



“CACCI recognizes the importance of encouraging greater interaction between individual businessmen within the region as well as from around the world”

Interview

Dr. Webster W. Kiang
CACCI Director-General

How does CACCI act to ensure the success of the Asian countries and what are its major objectives?

As a regional organization of chambers of commerce and industry, CACCI recognizes the value and importance of providing services and projects aimed not only at complementing the services of the local, state or national chambers that form part of its constituencies, but also at promoting regional cooperation among Asian businessmen. This is especially true today. As you know, the increasing globalization of markets and continuing market deregulation of many economies has increased competitiveness in the world market, substantially changing the form and context within which business in the region will operate. We are faced with challenges brought about by developments such as the emerging role of China, the proliferation of free trade agreements involving Asian countries, and the growing call for good corporate governance, among others.

To help its members meet the challenges of globalization and at the same time take advantage of the opportunities it offers, CACCI has been providing supplementary services to its member chambers and their respective constituencies who are expanding beyond their territories and reaching out into the global market. These activities, which are also designed to promote regional cooperation, are focused on a number of areas.

First, CACCI maintains that policy advocacy is an important area for regional cooperation among chambers. As

representatives of the business sector, chambers of commerce and industry must serve as spokesmen for the business communities. Policy advocacy has been an important activity of CACCI, mainly through the continued issuance of position papers on issues of current concern to the business sector. These position papers are submitted to appropriate regional or international bodies concerned for consideration.

With SMEs comprising the bulk of the constituencies of its member chambers, CACCI strives to help these small

“We are faced with challenges brought about by developments such as the emerging role of China, the proliferation of free trade agreements involving Asian countries, and the growing call for good corporate governance”

businesses realize their full potential by providing them support to make them competitive in a fast-changing business environment and increasingly globalized markets. Capacity-building activities are conducted to enable SMEs to pursue technological improvements, enhancement of management skills, and information networking.

CACCI also recognizes the importance of encouraging

greater interaction between individual businessmen within the region as well as from around the world. These would include, for instance, the exchange of trade delegations, participation in trade fairs, the exchange of trade data information, and performing business inquiry services and trade matching activities. In this regard, CACCI stresses the need to build a strong infrastructure for information exchange. It has also encouraged its members to set up business assistance centers. Through these centers, member chambers can extend assistance to visiting members of other chambers who are exploring investment opportunities or planning to do business in the country being visited. CACCI has also created the Product and Service Councils, which serve as effective vehicles for promoting greater business interaction among CACCI members in the same product or service line. Members of the Product and Service Councils meet to discuss common problems and ways of cooperation. Their meetings also serve as marketplace for doing business transactions.

Another important area of concern is human resource development. As you know, human resources are the most important asset of any business enterprise. The development of

this asset is crucial in improving enterprise efficiency, introducing market innovation and increasing opportunities for market expansion. CACCI therefore conducts, by itself or in cooperation with other organizations, training programs on chamber management, on the efficient methods of production and business management, as well as on sound practices of doing international business, trade and investments.

“The development of human resource asset is crucial in improving enterprise efficiency, introducing market innovation and increasing opportunities for market expansion”

How would you define CACCI today in respect with several members who are composing CACCI?

CACCI is a regional body of chambers of commerce and industry, business associations and business enterprises in Asia-Pacific. It serves as a forum for promoting the vital role of businessmen in the region, increasing

business interaction, and enhancing regional economic growth.

Since its establishment in 1966, CACCI has grown into a network of 27 national chambers from 25 Asian countries representing the interest of over three million business enterprises. We believe that these constituencies, when effectively mobilized, can give substance to our common commitment to economic development. For the last 42 years, CACCI has brought together business leaders and key entrepreneurs in personal contact through its regular meetings held in major cities in the region.

We in CACCI believe that the worth of any association, particularly chambers of commerce and industry, whether it be at the local, state or national, or pan-regional level, may be measured on the basis of two criteria: First, the value-added worth of the services it provides to its constituents in terms of how such services enable the individual or corporate members to build up their businesses and serve their respective communities. Second, its effectiveness in improving the economic lot of its individual members and the community as a whole through its policy advocacy efforts aimed at urging government to provide an environment conducive

to the growth of trade and industry.

Which are the sectors of the economy in which you believe your members could develop rapidly?

I believe that, for many of the member countries of CACCI, the potential for growth and development lies in several sectors, including infrastructure, food processing, housing, agricultural production, transportation, tourism, services, and other labour-intensive industries.

Is the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with your counterpart, the FGCCC, one of your major achievements as CACCI Director-General?

I believe the recent signing of the MOU between the FGCCC and CACCI has opened up a window for CACCI and its members to explore business opportunities in the Gulf Area States. On the other hand, the MOU has also given FGCCC members the vehicle for checking what the Asian markets have to offer for their constituencies and the business community of the Gulf area.

I am very pleased with the initiatives already taken by the FGCCC to activate and implement the MOU. For instance, following the MOU

signing, the FGCCC has drafted an Action Plan to help move the MOU forward. It has also requested CACCI to provide information from CACCI member countries that will help serve as a guide for FGCCC in identifying areas of cooperation between member countries of the two organizations.

“Although there are already bilateral relationships existing between individual Asian and GCC countries, I believe there is more than enough room for further enhancements in all aspects. We hope the signing of the MOU between CACCI and FGCCC can help achieve this objective”

Could you describe the economic relationship existing between Asian countries and GCC countries?

Although there are already bilateral relationships existing between individual Asian and GCC countries, I believe there is more than enough room for further enhancements in all aspects. We hope the signing of the MOU between CACCI and FGCCC can help achieve this objective.

What are your next projects?

CACCI hopes to undertake projects that will encourage more businessmen from FGCCC members

and other neighboring countries in the Gulf Area to visit CACCI member countries and meet with their Asian counterparts.

For instance, we plan to organize a delegation led by the CACCI President to visit FGCCC member countries. During the visit, the CACCI

delegation will gather first-hand information on the business situation in the Gulf area, meet with its leading businessmen, and visit local factories and selected companies. It will also introduce CACCI to FGCCC members and secure their cooperation in implementing, where applicable, the various programs adopted by CACCI. The visit will also aim to further build up the image of CACCI in the Gulf area by making courtesy calls on heads of states, economic ministers, and other high-ranking government officials to seek support for CACCI and its projects, as well as for endorsement of its various positions and recommendations on policy issues of concern to CACCI members.