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Interview

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Could you describe to our readers the role and the missions of CACCI?

CACCI aims to provide a platform for promoting the vital role of the businessmen in the region, increasing regional business interaction, and enhancing regional economic growth. With a membership of 27 national chambers from 25 countries, it cuts across national boundaries to link businessmen and promote economic growth throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

To achieve this objective, CACCI serves its members by:

- Holding biennial conferences to examine regional economic cooperation measures to help the development of the region;
- Liaising with government bodies and other international organizations to promote a regulatory environment conducive to economic cooperation;
- Compiling and disseminating trade and

investment information relevant to business operations;

- Initiating studies to serve as basis for advocating positions on issues of concern to the business sector of the region;
- Facilitating personal contacts among business people in the region and the provision of reciprocal chamber services between members visiting each others' countries;

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- Conducting training programs to assist member chambers in undertaking economic cooperation projects; and
- Promoting trade relationships among businessmen in the region.

What do you consider will be the impact of the Memorandum of Understanding between CACCI and FGCCC?

Given the continuing trend towards globalization, CACCI recognizes the need to maintain closer relationship with other international organizations not only in Asia-Pacific but outside the region as well. CACCI endeavours to establish itself as the leading private sector organization in Asia by cementing closer relationship and conducting dialogue with these organizations.

The signing of the MOU with FGCCC will help CACCI achieve this important objective. Among others, it will provide CACCI the opportunity to network with local, regional, and national chambers from the GCC countries, and to participate in their various programs that projects that facilitate trade and market access between the two regions.

Within the framework of the MOU, CACCI and FGCCC can strengthen their relationships by pursuing the following activities:

- (a) a regular exchange of information;
- (b) extending invitation to attend each others meetings or participate in each others activities;
- (c) Co-organizing workshops and seminars

on courses of interest to their respective members;

- (d) Co-sponsorship of research studies covering issues affecting businessmen in the region and on the possibility of further regional integration; and
- (e) Organizing occasional visits between member chambers for formal or informal meetings to discuss issues of common concern.

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What is the place of the private sector and its SMEs in the CACCI area? What initiatives have been put in place to promote them?

SMEs occupy an important and strategic place in many developing countries, particularly those located in the Asian region. They contribute significantly to the region’s wealth and employment, as intermediate and final producers, as well as consumers of goods and services.

Strong SME sectors attract and enable foreign investors to establish and expand domestic linkages. Because of their size, however, SMEs face limitations that make them less resilient to risks

and prevent them from attaining economies of scale. These limitations are particularly significant in the areas of human resources development, technological capability, and access to financing and information. SMEs therefore need enhanced support, domestically and regionally, in order to reduce, if not totally eliminate, the said limitations.

CACCI, whose member chambers' constituencies consist largely of SMEs, underscore the need for a strong partnership and cooperation between the government and the private sector in providing support for the development of SMEs, particularly in the areas of human resource development, technology transfer, trade promotion, fiscal assistance and access to financing and information.

To date, are there any examples of successful cooperation between CACCI companies and GCC companies?

We believe there are individual companies in CACCI and FGCCC countries that have already established business relationships, and there must also be others that are now exploring possible areas of cooperation. It is our hope that more opportunities for such partnership and collaboration will be opened up by the signing of the MOU between CACCI and FGCCC.

Which, in your opinion, are the sectors most likely to attract foreign firms to invest?

Sectors that will attract foreign investments in Asia vary from country to country, depending on the country's stage of economic development. I believe, however, that labour-intensive industries will remain attractive areas for investments in many developing Asian countries, given the relatively low cost of labour in these countries. Export-oriented processing and manufacturing industries have also good investment potential, as well as capital-intensive sectors.

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These would include, among others, tourism-related industries, agricultural and capital machinery, food processing, agricultural production and agro-industry, mining and mineral exploitation, energy and electricity sectors, infrastructure, real estate, construction materials, retail, ICT and electronics, automobile and auto ancillary, chemicals and pharmaceutical, and textile and garments.