



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Third Asia-Pacific Co-operative Ministers' Conference
on
Co-operative-Government Collaborative Strategies
Colombo, Sri Lanka, July 26-30, 1994



International Co-operative Alliance
Regional Office for Asia & the Pacific
New Delhi - 110065, India



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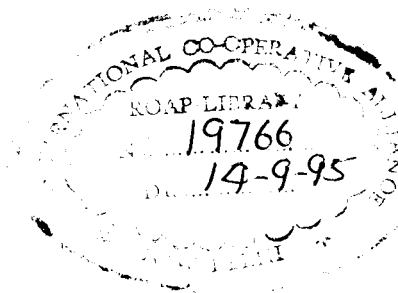
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ABBREVIATIONS

AARRO	Afro-Asian Rural Reconstruction Organisation
ACCU	Association of Asian Confederation of Credit Union
ACO	Asean Cooperative Organisation
BMICH	Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall
CCA	Canadian Cooperative Association
CICOPA	International Committee of Producers' and Artisinal Coopera- tive Societies
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisations
ILO	International Labour Organisation
SAARCCO	SAARC Cooperative Organisation
SCC	Swedish Cooperative Centre
SDID	Societe de developement international Desjardins

**CONCLUSIONS
AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Conclusions and Recommendations of the
Third Asia-Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference
on
Co-operative Government Collaborative Strategies
for the Development of Cooperatives**

BACKGROUND

The International Co-operative Alliance, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ICA ROAP), organized the Third Asia Pacific Co-operative Ministers Conference in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from July 26 to 30, 1994. Fifteen Ministers responsible for Co-operative Development representing Bangladesh, China, Ghana, Fiji, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Tonga and Uzbekistan, participated at the Conference. 140 delegates from 24 countries, namely Bangladesh, Brunei, China, Fiji, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Japan, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam attended the Conference. In addition, representatives from international organizations, namely AARRO, ACCU, CCA, SDID, ILO, FAO, SCC, ACO and SAARCCO took part in the Conference as well.

Substance was what counts at the Third Co-operative Ministers' Conference. The rise of globalization has driven large companies and industries to review their respective positions. The report card of co-operatives was consequently affected and the sector needed a similar review. Such changing economic environment prevailed before the Regional Consultation in Kuala Lumpur and prompted the governments and co-operative movements in the region to strategically examine the competitive position of the co-operative sector. These recent shifts marked the distinct emphasis laid by the Third Ministers' Conference as compared to the previous two Ministerial Conferences in Sydney and Jakarta.

Results of the intensive deliberations at the Regional Consultation are contained in this report. These results were further translated by ICA ROAP into four Background Papers which became the resource document for the deliberations at the Ministers' Conference in Colombo. The COLOMBO DECLARATION was formulated to denote the fast changing environment which shaped the rising competition in the marketplace. The co-operative sector saw the need for renewed positioning. The Declaration is followed by succinct conclusions and recommendations which give co-operatives

in the region a new prospect to play their role in the new marketplace, as well as assert their rightful existence as a distinct sector in the economy. The critical role to be played by co-operatives to broaden their competitive strength will further be determined by the practical follow-up action of these recommendations. ICA ROAP is once again called to follow through. The following will highlight briefly the Conference proceedings.

The Conference was inaugurated by His Excellency D.B. Weejatunga, President of Sri Lanka, at the Bhandaranayake Memorial International Conference Hall. The inaugural session was also attended by foreign Ambassadors and High Commissioners from various countries in the region. The President in his speech emphasized that the co-operative movement is a movement of the people, by the people, for the people, and that it is managed and administered by its members whereas its basic principle is to ensure the progress of its members which again is based on self-help and mutual understanding. The President stressed the need for co-operatives to define a role for themselves as catalysts and agents of change in the poverty alleviation program, organize and equip needy families to manage their own affairs. He also said that: "today the world is moving towards a liberalised economic system - towards a global market economy and in this context the relevance of co-operative sector needs to be reaffirmed; what are the changes that are necessary both in the structure and the operations to put the co-operatives on par with the state sector and private sector? These are some of the questions which need greater attention at a forum like this Ministerial Conference. My belief is that co-operatives will have a greater role to play than ever before in a situation of this nature".

At the inaugural function, the ICA President, Mr. Lars Marcus, presented an award to Mr. Weeraman. It was officially presented by H.E. the President of Sri Lanka. The award stated:

"This Award is Presented to

Mr. Palita E. Weeraman

By His Excellency D.B. Wijetunga, President of Sri Lanka on behalf of the International Co-operative Alliance

In recognition of his meritorious services rendered to the Co-operative Movement as regional Director for Asia and the Pacific of the International Co-operative Alliance, as the Commissioner for operative Development of the Government of Sri Lanka, and as a Co-operator of distinction for his firm conviction in the Principles of Co-operation and devotion to the cause of Propagation of true and genuine co-operatives"

Subsequent to the Opening Ceremony at the BMICH, a Co-operative Trade Exhibition was inaugurated by Hon. Weerasinghe Mallimaratchi, Minister of Food, Co-operatives, and Janasaviya at the Taj Samundra Hotel. A wide variety of products and services were displayed by Apex co-operative organizations in Sri Lanka.

The Conference convened its session at the Crystal Room of the Taj Samundra Hotel. Mr. Weerasinghe Mallimaratchi, Minister of Co-operatives, Food and Janasaviya of Sri Lanka was unanimously elected as Chairperson of the Conference. After adoption of the formal agenda and clarification about the methodology of the Conference, the ministers, co-operative delegates and representatives from international organizations made their respective STATEMENTS.

Four Background Papers were presented in chronological order, first by Dr. R.C. Dwivedi on the topic of "Government-Cooperative Relationship", secondly by Mr. Robby Tulus on the topic of "Co-operative Competitive Strength: positioning co-operatives in the market-oriented economy", thirdly by Mr. G.K. Sharma on the topic of "Regional Coordination", and the fourth one by Mr. Bruce Thordarson on "Support from the Asia Pacific Region on the United Nations Secretary General's report to the U.N. General Assembly in 1994". Mr. Lars Marcus presented the topic on "Global Co-operative Trends, Basic Values and co-operative Principles", and Mr. Bruce Thordarson on "Strengthening genuine co-operatives worldwide - the role of the ICA and its collaboration with other international organizations and development partners"

Conference Drafting Committee

A Drafting Committee was proposed by the Chair and unanimously elected. Members of the Committee were as follows:

(a) Committee Members

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1. | Dr. Wagiono Ismangil | (Indonesia) | Chairperson |
| 2. | Ms. Teresita de Leon | (Philippines) | Secretary |
| 3. | Mr. TPGN Leelaratne | (Sri Lanka) | Member |
| 4. | Mr. R.C. Dwivedi | (India) | Member |
| 5. | Mr. Tahar Sudin | (Malaysia) | Member |
| 6. | Mr. A.P. Sharma | (Fiji) | Member |
| 7. | Mr. Yong Jin Kim | (Korea) | Member |

(b) Resource Facilitators:

1. Mr. G.K. Sharma (ICA ROAP)
2. Mr. Robby Tulus (ICA ROAP)
3. Mr. Daman Prakash (ICA ROAP)

The following Conclusions and Recommendations are adopted by the Conference:

COLOMBO DECLARATION

The Third Cooperative Ministers Conference held in Colombo from 26th to 30th July, 1994 adopts the following statements to be called 'the Colombo Declaration'.

"The Cooperative Sector is as important and imperative as public and private sectors in its contribution to the socio-economic well being of the people -- especially in view of rapid and drastic changes in the environment arising from deregulation, privatisation, marketization, and globalization of the economies in the Asia Pacific Countries -- in as much as the Cooperative Sector basically encourages initiatives and popular participation of people (peoplization), democratization, ensuring at the same time social justice and economic decentralisation".

"The Governments and Cooperatives shall take administrative, legislative, organizational, structural and operational measures to ensure economic viability and competitiveness of cooperatives".

"While effecting organizational renewal in the cooperatives, the preservation of cooperative character, basic values and principles shall be ensured".

"Human resources development shall get the highest priority for achieving qualitative improvement in the working of cooperatives".

"The Governments shall continue providing assistance, particularly, to cooperatives of people with small means".

"In view of the positive impact of the last two Cooperative Ministers conferences, the Cooperative Ministers of the Asia Pacific Region shall continue meeting periodically to review the progress and problems of cooperatives in the region".

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the above Declaration, the Third Conference of Ministers In-Charge of Cooperatives and Cooperative Leaders in the Asia-Pacific Region, held at Colombo in 26-30 July 1994, adopts the Conclusions and Recommendations, on the following broad issues:

- i. Government-Cooperative Relationship,
- ii. Cooperatives in the Market-oriented economies,
- iii. Regional Coordination and Future Ministers' Conferences,
- iv. International Cooperation.

1. GOVERNMENT-COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP

The Conference :

1.1 Appreciates the follow-up action taken by both Governments and Cooperative Movements in various countries in the region towards amending the cooperative laws and related policies in the light of the Sydney and Jakarta Ministers Conferences; the Conference, however, suggests that the implementation of the recommendations of the Sydney and Jakarta Conferences be accelerated in view of the rapid changes currently taking place in the global economy which are affecting the economy in various countries.

1.2 Recognizes the continuing need for government support in building an environment conducive to the growth of cooperatives. It recommends that this be done through reforms in the economic, and financial policies to include favourable tax treatment for cooperatives, de-politisation of cooperatives, and establishment of consultative mechanisms between the government and the movement to allow greater autonomy for cooperatives in decision making.

1.3 Affirms the importance and relevance of cooperatives in the changing national economic environment in the interest of the weaker sections and other disadvantaged groups in society.

1.4 Proposes that governments formulate policies that can recognize and strengthen cooperatives as a specific third sector in economic development along with private and public sectors and thereby enhance the public image of cooperatives.

1.5 Recognizes that the rehabilitation of weak cooperatives as a result of greater autonomy is the responsibility of the movement, however, government assistance could be sought when necessary.

1.6 Acknowledges the need to promote and preserve the people's faith and confidence in the cooperative philosophy, ideals, and capacities to meet their needs, thereby enhancing members loyalty and participation in the cooperative affairs.

1.7 Believes that the vertical and horizontal integration of cooperatives should be strengthened to foster greater cohesion of the cooperative movement. Being composed of autonomous organisations, however, the movement should be allowed to decide on matters relating to such an integration.

1.8 Re-affirms the necessity of a relevant and dynamic human resource development programme for the continuing growth of cooperatives. In this connection, technical and other assistance to study and strengthen potential centres of excellence in existing cooperative education and training institutions in the Asia-Pacific region should be sought.

1.9 Upholds the need for cooperatives to become more responsive to the aspirations of their constituencies and continue to do so through democratic processes.

1.10 Cooperative elections, audit, education and training should, as far as possible, be undertaken by the cooperatives themselves. The governments, however, may continue to extend assistance for audit, education, and training. Towards this end, the government may consider financial assistance in strengthening the management capacities of the cooperatives.

1.11 Recommends that Governments give priority in selling public sector factories and entities to the cooperative sector with easier facilities.

2. COOPERATIVES IN THE MARKET-ORIENTED ECONOMY

The Conference :

2.1 Recommends, in view of the current socio-economic trends and the resulting environment in the Asia-Pacific region, that a strategy formulation for the Year 2000 be undertaken jointly by the government and cooperatives in view of the significant contributions that cooperatives can provide to the caring society.

2.2 Recognizes that globalization of the economy provide opportunities to cooperatives to enter into new and diversified economic fields, providing greater value-added,

2.3 Recognizes the need to develop new patterns of relationship with business partners, including transfer of technology, joint ventures, and strategic alliances, within and outside the respective countries,

2.4 Affirms the need for cooperatives to adopt innovative approaches and to use appropriate technologies with the objective of improving efficiency of operations and the quality of their products and services,

2.5 Affirms the need for cooperatives to build intrapreneurial and professional managerial capabilities as a strategy. Assistance from national and international agencies, be they public, parastatal, or private, which have an interest in working with cooperative, should be tapped,

2.6 Recommends that cooperative business interests should be given recognition by the government in their economic policies.

2.7 Upholds the preservation of the distinct identity of cooperative, its values and principles while competing with private business enterprises, be they national or multinational.

2.8 Noting that considerable progress on structural improvements has been achieved in some countries, the Conference recommends that a specific technical assistance be sought to study successful experiences in organizational adjustments, and formulate a suitable model for the purposes of improving the structure and organization of cooperatives in the Asia-Pacific region.

2.9 To improve capital mobilization and enhance members' confidence in management integrity of finance-related activities of cooperatives, the government could consider suitable regulatory and institutional framework to ensure the safety and soundness of cooperatives. In this regard, the Conference recommends that relevant studies be conducted. Where necessary, financial assistance from bilateral or multilateral aid organization should be sought to develop the above mentioned regulatory and institutional model.

2.10 The ICA ROAP, together with the Canadian Cooperative Association, the Swedish Cooperative Centre, and other development partners, should start making sound policy dialogue with the Asian Development Bank to seek their involvement in co-financing cooperative development activities through technical assistance and study programmes. The Conference notes the need for policy support, especially policies which enhance the image of cooperatives in its entry into the Asian Development Bank and other multi-lateral agencies.

3. REGIONAL COORDINATION AND FUTURE MINISTERS' CONFERENCES

3.1 This Conference endorses the Recommendations of the Kuala Lumpur Consultation, that there is a need to continue this on-going process

through Government-Movement collaboration. For this purpose, it is necessary to set up a proper secretariat facility to support the preparation and follow-up activities. The secretariat will be housed at the ICA ROAP.

3.2 The Conference appreciates the assurance made by the Minister of Food, Cooperatives and Janasaviya, Government of Sri Lanka, to contribute US\$20,000 to help it become a regular Conference.

3.3 The Conference invites the participating Governments, Movements and International Development agencies and partners, to extend support to ICA ROAP in this regard.

4. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

4.1 In an attempt to gain full support from the Asia-Pacific Region on the Secretary General's Report to the United Nations General Assembly in 1994 on the "Status and Role of Cooperatives in the light of new economic and social trends", the Conference recommends that governments from the Asia-Pacific Region will consider to sponsor and support the UN Resolution on the above at their forthcoming General Assembly meeting in the later part of 1994, when the full report of the Secretary-General is received by the Governments.

4.2 The Conference recognizes the need to broaden the basis of cooperative network and cooperation at the international level and would therefore support ICA-Geneva office's proposal to conduct an International Conference of government officials and cooperative leaders during the 1995 ICA Congress in Manchester.

4.3 The Conference recognizes the importance of the 1995 UN Social Summit in Copenhagen and the role cooperatives can play in addressing the three core issues of:

- a) Reduction and elimination of widespread poverty;
- b) Productive employment and the reduction of unemployment;
- c) Social integration.

The Conference recommends that ICA request the Secretary General of the United Nations to consider in his report to the Social Summit, the inclusion of the role cooperatives can play in these three core issues.

VOTE OF THANKS

The Conference extends its gratitude to the Government of Sri Lanka, especially the Ministry of Food, Cooperatives and Janasaviya, and the

Cooperative Movement of Sri Lanka, in particular the National Cooperative Council of Sri Lanka, for the warm hospitality and outstanding organization of the Third Cooperative Ministers' Conference.

NOTE OF APPRECIATION

The Conference notes with appreciation the offer of the Government of Thailand to host the Fourth Cooperative Ministers' Conference.

PROGRAMME

Monday, 25th July 1994

- 15.00 - 17.00 : Registration.
Venue: Hotel Taj Samudra, Colombo
- 18.00 : Welcome/Reception
Venue: Hotel Taj Samundra.

Tuesday, 26th July 1994

- 09.15 : Departure for Bandaranaike Memorial Internatiuonal
Conference Hall for Opening Ceremony.
- 09.58 - 11.00 OPENING CEREMONY
- : Lighting of Traditional oil lamp
 - : Cooperative Song
 - : Address by Hon'ble Weerasinghe Mallimaratchi,
Minister of Food, Co-operatives and Janasaviya;
 - : Address by Mr. Lars Marcus, President, International
Co-operative Alliance
 - : Presentation of Award to Mr. P.E. Weeraman;
 - : Inaugural Address by His Excellency D.B. Wijetunga,
President of Democrative Socialist Republic of Sri
Lanka.
 - : Vote of thanks by Mr. G.K. Sharma, Regional Director,
ICA.
- 11.00 : National Anthem
- 11.30 : Tea/Coffee break
- 11.30 - 12.30 : Inauguration of Co-operative Trade Exhibition at
Hotel Taj Samundra.
- 12.30 - 14.00 : Lunch break.
- 14.00 - 14.45 : Working Session-I (Crystal Room, Taj Samudra Hotel)
Chairman: Mr. Lars Marcus, President, ICA
- a) Welcome address by the host movement -
President, National Co-operative Council of Sri
Lanka;

- b) Election of Conference Chairman and Drafting Committee;
 - c) Conference procedures and adoption of Programme Agenda;
 - d) Report from the Secretariat ICA (ROAP).
- 14.45 - 16.00 : Presentation of the Background Papers.
- 16.00 - 16.30 : Nutrition break.
- 17.00 - 17.07 : Working Session - I (contd.)

Wednesday, 27th July 1994

- 09.00 - 09.45 : Working Session-II
Presentation on Topic I - Global Co-operative Trends, Basic Values and Co-operative Principles.
- 09.45 - 10.30 : Country Statements -
Fiji,
India,
Speech by Mr. Vishwanathan
Israel,
Thailand.
- 10.30 - 11.00 : Tea/coffee break.
- 11.00 - 12.30 : Country Statements (Contd.) -
Speech by Mr. H. Eddiwan (ACO)
Iran,
Jordan,
S. Korea,
Kuwait,
Malaysia.
- 12.30 - 14.00 : Lunch
- 14.00 - 17.30 : Country Statements (Contd.) -
Myanmar,
Philippines,
Singapore,
Uzbekistan,
Vietnam,
Mauritius
Bornei
Ghana

Thursday, 28th July

- 09.00 - 09.45 : Working Session-III - Presentation on Topic II - Strengthening Genuine Co-operatives World-wide - the Role of the ICA and its collaboration with other international organisations and partners in cooperative development.
- 09.45 - 10.30 : Country statements (Contd.) -
Sri Lanka,
Presentation by Mr. Ranjith Hettiarachchi
Nepal,
Statement by Mr. Raj Krishna Amitya
Tonga.
- 10.30 - 11.00 : Tea/coffee break.
- 11.00 - 12.30 : Statements by International Organisations
Statement of AARRO by H.E. Kwamena Ahwoi
Statement of ILO
Statement of SAARC
Statement of FAO
Statement of CCA
Statement of SCC
- 12.30 - 14.00 : Lunch
- 14.00 - 14.45 : Statement by International Organisations (contd.)
Statement of SDID
Statement of CICOPA
Statement of SAARCO
- 14.45 - 15.30 : Discussion on Country Statements.
- 15.30 - 16.00 : Tea/coffee break.
- 16.00 - 17.30 : Discussions (Contd.)

Friday, 29 July

- 09.00 - 12.00 : Working Session-IV
- 1) Adoption of Conference conclusions and recommendations.
 - 2) Consideration of venue and dates for the next Conference.
 - 3) Closing of Conference.

12.00 - 13.00 : Lunch break
: Evening free

Saturday, 30 July, 1994

06.00 - 09.00 : Drive to Kandy -
: Field visit
17.00 - 21.00 : Return to Colombo

Sunday, 31 July, 1994

: Departure

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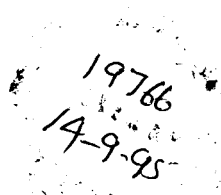
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