

Sharjah Chamber establishes local arm of World Business Council for Sustainable Development

January 22 - 2009

The Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) has announced that it today hosted the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) in a special meeting that led to the formal establishment of the Business Council for Sustainable Development United Arab Emirates (BCSD-UAE), under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed bin Sultan Al Qassimi, Crown Prince and Deputy Ruler of Sharjah.

The event also witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the newly-formed BCSD-UAE and the WBCSD, under the presence of H.E. Sheikh Issam bin Saqr Al Qassimi, President of the Sharjah Ruler's Office, to establish a working relationship between the two entities and to increase the number of members from UAE in the WBCSD.

Among the officials present at the meeting were Ahmad Mohammad Al Midfaa, Chairman, SCCI; Hussein Mohammad Al Mahmoudi, Director General, SCCI; and Bjorn Stigson, President of WBCSD.

BCSD-UAE will advance sustainable development across the Emirates by promoting green projects, renewable energy, and environmentally-friendly business practices. SCCI is collaborating on the creation of a full range of real estate development 'green solutions' that optimize both energy performance and costs without compromising operations and services.

Ahmad Mohammad Al Midfaa, Chairman, SCCI, said:

'Today, development is insignificant if it is not sustainable. While striving for growth and rapid development, we need to ensure that resources are judiciously used so that the ability of future generations to meet their needs is not compromised.'

'The creation of the BCSD-UAE reflects the kind of emphasis SCCI lays on sustainable development, perfectly complementing Sharjah's overall vision for growth. The BCSD-UAE will work in tandem with WBCSD to promote progress towards sustainable development and disseminate information about identified best practices to various stakeholders. We encourage Sharjah's business community to fully support BCSD-UAE and we urge them to make sustainable development an integral part of their operational framework,' he added.

Al Midfaa also pointed out that an increasing number of companies from the private and public sector in the UAE are realizing the importance of adopting sustainable development principles and environmental friendly practices.

'More and more organisations are recognising the economic benefits of adopting green standards. For instance, people have realised that the lifetime costs of green buildings are lower owing to the energy efficient and water conserving strategies adopted. Further, it is also a fact that if developers adopt green building strategies they can not only construct sustainable communities with indoor environmental quality, but can also support the preservation of energy and water resources,' he said.

'As the Gulf's most dynamic economy, the UAE's potential in motivating the entire Arab World towards sustainable development is enormous. We are thus very pleased that we are able to establish our presence in the Emirates, and we look forward to see Sharjah in particular transition to more sustainable approaches to growth,' added Bjorn Stigson, President, WBCSD.

BCSD-UAE's two primary goals are to promote better business leadership as a catalyst for change towards sustainable development and to support businesses in operating, innovating and growing in a world increasingly influenced by sustainable development issues. BCSD-UAE will focus on the Carbon economy beyond 2050; the risks and opportunities posed by climate change; new market opportunities; renewable and decentralized energy; design, build and construct; corporate consequences of food security; future leadership; legislative foresight; new technology development; and public private partnership.

Membership benefits include free access to general meetings, workshops, seminars, and other special events; inclusion in the Annual House of Commons business/political dinner; and electronic newsletters including updates from the WBCSD. Members can also avail of speaking opportunities in local and foreign events; discounts on services and events; a Members Only information section on the Council website; publication of articles on the website library; best practice location visits; and promotional opportunities.

'The UAE's economy remains vibrant due to its vision of sustainable development based on human capital, culture and infrastructure. H.H. Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, Ruler of Sharjah and Member of the Supreme Council of the UAE, rightly believes that more attention should be directed towards inflation and the challenges posed by energy demands in order to attain this end. BCSD-UAE will be an important agent in the broader quest to attain balanced and sustainable development for the emirate,' concluded Al Midfaa.

According to recent reports from the GCC's energy sector, GCC countries will be investing \$160bn-\$200bn to boost energy output over the next 10-12 years to meet the increase in Gulf energy consumption.

Established in January 1995, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development is considered the leading business voice on sustainable development. The coalition of 180 international companies represents 12 million employees and a turnover of \$5.2bn, with members affecting the lives of billions of customers through eco-friendly products and services. Most of the Council's work is organised into four Focus Areas chosen by its members, namely Energy and Climate, Development, The Business Role, and Ecosystems.

One of WBCSD's main objectives is to contribute to a sustainable future for developing nations and nations in transition. Its Regional Network is an informal alliance of around 55 CEO-led business organizations throughout the world collaborating on the provision of business leadership for sustainable development in their own countries or regions. These regional partners assist companies in addressing supply chain issues and interact with small and medium enterprises.

The Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry was formed via an Amiri Decree issued in 1970 by His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah. SCCI assists in the organization of commercial, industrial and professional initiatives, provides consultation on economic projects and policies, and conducts data gathering and statistical research related to economic development. The Chamber protects and promotes the interests of its members and introduces them to regional

and international corporate, government and special-interest groups. It also encourages greater participation of UAE Nationals in economic and commercial development.

{ AME Info }