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By **Vincent Subilia**

What Geneva can learn from Dubai

Chambers of commerce find themselves in a unique position. On the one hand, they face challenges themselves and, on the other, it is part of their role to accelerate the adoption of digital tools and innovative technologies to enable the transformation of the businesses in their respective networks



Vincent Subilia, director general, Geneva Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services

The pandemic has accelerated the digitalisation of processes in many areas, especially in relation to remote working. However, adapting the business model to IT advances still needs to be pushed forward, and not only in relation to the supply chain, which is currently an overriding cause for concern across industries.

The present, 12th World Chambers Congress (12WCC) has neatly set the scene: **Chambers of commerce** find themselves in a unique position. On the one hand, they face challenges themselves and, on the other, it is part of their role to accelerate the adoption of digital tools and innovative technologies to enable the transformation of the businesses in their respective networks.

Resilience is a key word – one might even say a buzz word – in relation to digitalisation and not only because it was chosen by Arianna Huffington at the end of 2020 as the word of the year. As she pointed out, resilience is much-needed in this time of uncertainty, but is also the characteristic that will carry people forward thereafter.

How Dubai is ready to help the world get back to business



In an exclusive interview with Arabian Business, Hamad Buamim, president and CEO of Dubai Chamber highlights the significance of the 12th World Chambers Congress being hosted in Dubai (12WCC), the first time it is being held in the post-Covid-era



Arabian Business

It is fairly easy to theorise on resilience, as well as on flexibility – another catchword of our times. Much less so to turn these qualities into practice. However, as is shown in Dubai, those who successfully adopt the latest technologies and data management tools have demonstrated resilience and flexibility. Such examples are truly inspiring.

According to a recent survey, 73 percent of companies in Switzerland believe digital technologies play a medium to significant role in their respective business models. While one out of two companies with an annual turnover of more than CHF100m (\$107.7m) attaches great importance to digital technologies, this rate is only 20 percent for SMEs.

There is much scope for improvement and no doubt, the success stories heard at (12WCC) will be useful. **The Geneva Chamber of Commerce** has just launched a service, which enables businesses to get free coaching on how to go about digitalising their business. We hope the take-aways from the Congress will help us find additional ways in which to encourage our members to rethink their business models in the light of digital technologies.

Digitalisation does not mean, however, the absence of human action and interaction. This is what we will focus on in Geneva, where we will have the honour of hosting the 13th World Chambers Congress. Drawing on the role Geneva plays on the international scene, we will look into how soft power is key to effective multilateral cooperation.

The concept of soft power was coined in 1990 by Joseph Nye, a Harvard professor, who defined it as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments.”



Geneva is an important centre for international negotiations and rule-making.

Geneva's mark on international affairs has expanded over time. The city has headquartered the League of Nations, the forerunner of the United Nations. Today, by hosting the largest office of the United Nations outside its New York headquarters, 39 international organisations and 431 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Geneva is an important centre for international negotiations and rule-making.

Alongside international bodies, several locally-rooted actors exert soft power. The University of Geneva and the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies are two such actors. Economic players also wield influence. There are over 900 multinational corporations established in Geneva, 140 of which are major players.

The Geneva ecosystem is interesting not because of the number of international organisations

or multinational corporations headquarters it hosts, impressive as the figures may be. The value lies in the relations the various bodies have developed. For instance, drawing on this dense network, the Geneva financial centre is turning into a hub for sustainable finance.

Clearly, international issues are increasingly addressed by a wide range of actors. In addition to international organisations and governments, stakeholders from the business world – and particularly chambers of commerce – or cities and regions come together to solve the problems of society. The concentration of all the above has made Geneva a hub of multilateral negotiation and, therefore, of soft power.

The energies, the skills, the creativity can all be channelled for a greater good, which will profit communities across the globe. Under the motto “Achieving shared prosperity through multilateralism”, this is what the [Geneva Chamber of Commerce](#) is set to explore during the 13th World Chambers’ Congress.

[Vincent Subilia, director general, Geneva Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services](#)

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