



ICA General Assembly 2026, Global Cooperative Conference and ICADP Meeting Panama City, Panama | 14–17 September 2026

Programme Report

The **International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)**, founded in 1895, is the apex global body of the cooperative movement. ICA has **331 member organisations, comprising 281 full and 50 associate members, from 106 countries**, and represents approximately **one billion cooperative individual members** worldwide. ICA operates through four regional offices viz. Africa, the Americas, Asia-Pacific and Europe, as well as eight sectoral organisations. The ICA Asia-Pacific Regional Office is based in New Delhi. **Cooperatives of the Americas**, the ICA regional office based in San José, Costa Rica, co-organised the Panama programme.

The **2026 ICA Global Conference and Assembly** was held in Panama City from **14 to 17 September 2026** and constituted the principal global gathering of the cooperative movement during the year. The programme combined the quadrennial elective **ICA General Assembly**, held on 15 September 2026, with the two-day **Global Cooperative Conference** held on 16–17 September 2026, along with other associated meetings and events. The conference was attended by more than **1,100 participants from around 80 countries**, with approximately 90 speakers.

The theme of the programme was **“Building Bridges: Cooperative Contributions for a Peaceful World.”** The theme drew inspiration from Panama's Bridge of the Americas, which connects North and South America at the Pacific entrance of the Panama Canal, and was used as a symbol of the cooperative movement's role in building bridges among people, communities and nations. The programme placed particular emphasis on peace as an important dimension of cooperative identity and recalled the **2019 Kigali Declaration on Positive Peace through Cooperatives**. The Director-General's report to the General Assembly also situated the programme in the context of armed conflict, geopolitical fragmentation and the momentum generated by the **2025 International Year of Cooperatives**.

Shri **Pankaj Srivastava, Chief Executive, National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI)**, participated in the ICA General Assembly, Global Cooperative Conference and **International Cooperative Alliance Development Platform (ICADP) Meeting** held at the Panama Convention Center, Panama City, Panama, during the programme period. The present report records the principal proceedings attended by the Chief Executive and the major outcomes of the global programme.

On **15 September 2026**, Shri Pankaj Srivastava participated in the **ICA Elective General Assembly 2026** as the duly designated **Representative and Voter of NCUI**, and exercised NCUI's voting rights in the elections held during the General Assembly. Dr Ariel Guarco of Argentina was re-elected as President of the International Cooperative Alliance unopposed. Fifteen At-large Directors were elected from among 24 candidates by 116 voters representing 193 member organisations from 66 countries. Shri **Dileep Sanghani**, Chairman of IFFCO and former President of NCUI, was elected to the ICA Global Board for the 2026–2030 term. Besides, other members from India Dr **Chandrapal Singh Yadav** continued as ICA Vice-President for the Asia-Pacific Region and Shri B Subramaniam as Chair of ICBA, while Shri **Harsh Sanghani** joined the ICA Board as the representative of the Youth Committee.

The General Assembly also considered matters relating to **ICA membership fees and voting rights**. Members were consulted on a proposed revision of the existing fee and voting formula, and the incoming ICA Global Board was requested to continue developing the proposed formula. The discussions formed part of the broader consideration of ICA's governance, membership and financial arrangements.

The proceedings of the General Assembly also included consideration of ICA's activities and future priorities. The Director-General presented the 2025 Activity Report and the 2026 Work Plan in the context of the **ICA Strategy 2026–2030**, which is structured around the broad strategic areas of **People, Data, Advocacy, Finance and Future**.

The **Global Cooperative Conference commenced on 16 September 2026** with the official opening of the programme. The conference brought together cooperative leaders, representatives of international organisations, development partners and other stakeholders to deliberate upon the contribution of cooperatives to peace, sustainable development, inclusive economies and multilateral cooperation.

During the conference, the **ICA and COPAC** launched all **17 SDG policy briefs** as a single report under the **#coops4dev** initiative and the ICA–EU Partnership 2024–2028. The initiative highlighted the contribution of cooperatives towards the Sustainable Development Goals and provided a consolidated policy resource for advocacy and engagement with governments and multilateral institutions.

The conference further addressed the theme of **peace and multilateralism**, with discussions focusing on the role of cooperatives in strengthening democratic participation, social and economic inclusion, community resilience and peaceful societies. A dedicated panel examined the cooperative path towards peaceful multilateralism, while other sessions explored the contribution of cooperatives to peacebuilding and sustainable development.

A series of parallel sessions were organised around the three strategic pillars of the **ICA Strategy 2026–2030 — Practice, Promote and Protect**. Discussions under the **Practice** pillar focused, among other matters, on youth and women's leadership in cooperatives, barriers to meaningful participation and the importance of providing young people with genuine responsibility in cooperative governance. Under **Promote**, emphasis was placed on communication, advocacy and documenting the impact of cooperatives in order to strengthen their engagement with policymakers and multilateral institutions. Under **Protect**, discussions focused on Cooperative Identity, legislation, education, democratic culture, technology and the role of members in preserving and advancing cooperative values and principles.

The conference also highlighted the cultural heritage associated with the cooperative movement. During the programme, **63 new Cooperative Cultural Heritage inscriptions from 39 countries** were announced, bringing the total number of recognised sites and living traditions to 95. The initiative highlighted the contribution of cooperatives to preserving community traditions, social values and collective identity.

On **17 September 2026**, the second day of the Global Cooperative Conference continued with discussions on peace, conflict, economic democracy, community development, climate change, leadership, local economies, public policy and emerging technologies. The proceedings emphasised the role of cooperatives as bridge-builders and their potential contribution to peaceful, inclusive and resilient societies. Discussions also considered the opportunities and challenges associated with technology and artificial intelligence, including the importance of ensuring that technological development remains consistent with democratic and inclusive values.

An interaction with young cooperative leaders further highlighted the importance of providing youth with meaningful participation and genuine responsibility in cooperative decision-making rather than limiting their role to symbolic representation.

The conference culminated in the unanimous adoption of the **Panama Declaration on 17 September 2026**. The Declaration affirmed cooperatives as builders of **positive peace**, rooted in the Cooperative Identity and its seven principles. It recognised the economic, social and environmental contribution of cooperatives and called for greater recognition and support for the cooperative model. It further called upon cooperatives and their members to make positive peace an everyday practice and encouraged governments, the United Nations, regional organisations and other stakeholders to engage cooperatives as strategic partners and implementation partners in peacebuilding and development.

The Panama Declaration also reaffirmed the importance of the rule of law, international law and the UN Charter, and called for disputes to be resolved through peaceful means.

On **17 September 2026**, Shri Pankaj Srivastava also attended the **International Cooperative Alliance Development Platform (ICADP) Meeting**, held in the afternoon of the final conference day at the Panama Convention Center. ICADP provides a platform for cooperative development organisations and partners to promote cooperation, collaboration and synergies in the field of cooperative development. The development work

is undertaken through the **#coops4dev initiative under the ICA-EU Partnership 2024–2028**, co-funded by the European Union.

The ICADP meeting formed part of the international cooperative development programme associated with the ICA Global Conference.

The meeting commenced with welcome remarks and introduction to the agenda by Ms Francesca Ottolenghi, Chair of ICADP, followed by a short tour-de-table of participating members. Thereafter, the meeting deliberated on the functioning and future direction of the **four regional and global platforms**, namely the Cooperative Europe Development Platform (CEDP), Cooperatives of the Americas Development Platform (CADP), Africa Cooperative Development Platform (AFCDP), Asia-Pacific Cooperative Development Platform (APCDP) and the International Cooperative Alliance Development Platform (ICADP). The discussions covered the past highlights, current activities and future ambitions of the respective platforms.

Shri Pankaj Srivastava, Chief Executive, NCUI, **actively deliberated on the agenda points and exchanged views in the discussions relating to cooperative development, regional and global platforms, their ongoing activities and future areas of collaboration**. Particular deliberations were held on strengthening complementarities and collaboration among the platforms, including **access to funding and finance and development of concrete joint initiatives/actions**. These discussions were aimed at promoting greater coordination and synergies among cooperative development organisations and platforms.

The meeting also included **elections for members of the ICADP Executive Committee and the Presidency for the 2026–2030 term**, followed by closing remarks and discussion on the next steps.

The participation of the Chief Executive in the ICADP meeting provided NCUI an opportunity to engage directly with international cooperative development organisations and regional platforms, deliberate on emerging requirements in cooperative development, and explore possibilities for enhanced collaboration, access to development finance and joint initiatives. The discussions are relevant for strengthening NCUI's international cooperation and development partnerships, particularly in the Asia-Pacific and global cooperative development context.

Overall, participation in the ICA General Assembly and Global Cooperative Conference provided NCUI with an opportunity to engage with the international cooperative movement on matters concerning **cooperative governance, membership and voting arrangements, peacebuilding, sustainable development, cooperative identity, leadership, advocacy, youth and women participation, cultural heritage and emerging technologies**. The programme also provided a platform for strengthening NCUI's engagement with ICA and other international cooperative organisations and for identifying areas of relevance for India's cooperative sector.

The proceedings also indicate several areas for possible follow-up by NCUI, including continued coordination with India's representatives on the ICA Global Board and Asia-Pacific leadership, examination of the implications of the proposed ICA membership fee and voting reforms for Indian ICA members, dissemination of the SDG policy briefs and Panama Declaration among relevant stakeholders, identification of suitable Indian cooperative cultural heritage sites for future nominations, and exploration of opportunities for international development cooperation under the **#coops4dev** framework.





