

Qatar's hospitality sector comes together on sustainability issues

Doha, June 10 – Hotels in Qatar are joining forces to pursue a new green agenda that has all the hallmarks of a meaningful sustainable movement. The initiative is being led by Qatar Green Building Council (QGBC) through its Green Hotel Interest Group. Today it hosted a diverse range of stakeholders at the Wyndham Grand Regency Hotel for an interactive workshop entitled *Breaking Down Barriers to Enhance Sustainability in the Hotel and Tourism Sector*.

Participants included the Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA), WS Atkins, AECOM and some of the city's leading hotels. Attendees shared presentations and held roundtable discussions on key areas of waste, utilities, design and refurbishment, operational issues, and CSR. A range of sustainable measures in hotel design, construction and operation were discussed. It was agreed that hoteliers could assist in improving Qatar's environmental performance in a number of ways, such as offering bottled water only upon request, improving recycling schemes, and installing efficient HVAC ventilation systems

"The strong participation in today's workshop is evidence that the tourism sector in Qatar is eager to institute programs and contribute to initiatives that save water, conserve energy and reduce waste – while saving money – to help protect our precious environment," said Steven Humphrey, chair of the QGBC Green Hotels Interest Group and Head of Programme Cost Consultancy Qatar AECOM.

QTA delivered a presentation on the valuable role hotels can play in making national tourism more sustainable. The organisation has an existing national-level cooperation agreement with the UN World Tourism Organization that aims to develop a holistic approach to sustainable development in the tourism sector, with the local hotel industry at its centre.

The topic of sustainability in relation to the FIFA® World Cup 2022 was raised by Dr Neil Kirkpatrick of WS Atkins & Partners Overseas – Qatar. He said, "As the FIFA® World Cup 2022 aims to be carbon neutral, the design and operations of hotels and tourism facilities can help significantly by reducing their operational carbon footprint."

Representatives from some of Doha's leading hotels shared their experience of sustainability, from design and construction to operation. Director of Engineering at InterContinental Doha The City, Martin Mueller, outlined design elements that hotels can use to reduce power consumption for cooling. These include building orientation for solar and wind considerations, landscaping, insulation and efficient air conditioning systems.

Improved energy management processes for guest rooms and techniques for benchmarking hotel performance were other topics discussed by professionals from InterContinental Doha The City and Radisson Blue Doha.

Additionally, Ahmed Daas of Wyndham Grand Regency highlighted the various initiatives that the hotel has adopted as part of its transformation into a green establishment through its engineering, food and beverage, and housekeeping departments.

Humphrey concluded the session by debunking some common myths surrounding green building. "Adding renewable energy items, recycling bins, or other green 'bling' does not mean that a building or hotel is now operating sustainably," he said. "Most truly sustainable practices come down to good design, which does not cost more money, contrary to popular belief."

These design elements could be as simple as reducing the number of lights in a room and ensuring that windows are well sealed, or installing motion sensors and using water recycling systems, noted Humphrey, before opening the gathering for debate on best practices.

The Green Hotel Interest Group was launched in advance of the landmark Conference of the Parties N°18 (CoP18) in Doha last year. It brings together representatives and interested parties from the hotel, hospitality and tourism sectors with the objective of discussing and identifying opportunities to improve the sustainable landscape in Qatar.

GHIG is one of the latest additions to QGBC's growing number of interest groups within its Research and Innovation Department, which also includes the Solid Waste Interest Group, the Water Interest Group, and the Green Infrastructure Interest Group.

To become a member or a volunteer with QGBC or for details about group activities, please visit www.qatargbc.org.

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About Qatar Green Building Council

Qatar Green Building Council (QGBC) is a non-profit, membership-driven organization 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 H.H. Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser and is helping Qatar on its journey to establish a post-hydrocarbon, knowledge economy and 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, constructors, manufacturers & suppliers, oil & gas, professional firms, financial services, telecom/technology, academia, NGOs & media.

QGBC is setting up operations from its HQ, organizing awareness events, knowledge seminars, training, forums and networking sessions with the like-minded. To learn more visit www.qatargbc.org.

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