## Speech points - Alliance International Board Gala Dinner - Sydney, AU - 2/3/2016

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Co-operators.

Madam Treasurer.

**Thanks and welcome**

* I am honoured to join you tonight at Sydney’s beautiful Opera House. My compliments to Mr Greg Wall, to the Australian movement and to the Australian Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals for providing this magnificent venue. Thank you, dear members of the BCCM who have sponsored tables and welcomed us as your guests tonight.
* I am pleased to welcome the treasurer of New South Wales, Mrs Gladys Berejikilan, Canadian Consul General, and Graham Putt from Austrade and I look forward to discussing trade and investment opportunities with you.
* Tonight is a landmark for the Alliance. We are glad to meet for the first time in our history with Australian co-operators for an evening of high-level networking.
* We can do much when we come together to collaborate as your new national business council initiative is showing, and we are impressed by your progress.

We welcome the opportunity tomorrow to speak to the Federal Government about the role of co-operatives in agricultural development and food security in Asia-Pacific.

**About the Alliance**

* The International Co-operative Alliance was founded in 1895. We are a non profit organisation. The Alliance is the global voice of co-operatives and mutuals and the custodian of the co-operative principles.
* We are truly international - the Directors of the global board represent these nations in the room tonight : China, Canada, Mexico, Germany, Brazil, Japan, Korea, Bulgaria, Finland, Singapore, Sweden, USA, India, France, Italy, Russia, Kenya, DR Congo and Australia.
* The Alliance today represents co-operative enterprises and mutuals in 100 countries. We are organised with four regions and eight sectors.
* Banking, insurance, retail, agriculture, fisheries, housing, health and worker co-operatives.
* The Alliance represents 2.6 million co-operatives, or 1 billion individuals across the world.
* The 300 largest co-operatives in the world have combined annual revenues of USD 2.4 trillion. This impressive figure puts the co-operative economy at the same level as the 7th largest GDP in the world, the country of Brazil.
* Co-operatives are the main source of income for 250 million people. We provide employment to 12% of the G20 work force.
* Since 2007, mutual insurers have grown their premium income by an impressive 31%, where market growth is 13%.
* We congratulate ourselves on a global growth figure between 5% and 10%.

**The Alliance: a lever for business**

* We welcomed over 1000 visitors at our global conference in Antalya, in Turkey, last November. I asked delegates and business visitors for their impressions and one remark kept returning!
* They were impressed by how spontaneously co-operatives from all over the world connected. A sense of trust prevailed throughout the conference. Many returned to their countries with agreements in progress.
* I want to especially acknowledge the work of Andrew Crane, whom I congratulate to be the first co-operative leader to join the B20.
* We have stepped up our engagement, attending B20 talks in Turkey last year, and this year in China. The Alliance is a growing voice for co-operatives at the top tables – G20, WEF- Davos, COP21, and the UN.

**Australia**

* Australians have relied on co-operatives since before the founding of the Alliance. Australian Unity, Australia’s oldest co-op, was founded in 1840. They preceeded the Alliance by half a century !
* Australian co-operatives are doing well. Income has grown by an impressive 14% between 2012 and 2014.
* 8 in 10 Australians are a member of at least one co-operative or mutual.

Australian co-ops represent a combined 14.8 million memberships. For every $1 spent in an Australian co-operative, 76c is returned to the Australian economy.

* Australia sits in the Asia-Pacific region. A large and growing middle class market is driving a shift in this region. We are moving from a ‘mining boom’ to a ‘dining boom’. Domestically growth is in shared services, health insurance and motoring services.
* Co-operatives are poised to take advantage of this boom. Domestic agricultural champions can help do this. They can add to the local, Australian economy, by their ownership structure.
* Co-ops could grow more, with regulation which understands the specific structure of coops as associations of people teaming up to make a living, not for the stock market.
* A federal government inquiry on co-operative reforms is under way. I congratulate the Australian government for a readiness to engage in reforms to put co-operatives and mutuals on an equal footing with other forms of business in terms of regulatory and legislative settings.
* Tonight is a grand opportunity to capitalize on our joint heritage and our shared co-operative identity!

**What co-operatives do for domestic economy**

* The world is facing many challenges: financial volatility, low growth, shifts in sectors, energy resource depletion, employment shortage, and climate change and growing inequality
* The co-operative model is an answer to these challenges! We not only create growth, we also make the economy more resilient.
* Co-ops provide stability, and connect people through doing business. Co-operatives are a hybrid form of business connecting commerce and people.
* During the global crisis financial co-operatives have remained financially sound. Consumer co-operatives reported increased turnover. Worker co-operatives grew as people created co-operatives to respond to new economic realities.

**Our model scales well in global markets and challenging times**

* Co-ops return more value from the supply chain to members. This why we will educate about the long term impacts of demutualisation and advocate for the benefits of retaining member ownership of our businesses.
* Our business efficiency is exemplary. Our capacity to grow and scale is proven. We have a track record of investing in infrastructure to scale and compete in global markets.

	+ In the US, 12% of energy is supplied to 42 million customers through electricity co-ops;
	+ Desjardin is the largest private sector employer in Quebec;
	+ Co-operative banks have a third of the banking market in Germany;
	+ 30% of global agricultural is co-operatively owned.
* We make economies work better by improving competition.
* We stand for fair and transparent pricing.
* We reinvestment in the economy,
* We do not suffer market volatility because we are not listed.
* We prevent economic desertification in remote territories
* We keep profits local as national businesses – good for the nation, members, growers, producers and customers.
* All this will make co-ops the fastest growing form of enterprise by 2020!

**My pledge as a new president**

* As the Alliance’s new president, I intend to spare no efforts to bolster business between Alliance members.
* I will put my passion and my experience at the service of the Alliance, so that we can together realise our ambitions.
* We will step up our presence on the International stage. We will lead with our co-operative identity and show how we build social responsibility and sustainable development.

**Co-operatives are a partner to the United Nations**

* The Opera house is a UNESCO world heritage site since 2007. The sails of the Opera House are iconic. It is fitting to hold this meeting about our iconic model of business in this beautiful setting.
* The United Nations, to which the Alliance is a long standing partner, in this way is a patron to and protects distinguished achievements of humanity.
* Co-operatives are a similar achievement of mankind.
* Co-operatives are recognized by the UN as a model that humanity needs to live, and to live well.
* This special regard for co-operatives is what we at the Alliance have endeavoured for, which have achieved, and which we expand in new global for a such as the Business 20, and the World Economic Forum, and with partners such as the International Monetary Fund and The World Bank.

**Closing – meet more often – see you at the summit**

* Ladies and Gentlemen, the greatest opportunity of the co-operative movement is to do business globally.
* We need to speak and to see each other often.
* I cordially invite you to the International Summit of Co-operatives, coming 11 to 13 October in Quebec, Canada.

The theme of the summit is Co-operatives: the Power to Act.
* The summit is a forum for co-operative business leaders and governments:
* Who want to act!
* Who want to meet, to cross ideas and to show how much strength co-operatives and mutuals wield when it comes to helping solve key global issues.
* We need to unite, promote and develop, to ‘build a better world now’.

Not tomorrow, not next year, but now.

Thank you for being here tonight!

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