



**THE 9TH ASIA-PACIFIC CO-OPERATIVE MINISTERS' CONFERENCE ON
ENABLING CO-OPERATIVE LEGAL AND POLICY ENVIRONMENT
FOR 'SUFFICIENCY ECONOMY'**

**IN ACHIEVING THE GOALS OF THE UNITED NATIONS (UN) INTERNATIONAL
YEAR OF CO-OPERATIVES - 2012**

CONCEPT PAPER

Contribution of Co-operatives in Asia-Pacific

- **Large segments of the population are members of co-operatives.**

The Co-operative Movement brings together over 1 billion people around the world. The United Nations in 1994 estimated that the livelihood of nearly 3 billion people, or half of the world's population, was made secure by co-operative enterprise. These enterprises continue to play significant economic and social roles in their communities.

Founded in 1895, the International Co-operative Alliance is an independent, non-governmental organisation which unites, represents and serves co-operatives worldwide. It is the largest non-governmental organisations in the world. ICA members are national and international co-operative organisations in all sectors of activity including agriculture, banking, fisheries, health, housing, industry, insurance, tourism and consumer co-operatives. Currently, ICA has 269 member organisations from 97 countries, representing approximately 1 billion individuals worldwide.

The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) reached out to Asia and established the regional office in New Delhi, India in 1960. Since then co-operatives as well as ICA in the Asia-Pacific region (ICA-AP) have evolved a great deal and emerged as a major instrument of socio economic progress. At present, the ICA-AP serves more than 550 million co-operative members in 25 countries through 75 co-operative organizations operating in various sectors of economy and business. The co-operative business organizations are great survivors of more than a century. Co-operative enterprises have always emerged as a great force when nothing seemed to work and have pulled through major crisis.

In Asia-Pacific, 45.3 million people are members of a credit union. In Iran, there are over 130,000 co-operative societies with 23 million members or approximately 33% of the population. In Indonesia, 27.5% families representing approximately 80 million individuals are members of co-operatives. In Japan, 1 out of every 3 families is a member of a co-operative. In India, over 239 million people are members of co-operatives. In Malaysia, 6.78 million people or 27% of the total population are members of co-operatives. In Singapore, 50% of the population (1.6 million people) are members of a co-operative. In New Zealand, 40% of the adult population are members of co-operatives and mutuals.



- **Co-operatives are significant economic actors in national economies**

Iran co-operatives contribute 6% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The Japan agricultural co-operatives report outputs of USD 90 billion with 91% of all Japanese farmers are members of co-operatives. Korean agricultural co-operatives have a membership of over 2 million farmers (90% of all farmers), and an output of USD 11 billion. The Korean fishery co-operatives also report a market share of 71%. The Kuwaiti Union of Consumer Co-operative Societies handled nearly 70% of the national retail trade in 2007. In New Zealand, 22% of the gross domestic product (GDP) is generated by co-operative enterprises. Co-operatives are responsible for 95% of the dairy market and 95% of the dairy export. They hold 70% of the meat market, 50% of the farm supply market, 70% of the fertilizer market, 75% of the wholesale pharmaceuticals, and 62% of the grocery market. Singapore consumer co-operatives hold 55% of the market in supermarket purchases. Vietnam co-operatives contribute 8.6% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

- **Co-operatives create and maintain decent employment**

Co-operatives provide over 100 million jobs around the world, 20% more than multinational corporations. For example, in Indonesia, co-operatives provide jobs to 288,589 individuals. In Iran, co-operatives have created and maintain 1.5 million jobs.

- **Co-operatives have faced fierce competition in globalisation and open markets**

However, they have survived in the world economic recession and the financial slowdown. In the recent past, the collapse of major banks etc. drove the corporate sectors to the brink with huge losses and job cuts. However, there have been no reports of drastic adversities, economic conditions or job cuts in the co-operative sector in the world. Co-operatives are the biggest of employers and have major shares in the economy of several countries in the world.

Co-operative Issues in Asia

Notwithstanding the known strengths and contributions of co-operatives to the economy and their proven sustainable business model, it is however a fact that historically co-operative in Asia have largely been the offspring of the respective governments, and in reality many of them have been protected and controlled enough to become high maintenance non-performing assets.

It is also an open secret that the promotion and development of co-operative by the governments are heavily aligned with the agenda of party politics than the motive to empower people through resilient and autonomous co-operative business organizations.

The co-operatives are expected to deliver and at the same time controlled to deliver under certain conditions. In spite of over hundred years of existence in most of the Asian countries, the excesses of support, protection and control of co-operative turned the co-operative into white elephants and put the Governments into a catch 22 situation.

Co-operative leadership on the other hand has enjoyed unbridled powers for long without accountability and maintaining the “status quo” serves their interest the best. In some cases where the co-operative law provides autonomy, the co-operatives have ended up becoming the fiefdom of a few promoters/founders. In the name of pseudo-democracy, the elections are managed and same faces taking up leadership in rotation, and continue enjoying the benefits for years.

The co-operative on their part are so used to be taken care of by the restrictive guardians that by and large, they have lost their identity as self reliant entities. This vicious circle of “co-operative by the

government for the unaccountable leadership of indifferent members” has left the real component- the member- far behind with no sense of belonging to the co-operative.

Even after more than 100 years of co-operative movement, the much has to be changed in the region. Most of the countries in the region are reeling under poverty, food scarcity, unemployment and inhuman living conditions. The co-operative could not help as expected.

Ratio of success in comparison of the huge number of co-operative and membership is astonishingly low. There is something amiss.

The best co-operative practices are confined into pockets. Unprofessional staff and lack of leadership resulted into losses of business and trust of people. The government's policies and legal frame work, political clout and lack of legal protection against oppressive situations have resulted into crisis.

In view of the prevailing situation, it is essential that the governments and federations should provide enabling legal and policy environment to co-operative to realize its full potential as powerful business model for the socio-economic development of the region.

The ICA-AP is well aware of the situation and understands that the success can be achieved only through productive collaboration between governments and co-operative. The government should not only put in place enabling law and policy for operations but also appropriate judicial safeguard against any eventuality. Interestingly, some countries have been able to put in place the best legal system but the members lack capacity to utilize such system for want of awareness and often co-operative fall prey to the greed of democratically elected leadership.

The Co-operative Ministers' Conference

Therefore, in order to address these issues, the ICA-AP introduced the Co-operative Ministers' Conference in 1990 as an instrument to mobilize governments, co-operative leadership and other stake holders for creating enabling legal and policy environment for co-operatives in the region and since then the co-operative ministers' conference is being organized periodically. The 8th Ministers' Conference on Coop Legislation and Policy was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2007. 11 Co-operative Ministers and 314 delegates from governments and co-operative of 21 countries participated. The report of the conference along with Declarations and Recommendations of the Conference has been sent to all concerned.

The United Nations (UN) and International Labour organization (ILO), also acknowledged the importance of healthy relationship between co-operative and governments and recommended for creating supportive environment for development of co-operative.

The ILO recommendation No. 193 on the Promotion of the co-operative was adopted in 2002 and the guidelines aimed at creating a supportive environment for the development of co-operative adopted by the United Nations in 2001. UN Guidelines annexed to the 2001 Report of the United Nations Secretary General provide recommendations on policy regarding co-operative and the co-operative movement including the need for public recognition of co-operatives, appropriate legal, judicial and administrative provisions, research, statistics and information, education on co-operative, the provision of public funds for support to co-operatives and the need for institutional arrangements.

The Legal Environment in and around Asia-Pacific

The Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Co-operative (COPAC) reports about the following Policy and Legislation in Africa, Latin America and Europe.

- **Africa:** ACTE UNIFORME RELATIF AU DROIT DES SOCIETES CO-OPERATIVE:
Adopté le 15 décembre 2010 à Lomé

This Uniform Act is applicable to 16 countries, 14 countries in the CFA zone plus Comores and Guinea Conakry.

- **Latin America:** Framework Law for Co-operative in Latin America-2009

The framework law for co-operative in Latin America is a guide to policy makers on general co-operative law covering all types of co-operative. It contains 102 articles and is organized into chapters, beginning with general provisions, statutes, members, economic set up, social bodies and co-operative integration as well as dissolution and liquidation. The framework also addresses specific chapters, public authorities responsible for the oversight of co-operative as well as co-operative public policy. Originally drafted in 1998, the ICA Americas has updated the framework law. It was endorsed by co-operative in the region in 2008.

Source: International Co-operative Alliance Regional Office for the Americas (ICA Americas).

- **Europe:** The Statute for a European Co-operative Society -2003:European Council (EC)
Regulation No 1435/2003.

This Regulation establishes a legal statute for a European Co-operative Society (SCE). This statute guarantees equal terms of competition between co-operative societies and capital companies. It contributes to the development of the cross-border activities of co-operative societies. permits the creation of a co-operative by persons residing in different European Union Member States or by legal entities established in different EU Member States.

- **Asia-Pacific:**

There is no such uniform legal policy documents/guidelines drafted or agreed upon by the Asia and Pacific Region. The ICA-AP is conducting study on co-operative law and policies of the countries in the region from time to time and the co-operative dialogue are being held periodically. ICA-AP is also organizing national co-operative conferences in the member countries regularly to mobilize the co-operative community and bringing all the stake holders on a platform to discuss the law and other issues. We also facilitate and participate in the process of law making in the member countries. Iran, India, China and Vietnam are some members who have reviewed there law in recent years for making the co-operative more vibrant.

However, unlike the other continents, this region is economically-socially, culturally and politically hugely diverse. Therefore, for better understanding of the co-operative system operations, a deep discussion should be held among the representatives from all the diverse regions such as Pacific, Far East, South East, South and Middle East and an agreeable Code of Practice could be arrived at covering broader fundamental issues such as 1) Democracy, 2) Establishment of Enabling Legal and Policy Environment, and 3) Support by governments with greater accountability on the part of co-operative.

Objectives

- **General**

The general objective of the conference is to bring together Governments, co-operative and other stake holders on a platform to discuss and resolve issues being faced by the co-operatives that prevent this unique business model to realize its full potential.

- **Specific objectives are:**

1. Reiterate the fact that co-operatives are the agents of social cohesion and have great potential for socio-economic development in diversity

2. Facilitate the governments and co-operatives in Asia Pacific countries to integrate resources for developing and implementing enabling legal and policy environment and also introducing the instrument of judiciary for safeguarding the interest of the co-operatives.
3. Facilitate exchange of information and contribute to mainstream co-operative affairs with socio-economic agenda of the governments

- **Expected results**

To arrive at an agreeable “**Uniform Code of Practice**” for the governments and co-operative in the region covering broader fundamental issues such as 1) Democracy, 2) Establishing Enabling Legal and Policy Environment and 3) Support by governments with greater accountability on the part of co-operative.

Goals of the UN International Year of Co-operatives

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2012 as the International Year of Co-operatives, highlighting the contribution of co-operatives to socio-economic development, in particular recognizing their impact on poverty reduction, employment generation and social integration.

[The United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/64/136](#) encourages all member States, the United Nations and all relevant stakeholders to take advantage of the IYC to promote co-operatives and raise awareness of their contribution to social and economic development and promote the formation and growth of co-operatives. The resolution A/RES/64/136 - Proclamation of 2012 as International Year of Co-operatives is available in all UN six official languages

[The United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/65/184](#) Invites all Member States to consider taking action towards establishing national mechanisms, such as national committees, to prepare for, observe and follow up on the International Year of Co-operatives, in particular for the purpose of planning, stimulating and harmonizing the activities of the governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations concerned with the preparations for and observance of the Year.

Goals of the International Year of Co-operatives

- Increase public awareness about co-operatives and their contributions to socio-economic development and the achievement of the [Millennium Development Goals](#).
- Promote the formation and growth of co-operatives
- Encourage Governments to establish policies, laws and regulations conducive to the formation, growth and stability of co-operatives

The Theme of the 9th Asia-Pacific Co-operative Ministers' Conference

A specific theme is recommended to provide the Conference with mission, focus and guidance. The theme “Enabling Co-operative Legal and Policy Environment for Sufficiency Economy” has been suggested as the outcome of the deliberation of the coop dialogue 2010 and suggestions received from the host country, Royal Government of Thailand.

“**Sufficiency Economy**” is the philosophy initiated by His Majesty the King of Thailand since 1974. "It is a philosophy that suggests the guideline for the populace how to lead their life in proper way by means of "moderation, reasonableness and risk management. His Majesty has called upon the countrymen to practice sufficiency economy in their lives to fulfil basic needs and use it as a tool to get through the economic crisis due to globalization and various changes. Such a practice could be used to strengthen the efficiency in running the co-operative businesses.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM (Tentative)

27 February – 1 March, 2012

Theme: Enabling Co-operative Legal and Policy Environment for ‘Sufficiency Economy’ in Achieving the Goals of the UN International Year of Co-operatives-2012

26 February (Sun) - Day 0

Arrival of Honourable Ministers, Co-operative Leaders and International Delegates

14:00 – 18:00 Registration of Participants

27 February (Mon) - Day 1

09:00 – 10:00 Inauguration of the Conference

- Welcome Address: Honourable Minister Theera Wongsamut, Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives, Kingdom of Thailand
- Appreciation: Mr. Li Chunsheng, Vice President of the ICA for Asia- Pacific
- Special Address: Dame Pauline Green, President of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA)
- Inaugural Address: Her Excellency Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand (to be confirmed)

10:00 – 10:30 Key-note Speech

- Keynote Speech on the Theme of ‘Sufficiency Economy and Co-operatives’ - by Mr. Somchai Charnnarongkul, Director General of Co-operative Promotion Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives, Thailand

10:30 – 10:50 Tea/Coffee Break

10:50 – 11:30 Statutory Proceedings

(Agenda)

1. Election of Conference Chairperson(s)
2. Adoption of Rules and Procedures
3. Election of Drafting Committee for the Joint Declaration & Recommendation
4. Report on the Conference: Dr. Chan Ho Choi, ICA Regional Director
5. Award Presentation to Mr. Shil-Kwan Lee, former Regional Director of ICA Asia-Pacific
6. Presentation of the Preliminary Draft Joint Declaration

11:30 – 12:30 Speeches by International Agencies

- Mr. Charles Gould, Director General of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) on “Vision and Activities of ICA in the UN International Year of Co-operative”
- ILO – “How to Achieve the Objectives of the UN International Year of Co-operatives”
- FAO – “Relevance of Co-operative Institution for Agricultural Development and Social Inclusion”

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 18:00 Ministers' Statements and Co-operative Stories - Session 1

- Statements by Honourable Ministers on 'Enabling Legal and Policy Environment for the Formation and Growth of Co-operatives'
 - Presentation of Success Stories by Co-operatives - (15 minutes each)
 - Speakers will be confirmed –
1. Statement by Honourable Minister Mr. Michihiko KANO, Ministry of agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan (to be confirmed)
 2. Statement by Ms. Yoko Komiyama, Honourable Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan
 3. Statement by Honourable Minister Mr. Tunjin Badamjunai, Minister of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry of Mongolia , Mongolia
 4. Presentation of Success Story by the National Association of Mongolian Agricultural Co-operatives (NAMAC) on “the Ur Jims Co-operative - “Co-operative Enterprises Empower Women”
 5. Statement by Honourable Minister Mr. Sharad Pawar, Union Minister for Agriculture and Co-operation, India
 6. Presentation of Success Story by the National Co-operative Union of India (NCUI) on the Indian Farm Forestry Development Co-operative (IFFDC)

(15:30 – 15:50 Tea/ Coffee Break)

7. Honorable Minister Dr. Rashid Ahmed Bin Fahad, Minister of Environment and Water, United Arab Emirates
8. Honourable Minister Mr. Chan Sarun, Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, Cambodia
9. Statement by Honourable Minister Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, Minister for Justice, Anti-Corruption, Public Enterprises, Civil Aviation, Industry & Trade, Tourism and Communication, Government of Fiji
10. Presentation by Mr. Chan Tee Seng, Chairman of the Singapore National Co-operative Federation Ltd. (SNCF) on “Innovative Media Uses in Promoting Co-operative Movement in Singapore”
11. Statement by Mr. Yang Berhomat Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Utama Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Yahya Bin Begawan Mudim Dato Paduka Haji Bakar, Hon'ble Minister of Industry & Primary Resources, Brunei
12. Presentation by Mr. Ramsey Margolis, Executive Director of the New Zealand Co-operatives Association (NZCA) on “ Co-operatives and Mutual in New Zealand”
13. Presentation by Mr. Zeev Shor, Director-General of the Kibbutz Movement, Israel on “Youngsters Volunteer Program”

17:35 – 18:00 Open Forum - (25 minutes)

19:00 – Welcome Dinner Hosted by the Royal Thai Government

28 February (Tue) - Day 2

09:00 – 09:30 Presentation : “The 4th Critical Study on Co-operative Legislation and Policy Reforms” by Mr. Rangan Dutta, Sr. Consultant, ICA-AP

09:30 – 12:30 Ministers' Statement and Co-operative Stories - Session 2

14. Statement by Honourable Minister Mr. Chen Deming, Minister for Commerce, China
15. Presentation by the All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Co-operatives (ACFSMC) on the 'Circular Economy Business'
16. Statement by Honorable Minister Nandan Kumar Datta, Minister of Agriculture and Co-operatives (MOAC), Nepal
17. Statement by Honourable Minister Theera Wongsamut, Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives, Kingdom of Thailand

(10:30 – 10:50 Tea/ Coffee Break)

18. Presentation of Success Story by the Co-operative League of Thailand (CLT) on 'Bio-energy Jatropha Co-operatives in Thailand'
19. Statement by Honourable Mr. Suh Kyu Yong, Minister of Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MFAFF), Republic of Korea
20. Presentation of Success Story by Ms. Oh Mi-Yeh, Chairperson of the iCoop Korea on "Consumer Co-operatives build Organic Farm Clusters in Korea"
21. Statement by Honourable Minister Syarifuddin Hasan, SE, MM, MBA, Ministry of Co-operatives & SMEs, Indonesia
22. Statement by Honorable Syed Asrafur Islam, Minister for local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives, Bangladesh

12:05 – 12:30 Open Forum - (25 minutes)

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 18:00 Ministers' Statements and Co-operative Stories - Session 3

23. Statement of Honorable Minister Mr. Omar Noh, Ministry of Entrepreneur & Co-operative Development, Malaysia
24. Presentation by Mr. Hj. Idris Ismail, Chief Director the Co-operative College of Malaysia on "Co-operative Training and Education in Malaysia"
25. Presentation of Success Story by Mr. Emmanuel M. Santiaguel, Chairman of the Co-operative Development Authority (CDA), on "Agrarian Reform Beneficiary Co-operatives in Mindanao, Philippines"
26. Presentation of Success Story on the Abuyog St. Francis Xavier Credit Co-operative (AFCCO), Philippines
27. Presentation by Tony Gill, Director, Co-operative Development Services Ltd. Australia

(15:30 – 15:50 Tea/ Coffee Break)

28. Statement by Honorable Minister Reza Sheykholeslam, Ministry of Co-operatives, Labor and Social Welfare, Islamic Republic of Iran
29. Presentation of Success Story of the Iran Oilseeds & Vegetable Oil Processing Co-operative (OVOPC)
30. Statement by Honorable Secretary Sunil S. Sirisena, Ministry of Co-operatives & Internal Trade, Sri Lanka
31. Presentation of Success Story by the National Co-operative Council of Sri Lanka (NCC) on "Youth and Women Empowerment by Co-operatives"
32. Statement by Mr. Cao Duc Phat, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, (in-charge Co-operative Development), Government of Vietnam

33. Presentation of Success Story of the “Rach Gam Co-operative in Serving Transportations in Vietnam” by the Vietnam Co-operative Alliance (VCA)

17:35 – 18:00 Open Forum - (25 minutes)

29 February (Wed) - Day 3

09:00 – 10:45 Ministers' Statements and Co-operative Stories - Session 4

(to be confirmed)

34. Statement by Honourable Minister Asif Rahimi, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation & Livestock, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

35. Statement by Honourable Minister Lyonpo Dr. Pema Gyamtsho of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Royal Government of Bhutan

36. Presentation by the Union of Consumer Societies of the Republic of Kazakhstan (UCSK), Kazakhstan

37. Statement by Honourable Minister Mohammed Al-Afasi, Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, Government of Kuwait

38. Statement by H.E. Sitaheng Rasphone, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Government of Laos

39. Statement by Honourable Minister Mr. U Ohn Mint, Ministry of Co-operatives, Myanmar

40. Presentation of Success Story by the Karachi Co-operative Housing Societies Union Ltd., Pakistan

(10:45 – 11:00 Tea/ Coffee Break)

11:00 – 12:30 Concluding Session

- Report of the Drafting Committee
- Adoption of the report of the conference
- Adoption of the Joint Declaration and Recommendation
- Closing and Vote of thanks

1st March (Thu) - Day 4

Field Visits organised by Co-operative Promotion Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives, Thailand to co-operatives in Petchaburi Province.

2nd March (Fri) - Departure

VENUE & HOTEL

Ministers' Conference Organizers

The Conference has been organized by the ICA-Asia and Pacific in collaboration with member organizations. The Co-operative Promotion Department (CPD) of Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives (MOAC), Kingdom of Thailand has kindly agreed to host the conference.

Venue of the Ministers' Conference



United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), Rajdamnern-Nok Avenue, Bangkok 10200, Thailand: <http://www.unescap.org/uncc>

Hotels

The following hotels have been engaged with special rates for the stay of the Delegates/ Participants of the Conference. The Delegates /Participants can directly make room reservations online.

1. Siam Kempinski Hotel

991/9 Rama 1 Rd., Bangkok 10330, Thailand
Tel: 662-162 9000 Fax: 662-162 9009



Website: www.kempinski.com/bangkok
Reservations surporn.pirom@kempinski.com

2. Four Seasons Hotel

155 Rajadamri Rd., Bangkok 10330, Thailand
Tel: 662-126 8866 Fax: 662-253 9195



Website: www.fourseasons.com/bangkok
Reservation: sarochinee.napawong@fourseasons.com



3. Siam City Hotel

477 Si Ayutthaya Rd., Pathumwan, Bangkok
10330, Thailand
Tel: 662-247 0123 Fax: 662-247 0165



Website: www.siamhotels.com
Reservation : sadanith@siamhotels.com

4. Royal Princess

269 Larn Luang Rd., Pomprab, Bangkok 10110,
Thailand
Tel: 662-281 3088 Fax: 662-280 1314



Website: RoyalPrincessLarnLuang.com
Reservation : benjarat@royalprincessslarnluang.com

The Official Website of the 9th Ministers' Conference

It also gives all the relevant information on registration and booking of the hotels: <http://www.cpd.go.th/cpd/cmconference/>.

Participants and Observers

The Co-operative Ministers of the Asia-Pacific countries, Senior Government officials, International Agencies, Stakeholders, Leaders of the co-operative movements and observers from all ICA member countries in the Region.

Contact Persons:

In case you have any query or enquiry to make, please feel free to contact,

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Encl: Conference Registration Form