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## **The Role of Co-operatives in Sustaining Development and Fostering Social Responsibility**

### *Call for Papers*

The Chair of the ICA Committee on Co-operative Research, Lou Hammond Ketilson, is pleased to announce that the 2008 ICA Research Conference will take place in Riva del Garda (Trento, Italy) on October 16, 17, and 18.

### **The Themes**

All topics related to the study of co-operatives are welcomed. However, the Conference will mainly focus on four themes:

- 1) Recent contributions of human sciences in understanding and explaining co-operatives
- 2) The role of co-operatives in developing and transforming countries
- 3) Co-operative and social enterprise concern for the community: the emergence of new fields of activity
- 4) Co-operative social responsibility and social accounting

### **1) Recent contributions of human sciences in understanding and explaining co-operatives**

Various theoretical approaches have been developed by human sciences to understand the roles displayed by co-operatives and social enterprises. This debate has recently lost some of its original vitality. The aim of this conference is to re-launch the international discussion according to a wider framework that includes contributions from various disciplines, including among others: economics; sociology; political science; history.

### **2) The role displayed by co-operatives in developing and transforming countries: challenges and perspectives**

Historically, co-operatives have played an important role in creating solidarity and self-help in the interest of the most disadvantaged stakeholders. Hence, the relevance of co-operative enterprises especially in contexts characterized by crucial economic and social problems that other actors fail to tackle in an efficient and effective manner.

We are particularly interested in contributions that focus on the following issues:

- What are the main drivers of co-operative development in the transformation and development of countries (i.e. market failures; poverty; lack of public services; high unemployment rates; lack of human and social capital etc.)?

- Are there any specific economic sectors where co-operatives are experiencing a revitalization in the transformation and development of countries?
- What are the main barriers and challenges for co-operative and social enterprise development in developing and transforming countries?

### **3) Co-operative and social enterprise concern for the community: the emergence of new fields of activity**

Co-operatives are increasingly engaged in the production of services addressed to the community at large, rather than being aimed at promoting the interests of a specific category of stakeholders.

Contributions should specifically focus on the current evolution undergone by co-operatives with special regard to the following issues:

- How has the role of co-operatives and social enterprises increased in the supply of high public interest goods and services?
- What is the role of co-operatives and social enterprises in supporting local development
- How can we sustain the development of new co-operative forms apt to design and deliver goods and services for the community?
- Has the role of co-operatives as producers of social and community services been acknowledged by public policies?

### **4) Co-operative social responsibility and social accounting**

The topic of CSR has been embraced primarily by share-holder companies in search of legitimization within the community. Despite the intrinsic concern for the community held by co-operative enterprises, this issue has been so far overlooked at both a theoretical and practical level. Against the background of re-launching co-operative social responsibility, the ICA has decided to dedicate to this important topic the 2007 International Day of Co-operatives.

Contributions should explore one of the following issues:

- What is the specificity of CSR for co-operative enterprises?
- What have been the main developments of co-operative social auditing and accounting (theories and practices)?
- To what extent are CSR practices implemented by co-operatives and social enterprises?
- How can we institutionalize and disseminate co-operative social responsibility?

This list of themes is not exhaustive. Submissions that analyze other topical issues concerning co-operatives are also welcomed.

The title of the communications and abstracts in English should be submitted (by e-mail only) no later than March 31 2008, to the following address: [ica2008@issan.info](mailto:ica2008@issan.info).

All abstracts should be prepared in A4 MS Word format (Times New Roman, Size 12 font, single-spaced) and ideally be no more than 500 words in length. Author(s) full title, name, address, organization and email address should be included at the end of the abstract.

Scholarships are available for presenters coming from developing and transforming countries.

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