

World Conference Attendees as Varied as Dublin's Doorways



Over 1,800 Credit Union Leaders Converge in Ireland for Annual Event

Credit union enthusiasts from around the world gathered in Dublin for the 2006 World Credit Union Conference, co-hosted by World Council of Credit Unions and the Irish League of Credit Unions. "I think it's fair to say that this is an organization that has quite the reach," commented Ireland's Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Bertie Ahern as he opened the conference on July 27.

As has become custom, a record-breaking number of people from all over the world met to network and discuss pressing credit union issues ranging from demutualization to credit union board best practices. Irish celebrities such as former President Mary Robinson, economist and TV personality David McWilliams, Minister for Finance Brian Cowen and three-time peace prize winner and credit union advocate John Hume joined participants throughout the informative and inspiring weekend.

The day before the conference, regulators from 15 countries had the exclusive opportunity to meet and discuss important regulatory issues, and 35 young credit union professionals held their own networking session. World Council's Young Credit Union People (WYCUP) scholarship program participants discussed topics at the forefront of their movements. Of the 35 WYCUP scholarship participants, Tom Atkins (Canada), Alison Carr (USA), Anne-Marie Coffey (Ireland), Shoba Gunasekaran (Singapore) and Darcy Mykytyshyn (Canada) were honored as this year's leaders, earning a trip to the 2007 World Conference.

Surrounded by attendees from 42 countries, numerous dialects and

backgrounds as varied as Ireland's doorways, Iain Macdonald, director general of the International Co-operative Alliance, reminded the group of its cooperative responsibility amid diversity and adversity.

"I consider us as one," he said. "To understand a cooperative, you have to be part of it and benefit from it. We are the guardians of the international principles of cooperatives. We have to act more collectively and globally," he charged.

The success of Ireland's credit union movement is seen in the cooperative sentiment of its people. Credit union visits were so popular this year that they overbooked. Participants were greeted with *cead mile failte*—a hundred thousand welcomes—and abundant Irish hospitality during educational visits to 10 area credit unions.

In his signature style, keynoter Dan Mica, CEO of Credit Union National Association, explained the importance of credit unions' political involvement and outlined what he referred to as the three tenets of politics: all politics are local; all politics are out-of-sight and out-of-mind; and "what have you done for me lately?" He encouraged attendees with the reminder that credit unions "do the right thing for millions of people every single day."

The undertone of community reverberated throughout the conference and worked its way to the forefront of many presentations. Several presenters stressed the need to remain guided by the roots and spirit of the credit union movement.

"This is the type of spirit which provides the glue that is so essential for holding society together...a sense of community and belonging," Irish Minister for Finance, Brian Cowen said on the final day of the conference.

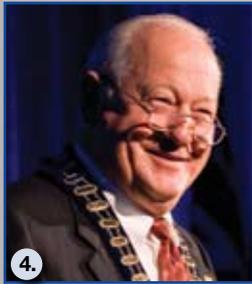
World Council welcomed new member associations, the Central Federation of Romanian Credit Unions, the Russian Credit Union League and the Ukrainian National Association of Savings and Credit Unions and presented them with World Council flags at the closing ceremony. Penny Reeves, Credit Union Central of Canada board director, also joined the World Council ranks as one of its 14 board directors. She replaces Wayne Nygren, who recently retired as CEO of Credit Union Central of British Columbia.

John Hume received a standing ovation at the closing ceremony as World Council presented him with the Distinguished Service Award in honor of his 40 years promoting credit unions. Though Hume is the only person in history to have won the three most prestigious peace prizes, he humbly considers his advancements in the credit union movement most noteworthy.

"Who could have forecasted in those first days that we would be gathered together like this?" Hume said in his compelling acceptance speech. "[Credit unions] show that people can live and work together and spill their sweat instead of their blood... common humanity transcends their differences." 

—by Jennifer Brink
Marketing Assistant, WOCCU

**Join us in Calgary, Canada, for the 2007 World Credit Union Conference
July 29-August 1**



1. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, gives the keynote address at a general session.
2. l-r: Chris and Rob Nicholls, chairman, CUSCAL with World Council chairman, Gary Plank.
3. Keynote speaker, Irish economist and television personality, David McWilliams.
4. World Council chairman, Gary Plank.
5. Pete Crear speaks at the Regulators Roundtable.
6. Dan Mica, CEO of CUNA & Affiliates, talks about the importance of legislation to the credit union movement.
7. 2006 WYCUP Networking Group.
8. Prime Minister of Ireland, Bertie Ahern, welcoming the attendees at the opening ceremony.