



DMCC

H.E. Ahmed Bin Sulayem

Executive Chairman
DMCC (Dubai Multi Commodities Centre)

Q. Congratulations for your newly opened 'DMCC Coffee Centre'. It places Dubai firmly, at the heart of the global coffee trade. How do you see it impacting the coffee industry and impacting its pricing and trade?

The coffee industry is on a growth trajectory and we anticipate further growth in the upcoming years, both in terms of trade and consumption. Coffee remains one of the world's most widely consumed hot beverages. According to coffee statistics from the International Coffee Organisation (ICO), about 1.4bn cups of coffee are poured per day globally, with the Arab world one of the fastest growing markets in the world. The global coffee industry is worth an estimated AED 367.3 billion (USD 100 billion), with the industry in the Middle East expected to climb to AED 16.2 billion (USD 4.4 billion) by 2021 (according to Euromonitor).

Focusing on the UAE, it has been the fastest evolving coffee market in the GCC. The number of coffee cups consumed has increased substantially from 1.4bn cups in 2012 to 3.4bn cups in 2016. Dubai also accounted for a major share of the number of coffee outlets in the UAE, followed by Abu Dhabi and Sharjah.

With the establishment of the DMCC Coffee Centre, which is anticipated to handle up to 20,000 tonnes of green coffee bean annually, with world-class services including include warehousing, logistics, green coffee cleaning, contract roasting and packing, we are optimistic about the increase in trade flow of coffee through Dubai, in return, boosting coffee consumption and the national economy.

Dubai offers a unique trading ecosystem, including its air and maritime links, world-class facilities, regulations, services and networks and most importantly, its centrally accessible location. From this vantage point, the new DMCC Coffee Centre is posed to connect coffee traders from

Africa, Asia, the Pacific and as far as Latin America to the Arabian Peninsula and beyond.

Q. Your Dubai Diamonds Centre has spelt glory for both, the diamond industry and trade. DMCC's contribution to the International Diamond trade has been highly applauded. How do you see the coming years for global trade in these precious jewels?

DMCC has created a custom-built infrastructure and service offering to support the international precious metals trade by integrating the refining, manufacturing and trading in accordance with the highest global standards. The Dubai Diamond Exchange (DDE), a subsidiary of DMCC, has recorded a remarkable increase in rough diamond tenders and total sales of just under USD 200 million, up by 75 per cent compared to 2017. Today, Dubai is one of the world's leading diamond trading hubs with over USD 16.7 billion of rough diamonds traded in 2017, and will continue to play a central role for the diamond trade. This has helped to make Dubai an integral trading hub for precious metals along with cities such as Shanghai, London, Singapore, and Hong Kong. We are constantly innovating and updating our infrastructure, products and services so that Dubai becomes one of the largest and most influential precious metals trading hubs in the world.

The UAE, and Dubai in particular, sits at a strategic geographic crossroads between producing and consuming markets. Dubai's real value-add is that it connects emerging markets with more established economies. While protectionist elements might be gaining a foothold in certain global markets, many more emerging markets in Asia and Africa are becoming more efficient, productive, and competitive, and they are eager to participate in the global economy.

Q. DMCC has consecutively been rated and awarded as the best 'Free Zone of the Year' for SMEs for many years. How can SMEs from other parts of the world leverage the DMCC Free Zone set up?

DMCC continuously works on providing a soft landing for entrepreneurs in the form of flexible working solutions and special packages to support startups at the beginning of their journey. Our member engagement programme is the most comprehensive of any business community in the region and creates opportunities for DMCC to interact with its members. These programmes are designed not only to educate and inform, but to create opportunities to establish new business connections – especially helpful for SMEs.

In April 2018, AstroLabs – a co-working space that hosts technology entrepreneurs from around the world – expanded and moved into a larger facility in our Free Zone. In July 2018, a new co-working space called Nook, the region's first co-working space dedicated to fitness and wellness professionals, opened in DMCC's ONE JLT. Moving forward, we will continue to invest in our set up procedures, infrastructure and company services to allow SMEs to establish presence in the UAE and develop their businesses in the most seamless and cost-effective environment.

Q. Dubai has been a creative land of firsts. Tell us about the Uptown Tower, being built in Dubai by DMCC. How do you see this tower as the global gateway to trade?

Located in Uptown Dubai, the Uptown Tower will offer a new iconic destination in the city through its convenient location, close to Jumeirah Lakes Towers (JLT) as well as major commercial projects in Dubai's Southern belt such as Expo 2020 and Al Maktoum International Airport. These factors will accommodate the needs of companies, residents and visitors alike and more importantly, will boost the economy by creating over 10,000 jobs in the years to come.

As a fully-immersive development, Uptown Dubai will be anchored by two iconic super tall towers and will include more than 10 million sq/ft of grade A commercial and residential space, over 200 retail and F&B outlets, approximately 3,000 residences, a unique central entertainment plaza, and a number of luxury hotels, all offering

supreme amenities for residents, workers and guests.

Q. India-UAE trade is estimated to cross 100 bn US dollars, by 2020. Which commodities, do you believe, will lead this exponential rise in trade?

The UAE and India enjoy longstanding bilateral trade relationships, which have only strengthened over the years. In the 1970s, the balance of trade volume between India and the UAE was valued at \$180 million. Today, it is worth \$57 billion, making India the second-largest trading partner of the UAE. Foreign direct investments (FDI) between the two countries are also remarkable and growing.

In 2018, Indian investors financed a total of 31 FDI projects valued at \$1 billion, making India the second biggest investor in the UAE in terms of capital invested and the fourth largest in terms of projects in the first nine months of 2018. In parallel, UAE investments in India are valued at an estimated \$8 billion, of which \$5.33 billion is in the form of FDI with the remainder being portfolio investment, which makes the UAE the 10th biggest investor in India in terms of FDI. The UAE's investments in India span multiple sectors, most notably the services sector, power, construction development, air transport, food, and hotels and tourism.

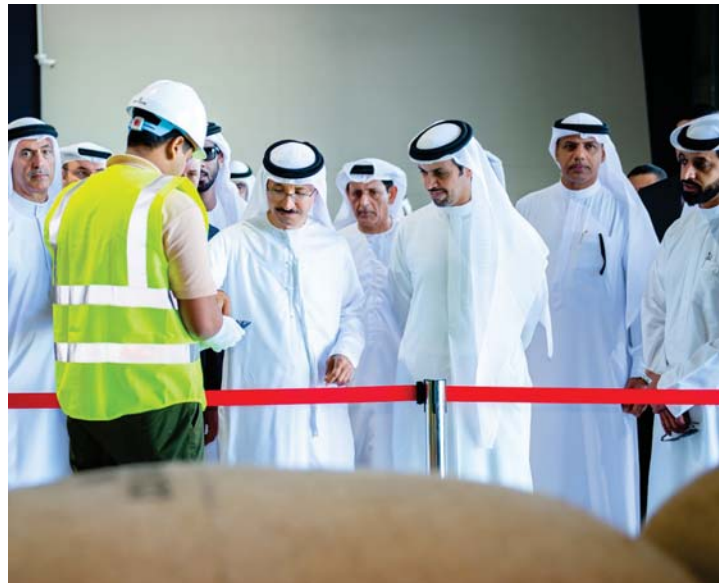
Pearls and precious stones continue to be among the largest traded commodities between the two nations. This is very likely to continue, particularly given the recently launched Surat-Sharjah direct flights, which will further facilitate diamond trading.

India is also a key market for us at DMCC - more than 2,700 Indian businesses spanning various industries have chosen our Free Zone as their home. Given that we welcome on average one new company from India every working day, we expect this to contribute to increased trade flows between the UAE and India in the coming years.

Q. DMCC was the first Free Zone in GCC to come up with a 'Sustainability Report'. It ensured a positive societal impact, without compromising on your top-line growth. How was this managed?

Sustainability is a core pillar of DMCC's business strategy. In August 2017, we were the first Free Zone in the GCC to join the United Nation's Global Compact, the world's largest corporate social responsibility





Inauguration DMCC Coffee Centre in Dubai

initiative. As part of this commitment, DMCC published its first sustainability report in September 2018. The report focused on DMCC's approach and performance in managing the Free Zone's social, economic and environmental impact throughout 2017 as well as its contribution to the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the context of the UAE Vision 2021 and Dubai Plan 2021. In this process, we identified the goals we believe would make the greatest difference throughout our business activities and pave the way for future generations to live in a sustainable environment.

Sustainability and social impact are becoming increasingly embedded in modern-day business models as the private sector recognises their potential in driving growth and meeting societal needs. At DMCC, we are proud to have made significant strides in that direction and hope that others will follow suit.

Q. Under your leadership, in the last 2 decades, DMCC has become the world's most interconnected and well-known Free Zone for trade, winning accolades globally. What has been the success strategy, behind this phenomenal performance?

It is my core belief that we have been winning these accolades globally, year after year, because we are constantly innovating, creating and outperforming. We offer businesses a world-class customer experience, from modern and state-of-the-art infrastructure, unique products and services to flexible regulations. Coupled with that, our mandate covers a wide range of sectors – trade, commodities, financial services, property – that we are constantly expanding based on opportunities we see in the market.

Q. In your opinion, what is that one reform, which can be a game changer for the India-UAE trade?

The recent currency swap agreement signed between India and the UAE, which means that businesses can now trade using their respective local currencies (rupees and dirhams), is likely to further boost bilateral trade. For us at DMCC, the game-changer is partnerships. We truly believe that by working together, we can ensure that no opportunity is missed and that we are driving mutually beneficial trade.

As Interviewed By : **Amanjit Kaur**, Senior Manager, IOD

