

Extract from the Executive Director's welcoming remarks to the 2012 Convention of the National Coffee Association of USA held in Charleston, USA from 22 to 24 March 2012:

As you know, the NCA's core purpose is to "champion the well-being of the U.S. industry within the context of the world coffee community." This regard for the wider framework in which the coffee industry operates is one of the main concerns that unites our two entities, since the ICO brings together exporting and importing governments from all over the world. My presence here is recognition of the valuable contributions of the NCA to the work of the ICO, which I am sure will continue and become even stronger in the future.

The NCA has played an important advisory role in US delegations to ICO meetings since the founding of our Organization, and in recent times this role has been strengthened through its participation in the Private Sector Consultative Board (PSCB), one of the most important innovations in the structure of the ICO in recent years.

We are extremely pleased that the NCA recognized the significance of the PSCB from the outset and has been a member of this body since its inception. In this context, I would like to pay a well-deserved personal tribute to Robert, who is the current chairman of the PSCB and whose skills have helped make this body even more dynamic.

In addition to its presence in the PSCB, the NCA has taken an active role in all aspects of the work of the ICO, ranging from submitting discussion papers to negotiations on the future of the 2007 Agreement to a concept paper on another important innovation, the Consultative Forum on Coffee Sector Finance. The Consultative Forum, whose creation owes much to the United States and the NCA, seeks to facilitate consultations on topics related to finance and risk management in the coffee sector, with a particular emphasis on the needs of small- and medium-scale producers and communities in coffee growing areas.

The first Forum was held in September of last year and provided many interesting insights into the question of green coffee price volatility, which can be explored in greater detail on the ICO's website. The shared interests and potential for synergies between our two organizations are highlighted by the fact that one of the speakers at the Forum has more recently presented a webinar on risk management to NCA members.

The second Forum on Coffee Sector Finance was held at the beginning of this month. Its theme was "The role that producer associations, governments and other entities play, or could play, in making risk management and financing tools more accessible, and more workable, for small- and medium-sized growers." As in the previous Forum, the NCA provided valuable support in the organization and selection of speakers for the event. I would also like to express my gratitude for the active role played by the US Government, in particular Amy Karpel, of the Office of the US Trade Representative, who chaired the event. A full report on the proceedings will be made available on the ICO website in the near future.