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Sharjah's vision and reality in focus at conference

It aims to educate companies on various development strategies

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The new building of Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The conference and workshop is co-organised by the UAE Business Council for Sustainable Development. Image Credit: Gulf News Archive/Ahmed Ramzan

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Sharjah: A disconnect between Sharjah's vision and reality of sustainable business development is likely to be addressed in a conference organised by the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce (SCCI), which began yesterday, a senior SCCI official said.

"We need to agree on the concept of sustainable development and adopt a future vision with medium and long-term goals," Hussain Mohammad Al Mahmoudi, Director-General of SCCI, told a press conference yesterday. "[Green projects] are not up to our ambitions, we want more, but it takes time."

The conference aims to educate companies on sustainable economic, environmental, and social business development strategies, said Hussain Mohammad Al Mahmoudi, Director-

General of SCCI. It will look at adopting best practices from Europe, he added.

However, these initiatives are not backed by legislation and remain optional recommendations for companies. "It is an initiative for awareness. We should look at the full side of the glass, this is not just talk," Al Mahmoudi told *Gulf News*, adding that SCCI plays an advocacy role and can only lobby the government and private sector.

Raising awareness

The first step is to raise awareness before legislation can follow, said Najib Faris, PR and Communication Manager of Beea'h, one of the event sponsors.

SCCI will encourage companies to adopt and implement ideas that "make business sense", create efficiency and competition and lead to a "win-win situation," said Al Mahmoudi.

The initiatives will cost companies little to nothing, experts promise.

"All you need is a dedicated manager to promote the initiative and inform employees. You're not required to set up huge facilities," said Phillip von Zitzewitz, Senior Consultant at Sesam a business consultancy and event sponsor.

"It all starts with awareness, you can't force people, you engage with employees and it creates team buildings," he said.

Recycling e-waste and office waste are just a few examples, he noted.

"Continuing business as usual in the face of global climate change and population growth is not an option," Al Mahmoudi said in the press conference. A constructive partnership between businesses, government, and the community is necessary, he added.

The conference and workshop is co-organised by the UAE Business Council for Sustainable Development. A panel of business, finance and development experts will lecture on achieving sustainable development through human resource development, protecting natural resources and using alternative energy.