

In conversation with Hassan Al Hashemi, Vice President of International Relations, Dubai Chamber



An illustration of Hassan Al Hashemi, Vice President of International Relations, [Dubai Chamber](#).

How will the Dubai Chamber of Commerce & Industry (Dubai Chamber) focus on promoting the interests of its business community over the next 50 years?

Dubai Chamber is fully committed to supporting businesses in Dubai as they adapt to a new reality and providing access to new opportunities in the next phase of growth. In line with Dubai's vision for the next 50 years, Dubai Chamber is expanding its range of smart services that improve ease of doing business and enhance economic competitiveness. We are increasing our focus on key sectors that are driving Dubai's sustainable growth, such as e-commerce and digital economy, blockchain, artificial intelligence, high-tech industries, logistics, agribusiness, sustainability, mobility, innovation and space industry. Meanwhile, we are exploring new gateways and facilitating international cooperation that can drive and diversify Dubai's foreign trade and strengthen its position in the global arena.

In terms of maintaining the competitiveness of Dubai as an international business hub, what are the key steps that need to be taken?

As Dubai maps out its vision for the next 50 years, it has a real opportunity to create a new narrative - one that draws on its strengths and positions the city as a global hub for the future economy and a magnet for the world's most innovative companies and startups. The timing of the recent stimulus and business-

friendly measures is ideal given that multinational companies are now looking to relocate their supply chains and prepare for the post-COVID recovery. In this regard, Dubai has become a destination of choice offering vast competitive advantages.

How did the Dubai Chamber's wide range of e-services and policy advocacy efforts ensure business continuity during the pandemic? What are the lessons for the future?

Dubai Chamber's wide range of smart services have become a necessity for businesses during COVID-19, while its advanced digital infrastructure enabled it to carry out all of its operations remotely and efficiently. Over 667,000 e-transactions were processed by Dubai Chamber in 2020 as it offered 98% of its core services online and utilised digital platforms to host the vast majority of its meetings and events. Keeping all this in perspective, the Chamber plans to continue investing in advanced technologies and cutting-edge solutions that improve ease-of-doing business in Dubai, create value for its members and boost its competitiveness in a fast-changing business landscape.

As a bridge between government and business, Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry is playing a crucial role in facilitating public-private sector cooperation and advocating on behalf of companies in Dubai to ensure a favourable business environment. In addition to engaging in an open dialogue with members of business groups and business council in Dubai, the Chamber has put in place several initiatives that businesses in the emirate are leveraging to voice their concerns, address issues of common interests and share policy recommendations.

Over the last year, we learned many valuable lessons as a chamber, including the importance of leadership, innovation, digital preparedness and close public-private sector cooperation in responding effectively to unprecedented challenges and enhancing economic competitiveness.

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The UAE's Bankruptcy law was a major step forward in modernising the UAE's insolvency law allowing for the early restructuring of indebtedness for distressed companies. What key legal changes does the Dubai Chamber see as having the most impact for the Dubai business community in the future?

Following several business-friendly measures rolled out by the government last year, including 100% foreign ownership and the amendment of the bankruptcy law, the UAE is now opening citizenship to select foreigners including investors, specialised talents and professionals, as well as their families.

This move is game changing for many reasons. It will attract top talent with expertise needed to support the UAE's sustainable development and transition to a knowledge-based economy. At the same time, it will elevate the country's status in the global arena and enhance its value proposition.

Why was it important to launch the Dubai Start-up Hub (the entrepreneurship arm of Dubai Chamber) and how will this hub grow?

Since its establishment in 2016 as an initiative of Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dubai Startup Hub has grown rapidly and expanded its offerings and network in line with the unique and changing needs of Dubai's maturing entrepreneurial community. What began as an online interactive portal offering resources and information has evolved over the last few years to become a one-stop shop for all things startup, providing entrepreneurs with an ideal platform for knowledge sharing, mentorship, training, development, competitions, knowledge sharing, collaboration, networking or growth opportunities.

Over the last few years, we have seen a sharp uptick in the number of international startups that are joining Dubai Startup Hub with the intention of entering the Dubai market and leverage the emirate to expand their footprint in the Middle East. In an effort to cater to different types of startups and their unique needs, we have launched other programmes such as Market Access which is designed to facilitate business deals between leading companies in Dubai and promising startups that can solve their market challenges.

Today, Dubai Startup Hub has truly become a platform of collaboration for city ecosystem. For instance, our annual Networking Series features incubators and accelerators as guest speakers, while the annual Dubai Smartpreneur Competition is supported by public and private sector stakeholders including Smart Dubai, venture capitalists, incubators and accelerators.

Female entrepreneurship and participation in the labor force has been high on the Dubai Chamber's Dubai Business Women's Council, under the umbrella of the Dubai Chamber has played an active role in enhancing gender diversity. How will this role grow in the next 50 years?

The entrepreneurial landscape for women has changed a lot here in the UAE over the last decade. Women were already highly education and working in the public and private sectors, but what happened in recent years is that many of them acquired enough skills and experience and capitalised on the opportunities this great country is offering by launching their own ventures – many of which meet market needs.

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Women entrepreneurship has long been a top priority for Dubai Chamber. Not only are we empowering women in business through our initiative – the Dubai Business Women Council (DBWC). Established in 2002 under the umbrella of the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, DBWC has dedicated its efforts to enhancing gender parity in society and encouraging women to play an active role in building the country and stimulating sustainable development. The DBWC organises tailored workshops and training sessions for its members to provide them with valuable information, best practices and skill set to excel in their field of work.

We also provide tailored support and guidance to aspiring women entrepreneurs through Dubai Startup Hub's various programmes and working closely with our international offices to provide them with access to global growth opportunities. There is vast potential for the UAE to align its efforts with other progressive countries to expand bilateral cooperation in the area of women entrepreneurship and build partnerships to expand support to women-led businesses.