

Dubai Chamber-organised seminar puts the spotlight on green buildings

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Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) in partnership with the Emirates Green Building Council Middle East organized a seminar and networking event called 'Green Buildings - Fact or Fiction?'.

The seminar, headed by key personnel from the Centre for Responsible Business and the Emirates Green Building Council was chaired by Mario Seneviratne, Secretary to the Board of Emirates Green Building Council and was well attended by a large number of top Government officials, real estate and construction company representatives, NGOs, investors and communication and risk management professionals.

Besides addressing some of the myths and facts associated with green buildings in Dubai and UAE, the seminar highlighted the current and proposed UAE and Dubai Municipality regulatory framework and plans for green building advancement. The seminar also covered topics like Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program internationally and in the UAE and ended with a panel discussion on the impact of green building movement in Dubai.

The real estate and construction sectors in Dubai are key sources of employment, income, and growth and contributed to 13% of the GDP in 2007. For Dubai, which is experiencing one of the world's fastest growth rates in real estate and construction, it is becoming imperative to develop more sustainable practices to sustain growth and conserve and protect the environment.

Dr Belaid Rettab, Senior Executive Director, Center for Responsible Business, in his welcome speech said: 'The concept of green buildings, although new, is of utmost importance for Dubai and UAE as modern future living and

working centers to capitalize on. The concept is an important part of Corporate Social Responsibility's growing agenda in the region as businesses now recognise that conventional way of doing business is not valid anymore and that they have to work for the general wellbeing of the society. It's here that the strategic objective of Dubai Chamber's role of supporting the development of businesses in Dubai comes into full play.

Added Gillian Foster, Manager, CRB, 'The green buildings concept extends beyond energy efficiency of a particular structure to how the urban environment is designed to incorporate access to health care, education, commerce, and public transport. This is relevant to the business community because the 'livability' of communities will be a factor, not only in where to locate within Dubai, but whether companies continue to locate their headquarters' here in future.'

Ali bin Towaih, Chairman of the Emirate Green Building Council, who gave a presentation on the concept of green building and its drivers said, 'At EGBC it's our motto to continue to foster collaboration among all sectors of the construction industry, the Government and others

if we have to successfully transform the UAE built-environment into a green building model that serves as a benchmark for the rest of the region.

'To start with I feel sustainable thinking has to come from within and at the consumer level so that they could demand green buildings and the developers too will benefit if they heed to this demand. As environment-conscious citizens we have to come together to share our experiences and ideas with each other. I am glad to inform that so far we have 170 buildings registered to be green. No doubt, there is a lull now but that will pass and the market will rejuvenate and comply by the green building principles to make a big success of this concept,'

said Ali bin Towaih.

Dubai Chamber established the Center for Responsible Business (formerly known as the Dubai Ethics Resource Centre) in 2004 to foster corporate integrity and assist organisations in applying responsible business practices that enhance performance and competitive edge. The Centre does this through the provision of research, training, programmes, events and advisory services that cover all aspects of CSR.

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