighbours. We have to represent the forces of democracy, internationalism and solidarity with the unfortunate on the national arena.

What, can we ask, is the importance of four regional assemblies inside the ICA Network?

The ICA membership is very diversified, both in different sectors of activities and geographically. Our specialised organisations cater for our increasing number of branches. The Regional Assemblies

are intended to serve the purpose of stronger geographical links. The idea is as simple as this. Collaboration between equals is natural and easy. The banker in Switzerland and a fisherman from Sri Lanka can have a common base in cooperative ideas, but talking business is likely to mean a somewhat limited conversation. The Regional Assemblies are also aimed at being umbrellas for a sectoral work.

To me the creation of four Regional Assemblies also means that the ICA has passed a milestone. The size of our membership and above all its strength is not the least in your region, which has made it possible to shrink the previous European domination in the ICA affairs and on its agenda.

Cooperators in Africa, the Americas and Europe will, like you, have a better chance every second year to turn to their own continents, their problems and opportunities. I am convinced that this will not diminish our common interest in a global organisation.

As you know the other three regions have already held their Assemblies. Let me now tell you of three major issues at their meetings.

Africa is a continent where the cooperatives are the weakest. For almost 50 years, they have been given support from the colleagues in the OECD countries. The money has mainly come from government agencies. Evaluating the progress made today, you find donors are more and more reluctant. Supporting national apex organisations costs money and have little grassroots effect. At the same time African overall situation is growing worse and worse with the fortunate exception of South Africa and a growing European responsibility is identified. More aid is in the pipeline. Will a cooperative alternative be attractive?

On an ICA initiative and in collaboration with European members, a report was presented to our African friends at their Assembly - about setbacks about governmental interference and about inefficiency and corruption in cooperative ranks. Self criticism was called for and a new policy to attract donors was presented. Such medicine does never taste everybody well, but was accepted. It was also understood that more cooperative support, and increased support, would be forthcoming but not as a pay off for the colonial exploitation, but as an investment for expected well defined results.

In the Americas, the Assembly represented a start and with enthusiasm. Their leading theme was 'Commercial Collaboration' but also to get to know each other. A meeting of this size between cooperators from South, Central and North had never taken place and between equals. This was not for those in any one's backyard.

The European Assembly also held a new element and several old ones. Here our members had the ICA for a century but they seconded our work with a strong structure of multinational sectoral bodies. There was on many minds some fear that the ICA should interfere in or limit in such work. Should ICA open a Regional Office in Brussels? Some wanted us to, but others felt uneasy about the thought. Even though it was made clear before the Assembly that the ICA was to respect what what existed and avoid any overlapping in activities but concentrate on European, East-West relations and development support, together with the members and not behind their backs. Some fear and doubt was there when the meeting began. However, the assembly was well prepared and a very promising work plan was adopted in unison. Graham Melmouth, European ICA President and of our Vice Presidents had certainly two hot days but a happy ending.

The result of your Assembly will be known tomorrow, but only on paper and in your minds. Another step will be taken on a ladder without end, but also note that the future is up there to be caught.

Please have high expectations and see to that they are fulfilled. This was my greetings and from colleagues world wide.

Let us all meet in Manchester, later this year.

Thank you.

**Remarks by
Mr. G. K. Sharma
Regional Director, ICA ROAP**

1. The restructuring of the ICA was approved in Tokyo Congress in October, 1992. Prior to that, the highest policy body in the region was the Regional Council which consisted of two delegates from each country. As a result of restructuring Regional Council has been replaced by a Regional Assembly in which all the members in the region are entitled to participate. In the meeting of all the members in the region held in Beijing, China, in April 1993, the constitution of the new Regional Assembly was adopted which has been approved by the General Assembly. Based on this constitution, the first meeting of the reconstituted Regional Assembly is being inaugurated today.
2. There are many important issues before the Assembly for consideration which includes certain amendments to its rules with regard to membership, consideration of the cooperative charter relating to Cooperative Principles to be considered in the Manchester Congress next year, the Three-Year Development Programme of the ICA ROAP, U.N. World Summit for Social Development to be held in Denmark in 1995 and the Role of ICA and Cooperatives in Social Development, as also a paper on Conversion Syndrome - an issue being raised in many countries of cooperatives versus cooperative companies.
3. The Regional Assembly is highest policy body in the region to promote collaboration among the ICA member organisations at the regional level and provide a forum for discussion of regional as well as global issues. It is to guide Regional Office on its programmes of activities and has to make recommendations and to submit proposals and resolutions for consideration by the General Assembly.
4. The Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific was first office established by the ICA in the region and was inaugurated in 1960 by the then Prime Minister of India, late Pt. Nehru. The office had the privilege of having Mrs. Indira Gandhi, who later became the Prime Minister of India, as the Honorary President of the Regional Council for more than a decade. Initially, the Regional Office was acting as a Education Centre with financial support from the Swedish Cooperative Movement. However, in course of time it became a fulfilled Regional Office providing a useful forum for the movements of Asian Pacific Cooperative Movements.
5. As a result of the restructuring the Asian Region which was earlier confined upto Iran has been extended upto Israel and its membership has increased from 16 to 25 countries. The new countries from whom membership have been added to the region are Iraq, Jordan, Israel, and Kuwait and three CIS countries from the former Soviet Union, namely, Uzbekistan, Kyrgystan and Turkmenistan. Myanmar, which had left ICA membership in sixties rejoined ICA recently and Mongolia which was not so far a member, also joined the ICA. Consequently, today there are 62 national level cooperative organisations as its members from 25 countries representing around 460 million individual members. In addition, there is a regional organisation, ACCU as its member.
6. The ICA will be celebrating its centenary next year. The Asia-Pacific Region's association with the ICA is as old as ICA itself. In the First Congress Meeting of ICA held in 1895, a professor, Mr. Krishna Menon, from Agricultural University in Madras was present. It may be mentioned that initially ICA was established by 12 countries from Europe and India was only country from Asia present in it. In the Fourth Congress held in 1900 in Paris, a representative of the then British Indian Cooperative Union, Calcutta, attended the meeting as a member. This was followed by a delegate from Australia in the Fifth Congress held in 1904. The third country from Asia to join

the ICA was Japan which attended the Eighth Congress held in 1910 in Hamburg. Today, even though the institutional membership from Asia accounts for only 28%, it account for two-third of the individual membership of the ICA.

7. The cooperative movements in the region is passing through a crucial period, particularly in view of the market economy being adopted by most of the countries. It gives new challenge to cooperatives. While on the one hand it provides greater opportunities and scope to operate, it would also result in many cases lesser patronage and assistance from the governments. In market economy it is the survival of the fittest and no one is concerned with weaker sections of the society. The importance of cooperatives, therefore, gets much more significant in the market economy as they must provide a vehicle particularly to those who are not much fortunate to have larger capital resources and contacts. The Assembly will consider issues which will help the cooperatives in the region to march forward in this fast changing global scenery.



Inaugural Address by Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar

**Hon'ble Union Minister of Agriculture
Government of India**

Friends, I join Shri B.S. Vishwanathan in welcoming you all, particularly the members of ICA Regional Assembly. It is a matter of privilege for the Indian Cooperative Movement to host the very first meeting of ICA Regional Assembly after re-structuring of the ICA. I appreciate the NCUI for inviting the Regional Assembly to meet in India. About five years ago, the Indian Cooperative Movement enjoyed the privilege of hosting ICA Central Committee Meeting in Delhi. We welcome such meetings/events as significant source of guidance to us. To some of my friends, the Delhi climate may be a little un-comfortable since mercury is going down. Nevertheless, I hope, you will feel at home and enjoy your stay. We welcome you with all our warmth of hearts.

2. Cooperatives occupy in the Asia and Pacific Region an important place in the economy of all the countries. It is also a common feature that the governments in this region have a positive and supportive attitude towards cooperatives. Though cooperatives were organised in India in the eighties of the 19th Century, in its present form the Indian Cooperative Movement started in 1904 when the first Cooperative Societies Act was passed. Thus it is nearing a century of its useful existence. During this period, it has faced many challenges. However, it has constantly progressed. Cooperatives constitute the third important sector of our economy, the other two being private and public sectors. Its significance is fully manifested in the vision that it has to play a balancing role between public and the private sectors. It is highly diversified, covering all the important areas of the economy.
3. In all, there are nearly 35 million cooperatives with nearly 200 million individual members. It has covered practically all the half million villages of India. Structurally, it has a sound vertical and horizontal framework. Interestingly, there are tiny cooperatives with small membership as also giant cooperatives having thousand of members. In the field of agriculture, cooperatives have played a very crucial and strategic role by supplying agricultural credit and other inputs, marketing and processing facilities etc. But for cooperatives it would have been difficult to achieve the green revolution which has made India, not only self-reliant in foodgrains, but we are in a position to export foodgrains. Cooperatives have become a model for production, processing and distribution of milk. As a result of deliberate policy of the government, cooperatives have played important role in improving the socio-economic conditions of weaker sections of the society. However, not all is well in the cooperative sector, as we have various problems. Cooperative development is imbalanced in different parts of the country. Some of the States are cooperatively well developed, while some are coming up, still others are lagging behind due to various cumulative factors. The Government of India has designed special schemes for under-developed States. The membership, by and large, is non-participative. The Governments have also involved themselves more than required, making the cooperatives too much dependent on government for finances and other support. There is a need to build professionalised cadres to improve the working of cooperatives. The primary societies at the village level, which serve the individuals, are very weak. They need to be strengthened. This is our greatest concern. The target, as was envisaged by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru to convulse India with cooperation is yet to be achieved. The journey is long, but we are marching with determination.
4. Government of India has taken a decision to transfer the power and authority from the Registrar

of Cooperative Societies to the members. The laws are being amended substantially with the objective to allow free play of the cooperative principles as was recommended by the Cooperation Ministers' Conferences convened by ICA Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific at Sydney, Jakarta and Colombo. Our direction of cooperative development is to combine "cooperative values, socio-economic objectives and competitive strength".

5. In the context of emerging new economic order as a result of liberalisation, marketisation, privatisation and globalisation of economy, after dis-integration of the communism, new challenges have surfaced before cooperatives. The challenge is that cooperatives will have to face competition with multi-nationals and big business houses. This calls for making cooperatives managerially efficient, cost effective and quality-conscious. That is the only way to survive in the environment of competitive markets and global impact. There is no alternative to it. As cooperative leaders, you have to find new ways and means to ensure that performance of cooperatives is not only at par with private enterprises, but still better. While the multi-nationals have certain financial and operational advantages, you have edge over them because of structural framework and large membership. What is needed is better service to the members so that they develop more faith in and reliance on their cooperatives. In Indian situation, it is crucial to strengthen primary cooperative societies to meet the challenge. National Cooperative Union of India, in collaboration with ILO, organised recently an Experts Consultation on "Role of Cooperatives in New Economic Policies" to consider measures for preparing cooperatives to new situations. I appreciate the concern being felt by the cooperative movement.
6. In market oriented economy the apprehension that the weak, both individuals and nations may be exploited. We live in a world of unequal and disparities. The developing countries in the region have problems of poverty, unemployment, infrastructural deficiencies etc. Government and cooperatives have to jointly work to solve these problems. We would welcome any kind of assistance from other countries in regard to this. We assure you whatever assistance we can give. Cooperation is mutuality. I suggest that you give your serious thought to evolve and establish an international cooperative system in the region through which exploitation of any nation by any sector of economy is avoided. There should be mutual benefits. It is a difficult task no doubt, but strengthening of cooperation as a bridge between various countries is most suitable way of peaceful co-existence. My vision is that, as Nehru envisaged, Cooperation should not be confined to economic activities alone it should be extended to solve other problems as well so that it promotes international understanding, high sense of human values and lasting peace. Long term international peace will go a long way in accelerating the pace of economic development in the region.
7. I am well aware of the role the ICA is playing in assisting cooperative to improve their functional efficiency in this region. Its guidance both to government and cooperatives has given new direction of action at government and cooperative level. In the present context, the ICA has greater responsibility in the region. It has to work for regional integration of cooperatives and development of human resources. It has to be a resource centre for cooperatives of the region. It should also assist to establish international trade relations on cooperative basis and economic collaboration. While expecting the ICA to be more helpful, it is necessary to strengthen its resources. It should give guidance to make cooperatives more efficient and genuine in character. It should also assist cooperatives to establish trade relations on cooperative basis, and develop human resources. It is to give valued counsel both to Government and the Movement. India has always supported ICA's efforts for development of cooperatives and we shall continue this support. This Assembly is the highest forum of cooperatives in the region. I hope you will deliberate upon the various issues and come out with recommendations which will make the cooperatives strong, competitive and value oriented. I once again welcome you and wish your stay comfortable.

JAI HIND

Presidential Address by Mr. Arvind Netem

Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Agriculture & Cooperation

Chief Guest of the function, Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar, Hon'ble Union Minister for Agriculture, Mr Lars Marcus, President, ICA, Mr. Horiuchi, Vice-President, ICA, Mr. Yang Deshou, Chairman, ICA Regional Assembly, Mr. Bruce Thordarson, Director-General, ICA, Mr. B.S. Vishwanathan, President, NCUI, Mr. G.K. Sharma, Regional Director, ICA, distinguished guests, my colleague cooperators from India, ladies and gentlemen.

Let me take this opportunity and privilege to greet you all and convey my best wishes for a very happy and prosperous New Year. I would also specially like to thank all the participants who have assembled here from different parts of the world to deliberate on present crucial and sensitive issues which need due consideration in the forthcoming discussions in this Regional Assembly meeting. This is the first international business meeting of cooperators and cooperative experts, being hosted by Indian Cooperative Movement in the auspicious New Year. I am sure it will mark a good beginning for promotion and development of cooperative activity, all over the world in general and in India in particular and the same tempo and endurance will continue in future.

As I have perceived, cooperative movement in India has made multi pronged, multi-faceted and multi-dimensional development. On many counts it has been able to provide a quite strong shield for the weaker sections of the community against the middlemen and the exploiters. I have all appreciation for the efforts made and support provided by the ICA ROAP, New Delhi, (India), in making the Indian Cooperative Movement value based, objective oriented, democratically vibrant and sustainable. Indian Cooperative Movement has hardly spared any activity from its coverage. Establishment of National Cooperative Bank, filling the systematic gaps in rural credit has proved a landmark. Likewise cooperativisation of insurance system in India, for which the stage is almost set, again will prove a boon in reducing premium payment burden coupled with need based facilities to both, cooperatives and the members. I am also told that continuous researches are also being made to bring power and energy sector under cooperatives and for all this I would like to recognise and congratulate the cooperative leaders, experts and also the professionals.

The Government, with a view to effect reforms in Indian economy has come out with a New Economic Policy providing for privatisation, market competition, globalisation and withdrawal of economic support and state control. This will have some effect on work styles of cooperatives as they are state protected and state supported institutions. The Indian cooperatives, thus have to ensure, preserve and maintain their ideals, philosophy as also the values by making them sustainable.

I feel happy to learn that in order to provide due status and recognition to Indian cooperatives, possible legal hurdles are being removed by further amending the cooperative legislation. Similarly, the cooperatives at the primary level are being strengthened along with improving efficiency of the higher level cooperative structure. The members have also been made aware about their rights and responsibilities through a well established network of cooperative education and skill and expertise development of staff is done through cooperative training organisations. To make all our efforts successful I would like to make a call to this international expert body, the ICA to provide needed guidance and support.

Being actively engaged with cooperatives right from the base upto national level, I have close association with ICA ROAP, New Delhi, and I feel proud in expressing that ever since its establishment

it has been doing good and appreciable services for the growth and diversification of our national cooperative movement.

I am sure the deliberations in this Regional Assembly will help in drawing a practical programme/schedule for development of cooperatives all over the region. I wish all success to this Regional Assembly meeting.

JAI HIND.