



The Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) was established in 1963 as the Chamber of Commerce of Vietnam Democratic Republic. After establishment, its main task was to maintain and expand trading relations between Vietnam and foreign countries, especially ones outside the socialist bloc, in order to promote export and import, break the economic embargo, and at the same time, carry out researches on foreign markets and international trading rules in preparation for future developments.

After the Liberation Day, activity of the Chamber became nationwide and focused not only on promotion of foreign trade but also on development of local production. In 1982, therefore, it was renamed the Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce and Industry operating according to new by-law as a financially independent organization.

Since 1986 when the economic reform was launched, the VCCI, with its experience in developing multilateral cooperation with market-oriented economies, tried its best to promote trading and investment relations with foreign countries. One of its noticeable achievements is expansion of Vietnam's export markets, including countries with no diplomatic relations with Vietnam, such as the U.S., Taiwan and Israel.

One of important milestones in its history was the fact that the VCCI, from a body under the Ministry of Trade, developed into an independent organization in 1993 with two functions: acting as a representative of business community in the Government's think tank, and promoting investment and trading rela-

VIETNAMESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY AT THE THRESHOLD OF NEW MILLENNIUM

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tions with foreign partners. From then on, the VCCI has expanded its activities, increasing its membership from 93 to some 4,000, including 600 business associations and 60 state corporations and become the representative of over 30,000 companies from all over the country.

In the past five years, the VCCI staff were developed both quantitatively and qualitatively, some 250 out of 380 officials take training courses of various kinds and some 20 of them are sent abroad to make studies every year. At present, 85% of the staff have bachelor degrees; 25% of them have two bachelor degrees or more; 4% have postgraduate degrees. The VCCI has also established branch offices and trading promotion centers in major economic centers. Equipment and facilities increased by 10 times in the past five years allowing the VCCI to carry out activities to support the local business community.

As the representative of the business community in the Government's think-tank, the VCCI carried out many researches on problems arising from economic developments, gave advice on economic reform and

improvements in the business climate to the Government, and held hundreds of workshops or conferences every year to provide businesspersons with forums to make their voice heard. The VCCI frequently takes part in research groups, advisory boards and task forces that helped work out economic policies; holds annual meetings between the PM and his ministers with business circle; and helps local companies engage in activities of international or regional organizations (International Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry, ASEAN Chamber of Commerce and Industry, APEC, ILO, etc.)

To promote foreign trade and investment, the VCCI took a wide range of measures to help local companies improve their competitiveness and expand their export markets. Every year, the VCCI gives some 1,000 short-time training courses to over 10,000 learners from companies; provides information and advice for thousands of businesspersons through Internet, publications, periodicals and other channels; holds dozens of trade fairs at home and

abroad; organizes foreign or domestic escorted tours for thousands of Vietnamese and foreign businesspersons who want to make market researches or look for business opportunities; helps thousands of companies claim their rights to their patents, industrial designs and trademarks; issues over 150,000 certificates of origin; and settles dozens of disputes arising from international trading relations. Due to its achievements, the VCCI was awarded the Labor Honor of First Grade and many rewards by the VCP and Government.

In its operation, however, the VCCI has met with a lot of difficulties, especially financial ones because the fund supplied by the Government and its own resources were limited. That is why the VCCI couldn't realize large-scale programs to support companies, especially ones that are located in remote districts.

In the next ten years, Vietnam has to try its best to develop the economy and improve the living standard, and at the same time, enhance its competitiveness when it has to integrate more fully and actively into the world economy. As a representative of the business community, the VCCI is under obligation to take part more actively in this effort. In the coming years, the VCCI will concentrate on the following activities:

- Developing good cooperation between the Government and businesspersons along with their associations in solving difficulties facing companies and working as their representative in international organizations and forums.

- Enhancing quality of trading and investment promoting activities by making them meet demands by

companies; making programs to provide companies with information about foreign markets, rivals and products; helping companies enhance their competitiveness and meet standards set by ASEAN, APEC and WTO; and tapping foreign and domestic resources to supply better services to local companies.

- Cooperating with and supporting business and employers' associations in their promotion of trading and investment relations with foreign partners; developing cooperation between local companies in improving their competitiveness.

- Playing well the role of representative of local employers aiming at ensuring interests of employers, employees and the whole society; cooperating with the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs and



the Vietnamese Labor Confederation in developing good industrial relations, implementing policies on labor, employment, wage and working conditions; and studying relations between these policies with the national development strategy.

- Supporting the development of the private sector, especially small and medium enterprises and family business, by carrying out various promotion programs; and cooperating with governmental bodies and foreign organizations in developing the legal infrastructure for this sector.

- To enhance the competitiveness in order to ensure sustainable development, the VCCI will carry out some other activities aiming at developing the army of Vietnamese businesspersons, especially female ones, and encouraging local companies to take part in charity activities and protection of the environment. To achieve this aim, the VCCI will cooperate with the Federation of Scientific Associations, research institutes and universities in linking the business with research communities. Other tasks undertaken by the VCCI in the coming years are: to carry out researches on laws and market economy with a view to combining them and making the system of laws suitable to the socialism-oriented market economy in Vietnam; and to evaluate financial and technological capacity of companies with a view to helping them shift to eco-friendly production processes.

The VCCI is ready to cooperate with individuals and organizations at home and abroad in developing local companies for a "strong, wealthy, democratic and civilized" Vietnam in the new millennium ■

