

Ladies and gentlemen, fellow coffee lovers,

I bring the greetings of the international coffee community, represented here by the International Coffee Organization, to the National Coffee Association of the United States, on the occasion of its one hundredth anniversary. One hundred years of existence is surely an impressive achievement, beyond the dreams of most of us mortals and just over half a century more than the ICO itself. This is a worthy cause for celebration.

At the ICO, we have an additional reason to commemorate this occasion, because the NCA is a most valued collaborator in our work. Although the NCA has played an important advisory role in US delegations to ICO meetings since the founding of our Organization, in recent times this role has become institutionalized through its participation in the Private Sector Consultative Board, one of the most important innovations in the structure of the ICO in recent years. This body, which brings together 16 leading trade associations from both importing and exporting countries, plays a crucial role in our work by providing advice on matters such as: promoting worldwide coffee consumption; positive communication on coffee; the

development of a sustainable coffee sector; food safety; coffee supply chain issues; and quality. We are extremely pleased that the NCA recognized the significance of this body from the very beginning and has been a member of the PSCB since its inception. The NCA takes 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 recent concept paper on another important innovation, the Consultative Forum on Coffee Sector Finance. It provides us with advance warning of all the latest developments in the US coffee market, especially in terms of legislation that, directly or indirectly, affects all members of the coffee value chain. In particular, we have learned that we need to brace ourselves to receive news from a strange and exotic land, otherwise known as California, which never ceases to surprise us. It is therefore only fitting that the CEO of the NCA, Robert Nelson, was elected in September 2010 as the current chairman of the PSCB and we look forward to seeing him at our next meeting in London in two weeks time.

Even more importantly, the ICO must also acknowledge a great debt of gratitude to the NCA. The withdrawal of the USA from the ICO in 1993 was one among a

constellation of factors that seemed to call into question the very survival of our Organization. ICO member countries decided to carry on, convinced of the enduring value of an entity such as ours, but knew that the Organization was that much weaker without the participation of the USA, the world's largest consuming country. During years of efforts to convince the US government to rejoin, the NCA was a powerful and decisive ally, helping to overcome erroneous perceptions that the ICO was a cartel of producers dedicated to interfering in the workings of the free market. So, when the USA decided to return to the ICO in 2005, all Members rejoiced. This could not have been achieved without the tireless support of Robert and the NCA, for which I would like to express my most heartfelt thanks.

I would like to conclude on a personal note. Unlike my predecessors in the post of Executive Director, I am not a civil servant by background. Most of my professional career has been spent in the private sector and a good part in trade associations similar in nature to the NCA. I have become convinced of the usefulness, indeed the indispensability, of such institutions. But I have also become acutely aware of how fragile they are. By their very nature, participation is voluntary and the interests of members do not always coincide, at least in the

short term. There is an inherent temptation for individual members to strike out on their own, especially since they stand to benefit anyway from the results of the activities of the association, such as efforts to influence legislation, whether they are members or not. The fact that the NCA has reached its one hundredth anniversary is powerful demonstration of the high calibre of the association's leadership, the value of its activities and the public spiritedness of its members.

I wish you many more anniversaries such as this one. Congratulations and, once again, many thanks.