

ICC World Chambers Federation opens its 6th Congress

Kuala Lumpur, 3 June 2009 – The ICC World Chambers Federation opened its 6th biennial World Chambers Congress today under the theme “Leading sustainable growth and change”, with a call to business leaders to address major challenges such as climate change.

The opening ceremony at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Center featured an address by Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin and took place in the presence of about 1,000 delegates from over 90 countries.

Organized by the World Chambers Federation, which is part of the International Chamber of Commerce, and hosted by the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers, the Congress brings together the global community of over 14,000 chambers of commerce.

“The theme for this Congress, ‘Leading sustainable growth and change’ could not be more appropriate given the present global economic situation,” said Mr Yassin. “The world is undergoing profound changes as a consequence of our response to the uncertainties and volatility of the global economy. It is indeed an opportune time for governments, especially to review domestic policies and the international business and financial framework that these changes and related challenges present.”

During a media conference before the opening, Rona Yircali, Chair of the World Chambers Federation, said: “The Congress will provide participants, particularly chamber of commerce executives, an invaluable opportunity to learn how others are coping and to coordinate action to help businesses get through this difficult period.”

Of particular interest will be the three plenary sessions on global challenges, including how trends in demographics, migration and industrialization are placing stress on the planet’s basic resources.

A second plenary on food, water and energy shortages will focus on the contribution chambers are making to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and the responsibilities of business, government and societies in resolving these issues. A third plenary will examine the implications climate change will have on the global economy.

“As chamber leaders we have a crucial role to play helping businesses adapt to the challenges they face today,” Mr Yircali told the delegates in a speech during the opening ceremony.

“Business needs our practical guidance, not only to weather the economic downturn we are currently experiencing, but also to address other long-term issues such as climate change and other environment-related issues,” he added.

In a special videotaped message shown at the opening ceremony, former US President Bill Clinton congratulated the Congress organizers for choosing sustainable growth as the Congress theme.

“The world’s great challenges – whether climate change, food and water shortages, sanitation, or extreme poverty – are increasingly becoming urban challenges,” Mr Clinton said. “Today, urban areas consume 75% of the world’s energy and produce 80% of the greenhouse gas emissions. This is particularly true in Asia, the venue for your Congress.”

In addition to the plenary sessions there will be 24 workshops divided into three tracks – business, development, and chamber issues. They will address the key challenges faced by businesses today, from the effects of globalization on small- and medium-sized enterprises to corporate governance, counterfeiting, and empowering women in business.

Among the business workshops, one will examine how cities around the world are building strategic alliances to find sustainable solutions to the effects of sprawling urbanism. Another will look into the different types of partnerships that are being created between port authorities, chambers and local municipalities to support economic development and sustainability for their communities.

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About the International Chamber of Commerce

The International Chamber of Commerce is the largest, most representative business organization in the world. Its hundreds of thousands of member companies in over 130 countries have interests spanning every sector of private enterprise.

A world network of national committees keeps the ICC International Secretariat in Paris informed about national and regional business priorities. More than 2,000 experts drawn from ICC's member companies feed their knowledge and experience into crafting the ICC stance on specific business issues.

The United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and many other intergovernmental bodies, both international and regional, are kept in touch with the views of international business through ICC.

For more information please visit: www.iccwbo.org

About the World Chambers Federation

The World Chambers Federation (WCF) represents ICC's chamber of commerce members worldwide.

WCF strengthens the links between chambers, enabling them to improve performance as well as discover new products and services to offer their members. Chambers represent companies of all sizes, particularly small- and medium-sized enterprises, the backbone of all economies. WCF promotes and protects the role of the chamber as an essential intermediary between business and government and between business and the general public.

For more information please visit: www.worldchambersfederation.org