

Interview with Abdulaziz bin Hamad Al Ageel , General Secretary, Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting



28.05.2012

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What was the vision behind the creation of GOIC back in 1976 by the 6 Gulf States (Bahrein, KSA, UAE, Oman, Kuwait and Qatar)? How did you 6 States see the need for such an organization, which is like a knowledge-hub that would promote trade and investment by enabling the flow of information and knowledge?

The reason behind the creation of GOIC is quite simple: 35 years ago, the GCC governments realized that it needed to promote the industries of this region. GOIC is now one of the organizations supporting this goal by all means. During its 35 years history, the organization has completed many achievements to promote the industries and the private sector. Our main goal is support those industries and provide them with the help they need for development.

What have been the main milestones and achievements of GOIC that you would like to highlight since its establishment back in 1976?

Back in that time the region needed a lot of support. GOIC has participated to help the growth of the Gulf industries by providing technical support as well as studies to investors that wanted more visibility and information to get started.

Talking about the objectives of GOIC's strategy 2012-2016. One of them is to support the activities of future-targeted industrial sectors in the Member States. Would you give our readers an insight about the most important sectors that GOIC is aiming to support? To which extent pharmaceutical and life sciences one of them?

Our strategy is to focus on the promotion of the industry in the Gulf States. We also want to improve the unity between the states.

We focused on various sectors that had the potential to grow: the first one was of course petrochemicals as we have the resources to make it huge. We also concentrated on the agricultural and pharmaceutical sector.

At GOIC we bring support by providing some data on the latest information that we have gathered those past few years because we believe this is how we can help companies.

One of the biggest supports given to our industry from GOIC was the launch of the Gulf Pharmaceutical Industries Association (GPIA) in the GCC countries and Yemen in July 2011. After almost 1 year of exercise, how would you rate the success of it?

I believe it is good if we gather all we have done so far. We provided a lot of opportunities to help the industry move ahead.

While KSA and UAE share the biggest market share of the GCC pharmaceutical industry. Qatar has been a front-runner in medical research with heavy investments in organizations under the umbrella of Qatar Foundation such as QSTP, QRSC... Would you say that Qatar is leading biomedical research in the GCC region?

Yes, Qatar has very ambitious programs and goals towards that industry. In the near future Qatar will be one of the leading industries. We are doing a lot to create opportunities to boost the industry here.

In that sense we have a lot of partnerships and cooperation with many organizations such as Qatar foundation or Hamad Medical Corporation, and we really feel that we are part of this development for Qatar and other states. It has of course a lot to do with oil and gas, education and entertainment. Qatar Foundation for instance, is another example of the spirit of innovation going on in the country as they have done a lot for Qatar. Other states like Bahrein, the UAE and Saudi are doing a lot of R&D as well.

One of the biggest roles of GOIC is to encourage synergies btw state members. What would you highlight as the biggest synergies created between all GOIC State members in the pharmaceutical and Life Sciences industry in the last 10 years?

We are working very closely with the GCC council. They are the umbrella organization of all GCC countries. We, as industry specialists, can give them a lot of support that they often ask for. In regard we have contributed to a lot of studies for them, especially about synergies between Gulf States.

GOIC is a unique intelligence business provider in GCC region thanks to a premier database providing key industrial data for 7 of the most important oil countries WW. How do you make the most of such a unique asset?

This has not been done in one or two years. This achievement is about big efforts accumulated for many years. We do an update every year to keep the data very accurate and up to date, so that it can be very useful for current researches. We have different types of data base, for example one for the Gulf experts, one for the trade experts, the economic opportunities, Gulf manufactures and products, and manpower, etc.

We specialize on the economic studies to help industries and companies who are seeking support in particular subjects and topics.

We also do research for the Industrial Marketing Intelligence (IMI). We invest a lot on that particular program to create partnerships in order to support the industries by keeping them aware of changes and news available. They can go to any topics and dig into to database until they find the right one. Making the information available is something we work very hard on.

On the other hand we have the industrial projects department that is available for the studies, especially the feasibility studies that we can conduct for states or investors. We have a record of 400 opportunities that we managed to provide, which is very successful. We help companies in making the right decision, and this is essential.

We provide as well technical support for the industry, we visit them and advise them on what they need to upgrade, we do consultancy on energy efficiency, on sustainability improvements, we have the expertise to achieve that goal and help them in the most effective way of conducting operations.

We are doing a lot of partnerships and Memorandum of Understanding with the top universities in the Gulf and worldwide, as well as with global organizations such as the United Nations, or the European Union, or some more specialized institutes. Those MOUs help us get the information we need from them, and as it is a win-win collaboration they take some information from us as well when they need to have data related to the GCC.

Apart from the Data Base, what makes you the partner of choice for GCC companies looking at being successful in the region? And where do non-member States fit in the picture if any space for them (such as Jordan since they have been helpful for creating the pharmaceutical association amongst other things)?

What makes us unique is simple: we have access to a lot of information that other consultancy firms don't have. We have the privilege to get the information directly from any Ministry of the GCC, which is a huge competitive advantage. It makes the information we provide very accurate and precise, and this is a great achievement for us. We are participating to create the strategies for the

countries and the industry, as they use a lot of information from our database.

Another activity we have is training, everywhere in the GCC or other countries. We are trying to make our training programs very unique on specialized industries, and we work very close to our clients.

Are you only giving consultancy to the countries of the Gulf or can other countries come to you and ask for your advice and information as well? For example if a big company comes to Doha and wants to have some information about marketing strategies or technical support on the Gulf region, how do you deal with that kind of matter?

Our goal is to focus on the Gulf. But of course, we are very opened. We exchange with a lot of foreign countries, we go to a lot of conferences and lectures abroad, so we are not limited to the Gulf in that sense. For instance, we have had relationships with Jordan and they also participate in increasing our database so we realize that we can also get some help from countries outside the Gulf. But, our main goal is to develop the industries in the GCC so of course this is our priority. We might expand our strategy in the near future to open industries but right now we are keeping the same regional focus.

Where would you like to take the operations of GCC in the next 3 to 4 years?

In the near future, our main mission will be to provide opportunities and support to small and medium companies in the region. We believe those companies will help supporting the Gulf and participate in the region growth. In the next coming years, those small and medium companies will also create more jobs. Young people that will graduate all over the GCC need to have work opportunities, and those companies can play a huge role in providing more jobs for them.

What is your final message to the readers of PHEX about the commitment of GOIC to remain the one stop shop for market intelligence in the GCC région ? GOIC will continue to work towards opportunities?

This is a very unique region and industry, and the focus on information is essential. We put all our efforts and experts together in order to support those goals, and we are opened to any questions or any organizations that seek support.

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