

ICA GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

CARTAGENA 20 SEPTEMBER 2005

TICA PRESENTATION BY ITS CHAIRPERSON MAURIZIO DAVOLIO

- TICA (International Association of Tourism Co-operatives) is a Network of about 80 co-operatives operating in Europe, Asia and the Americas. The membership base is diverse given the difference in size of the co-operatives and the type of activity they are involved in. The common denominator is their co-operative structure or that they are owned by co-operatives (mostly by consumer or agriculture co-operatives). There is, therefore, a wealth of variation in the membership panorama but as a whole the group identity is rather weak and not particularly representative at an international level.
- Participation in the Network is free of charge. The expenses incurred by the Coordinator (myself) are entirely covered by Legacoop of which the Coordinator is the tourism manager. Members are included in a data base and in a mailing list and are allowed to use the TICA name and logo. The membership activity is quite limited and consists of my sending out information and invitations and responding to queries and proposals. We have confirmed through experience that it is very difficult to organise meetings for TICA Network members. Distances and costs are prohibitive and, furthermore, most tourism co-operatives are sellers, not buyers: the travel agencies are retailers, not tour operators, and are therefore not buyers – this makes business exchange amongst members highly improbable.
- We are, however, able to offer a certain amount of activity to the members through BITS: TICA has a strong partnership with BITS (Bureau International du Tourisme Social), based on common values, principles and goals. The boundary between co-operatives and non-profit organisations that have business concerns is in fact blurred – in both cases the activity does not have profit as an objective, the participation of members is free and democratic, they are independent of public bodies and political parties and both are concerned with local communities and the territory in which their activities are developed.
- BITS is the international association of social (or associative) tourism; membership is open to all non-profit organisations, including co-operatives. ICA President Ivano Barberini took part in the last BITS Congress held in Blankenberge, Belgium, and his participation and his speech confirmed the collaboration between the co-operative movement and the world of

non-profit associations in the field of tourism. Three levels of fees exist for members, from 500 to 1.500 Euros, according to the size of the member organisations. BITS, together with TICA and IAST (International Association of Social Tourism) organises meetings, conventions, Forums (the last ones held in Poland, Sofia and Budapest) and commercial workshops every year; TICA members are also invited to participate in all BITS initiatives; TICA members who are also BITS members may enjoy further opportunities: inclusion in the BITS web site and in the “Who is Who” Directory; receiving the BITS electronic newsletter BITS Info; participating in the BITS working groups (youth tourism, networking, fair tourism) and regional structures (BITS America, CETS - European Commission of Social Tourism, and the recently created BITS Africa); use of BITS name and logo; free subscription to the magazine Social Tourism International; the possibility of participating in research projects, studies and missions. BITS is a member of the World Tourism Organisation which recently became an United Nations’ official organisation. BITS Secretary General Jean Blétard is a member of the Board of WTO, and BITS President, Norberto Tonini, is a member of the Commission on Ethics; through BITS therefore, TICA has the opportunity to expand its international relations and acquire visibility. BITS is not a large organisation either and its initiatives are boosted when organised in conjunction with TICA and IAST – i.e. there is strength in numbers!

- TICA is also necessary to BITS not only due to the loan granted in 1997 amounting to 54.536 Euro (BITS pays ICA an annual 4% interest) but also because TICA is present in Asia where BITS has no associates.
- In accordance with the partnership agreement signed by BITS and TICA, the Chairperson (or Coordinator) of TICA is entitled to a place on the BITS Board of Directors and on the Executive Committee; a second representative of TICA is also a member of the BITS Board (Faruk Pekin, Fest Travel Turkey). In addition, the TICA Coordinator at present chairs the working group on fair tourism whose first meeting was held some days ago in conjunction with the BITS Board meeting in Brussels.
- If the TICA Network were to develop, it would require the commitment of the ICA regional offices: each regional office would have to decide whether to set up TICA cells or chapters in their continent; it may be opportune to identify geographical zones such as the Central America and Caribbean, the ASEAN countries, the European Union area.
- ICA might also play a very relevant role: relations with other co-operatives are of fundamental importance; it is essential to bear in mind the vast and significant phenomenon

of diversification of activity in the field of tourism as represented by numerous co-operatives belonging to sectors that include consumers, agriculture, banks and financial services, insurance, the fishing trade, etc.; many companies involved in tourism are owned by co-operatives whose core business is in unrelated sectors.

- As regards the recovery of the loan made to BITS, I propose that the repayment instalments received by ICA over time could be paid into a “tourism fund” which would be put at the disposal of TICA in the event of its being re-established as an Association. It would be, furthermore, be very satisfactory for me at a personal level to be able to leave the same financial resources at the disposal of my successors as when I was first elected.
- At present I feel that the Network should be maintained; it is a lightweight organisation with very low running costs but which has a certain degree of visibility and offers a certain number of services as well as offering the opportunities resulting from the collaboration with BITS and other on-going contacts.

#### PROPOSALS FROM THE MEETING:

- Setting up a permanent working group, whose first meeting will be held in Portugal, probably on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2005; all TICA Network members will be invited to participate; a second meeting might be planned in Sri Lanka in September 2006, in occasion of the Regional Assembly of ICA Asia and Pacific;
- Specific thematic groups will be created within TICA: Ecotourism, Support to countries affected by tsunami, Safety in tourism etc.;
- Implementation and updating of ICA website pages dedicated to TICA and tourism; all TICA Network participants will be invited to become TICA members formally (although no membership fee is at present requested) and to send their profile to be added to the website and to link to ICA website;
- ICA will be asked to get in touch with UNWTO in order to sign an agreement as with other UN agencies (ILO, FAO) or, at least, to gain recognition in some way;
- ICA Regional Offices are invited to take into consideration the opportunity of setting up local TICA chapters;

- Furthermore, in collaboration with BITS; Asian co-operatives will be involved with the purpose of setting up BITS Asia, and African co-operatives will be invited to join the recently created BITS Africa;
- Contacts with the other ICA sectoral organisations in order to offer a “second home” to co-operatives that are diversifying their activity in the field of tourism