

The 10th Asia – Pacific Co-operative Ministers' Conference

Opening Speech

By

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Honorable Co-operative Ministers in Asia and the Pacific Region;

Chief Administrators of the International Co-operative Alliance;

Chief Administrators of the Asia-Pacific Co-operative Movements;

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me a great pleasure and honor to be with all of you today at this

important conference, the Tenth Asia-Pacific Co-operative Ministers' Conference. On behalf of ICA-Asia and Pacific, let me extend warm congratulations on the opening of this conference and give my hearty welcome to all participants coming from afar.

Just as spring marks the beginning of a new year, this conference arrives just at the right time to give us a chance to “pick ourselves up”, “dust ourselves off” and renew the commitment of opening up a new vision for our shared co-operative movement.

Since the modern co-operative society took shape in northern England back more than a century ago, co-operatives have remained dynamic not only on the economic front but also in areas that show concern for social and human development. Statistics are ample to reveal the significance of co-operatives in generating capitals, creating employment and contributing to a sustainable society.

These are also highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations. And as organizations that generate remarkable revenue and involve huge populations, co-operatives stand ready to make more contributions to a more sustainable world.

In the Asia-Pacific Region, co-operative methods of self-help and

mutual help have already proved of its usefulness in various circumstances even during the time of crisis. There is the consensus among governments that the prime task is to develop the co-operatives. For co-operatives, the uniting voice is that strong and strategic partnership with respective governments is essential for further advancement. And that is why APCMC matters so much for everyone present here today -- it is the platform that brings co-operatives and governments to the same table and enables us to pool our wisdom for the issues that are mutually concerned.

Speaking of this, I would like you to join me in reflecting on the theme of this year's Conference "Visioning Ahead to 2030: Promoting Stronger Partnerships Between Governments and Co-operative Stakeholders in Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals". It calls for more efforts to be made to strengthen the ties between co-operatives and governments. The notion of realizing SDGs suggests that co-operatives in the Asia-Pacific Region today should depart from the old thinking of region-based development; a more sustainable and mutually beneficial way of development calls for wider view, a global vision.

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

With this being the trend, we are pleased to see that countries in our Region have made efforts to be an impetus for greater connectivity and integration within the region. Some of them even look beyond the region and pursue partnership with wider coverage across various sectors. And with this being the solid foundation, co-operatives really have to keep up with the pace of the times, dig into our local wisdom and fundamental beliefs, and question ourselves to arrive at a genuine understanding of what sustainable development of co-operatives is and how we can achieve it, collectively and individually. In this regard, I do believe that if we are together we can make it.

It is also my hope that this Conference will help to advance our search for proper policies and legislation that will enhance contributions to sustainable development of co-operatives within the region of Asia and the Pacific. In this connection, we certainly need not only to look back to traditional wisdom; we have to invest our trust in a forward-looking and creative new generation which dares to face up to the challenges of our time.

With that in mind, I look forward to hearing the results of your deliberations. I wish you a productive meeting, and an enjoyable stay in

Vietnam.

In closing my remarks, I would like to express my sincere thank and appreciation to the the Vietnam Co-operative Alliance as well as the Ministry of Planning and Investment of Vietnam for your great efforts to organize this conference.

I hope you find it rewarding and fill your stay in Hanoi with fond memories, not only of the city of Hanoi but also of the friendliness and the warm welcome of the Vietnamese people.

Thank you.