

Qatar Green Building Council seeks to improve indoor air quality

Doha, 4 November 2013 – Leading experts from the sustainability industry gathered today for the Qatar Green Building Council's (QGBC) seminar titled 'Healthy Buildings for Healthy People' to discuss the health effects associated with poor indoor air quality.

As part of its ongoing effort to engage stakeholders and raise awareness about the importance of living and working in healthy indoor environments, QGBC launched a new group called the Healthy Building Interest Group (HBiG) at the event.

The group's aim is to achieve a more sustainable future, in keeping with Qatar National Vision 2030, by evaluating standards and holding workshops with local and international green building specialists. The HBiG also seeks to highlight the benefits of implementing guidelines that can bring about substantial improvements to the overall quality of life for residents.

"The launch of QGBC's Healthy Building Interest Group is another positive step towards creating enhanced awareness of what constitutes a healthy indoor environment," said Eng. Meshal Al Shamari, Director of QGBC. "Group members come from diverse backgrounds and work alongside our stakeholders, volunteers and other sustainability professionals to help Qatar attain the highest standards of sustainability for future generations."

The HBiG works to forge valuable partnerships and alliances in order to promote a widespread understanding of the relationship between Indoor Air Quality and the well-being and safety of residents.

Iñigo Satrustegui, Chair of the Healthy Building Interest Group and Managing Director of Q-Air Global explained, "Qatar is currently undergoing enormous growth and this gives it the chance to create healthy indoor environments by using the experiences and best practices utilized worldwide. Through the commitment of developers and the implementation of indoor environmental quality standards, Qatar can become one of the healthiest countries in the world."

Indoor air quality is an essential part of a green building process. With warm weather year-round, people in Qatar tend to spend over 90 per cent of their time inside. Despite this, little research has been done to assess the quality of air in homes, offices, schools, and recreational buildings. Air quality is even more relevant today as it can have an adverse impact on public health and increase the prevalence of conditions like asthma.

Mr. Yousef Noman Al Shammari, Head of Occupational Health at Health, Safety, Security and Environment (HSSE) Executive Directorate at Qatar Foundation, said, "Negative health effects of poor indoor air quality are much stronger than outdoor. It can cause a wide range of respiratory and infectious diseases. Indoor air quality can be affected by ineffective control of polluted outdoor air, standing water, moisture and unmaintained furniture."

Dr Atos Batarra, an Italian architect with over 30 years of experience in design concept, explained the significance of natural light. "Research has shown that sunlight has multiple benefits, such as boosting a person's energy level and immunity, as well as improving our mood and enhancing mental awareness, concentration and productivity. However, we are deprived of natural sunlight exposure due to our current lifestyle, spending much time in rooms with distorted artificial light," he said.

According to Dr Batarra, we need to introduce full-spectrum lighting in offices and homes to reproduce natural light frequencies in order to meet our biological needs, which would reduce eyestrain when reading, and counteract drowsiness.

Fahad Ali Khan, Assistant Building Service Manager at Qatar National Convention Centre, stressed the important role building managers have in maintaining sustainability in green buildings. He said, "The latest reports estimate there are nearly \$1.17 trillion worth of construction projects across the Middle East and North Africa region over the next decade, increasing the demand for energy which is already growing at between seven and eight per cent per annum. Building managers can play an important role in helping the environment, while at the same time reducing operating costs and creating a workplace that promotes good health, well-being and productivity among the building's occupants."

QGBC is a non-profit, membership-driven organisation dedicated to advocating green building solutions, leading industry research, as well as promoting sustainable practice in the community. Through QGBC, Qatar has joined a network of 80 different countries that run active national green building councils under the umbrella of the World Green Building Council.

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For more information contact:

Abed Shirzai

abeds@bljworldwide.com

+974 7021 8259

About Qatar Green Building Council

Qatar Green Building Council (QGBC) is a non-profit, membership-driven organisation providing leadership and encouraging collaboration in conducting environmentally sustainable practices for green building design and development in Qatar. QGBC also aims to support the overall health and sustainability of the environment, the people, and economic security in Qatar for generations to come. The council, a member of Qatar Foundation, was formally established in 2009 by a decree signed by HH Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser and is helping Qatar on its journey to establish a post-hydrocarbon, knowledge economy and a progressive society. Through QGBC, Qatar will join a

network of 80 different countries that run active national green building councils under the umbrella of the World Green Building Council. QGBC's members include representatives from government, real estate developers, investors, facilities managers, consultants, construction, manufacturers & suppliers, oil & gas, professional firms, financial services, telecom/technology, academia, NGOs & media. QGBC is setting up operations from its HQ, organising awareness events, knowledge seminars, training, forums, and networking sessions with the like-minded. To learn more visit www.qatargbc.org.

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