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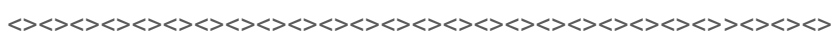
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1. OCCI APPOINTS NEW CHAIRPERSON

Hiroshi Ozaki announced his resignation as chair of the OCCI at the 4th Ordinary General Meeting of the Executive Council on March 29, 2022.

He had served as the chamber’s head since December 2015.

Following a vote, Shingo Torii, vice chairman of the board and representative director of Suntory Holdings, was appointed the new chairperson.

The OCCI’s chairperson and vice-chairs for the next business year are as follows.

Chairperson

Shingo Torii (Vice Chairman of the Board,
Representative Director, Suntory Holdings Limited)



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Vice-Chairs

Isao Teshirogi, (President and CEO, Shionogi & Co., Ltd.)

Junzo Tateno (President, Union Corporation)

Kazuhiro Higashi (Chairman of the Board, Representative Director,
President and Executive Officer, Resona Bank, Ltd.)

Yoshinori Yoshida (Adviser, Kintetsu Corporation)

Akihiro Kuroda (Chairman, Kokuyo Co., Ltd.)

Kyoko Hirose (President, Hirose Mfg. Co., Ltd.)

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2. GIF OSAKA IS BACK IN 2022: THE IDEAL FORUM FOR SEEKING NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Global Innovation Forum (GIF) Osaka has been a fixture of the business calendar since 2019. This year, as always, we look forward to matching international start-ups with Japanese companies. Early event details are as follows.

1) To be held 4 times/year in various regions

Past GIFs were held once a year, but starting this year, a new format has been introduced, with four business matching events across different regions featuring online exhibits, live pitch sessions, and business matching.

Regions covered:

North & South America in late June, Middle East/Southwest Asia in late August, Europe in late October, and East/Southeast Asia in December.

(Schedule subject to change)

2) Pitch session winners to be invited to Osaka

During each regional event, there will be a vote to select the start-ups that participants would most like to meet

in Osaka. One winner from each region will be invited to visit Osaka in January 2023, allowing for the chance for real-time capability displays and meetings with Japanese companies to pursue business opportunities.

3) Exhibitors sought from GIF's 7 focus sectors, now including new sectors

GIF2022 is open to start-up companies operating in one (or more) of these seven sectors:

(1) Augmented/virtual/mixed reality

(2) Robotics

(3) Digital transformation

(4) Carbon neutrality

(5) Agri-tech, food-tech

(6) Health-tech

(7) Advanced materials

To apply to exhibit, contact us at: gif@osaka.cci.or.jp

Schedule: North & South America in late June

Middle East/Southwest Asia in late August

Europe in late October

East/Southeast Asia in December.

(Schedule subject to change)

*Pitch and meeting times will take time zone differences into account and vary by region.

Location: Online

To join, please register for GIF online. Details on how to join the event will be provided upon registration.

Pitch winners will be invited to Osaka to take part in business meetings in person.

Program

- 1. Online exhibition
- 2. Live pitches
- 3. Online business meetings

GIF 2022 website-launching soon!

The GIF Osaka 2022 website will feature helpful information around participant programming, exhibitors, presenters, and more.

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3. ONLINE INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE EVENT PROVIDES MUCH NEEDED NETWORKING FORUM AMID COVID RESTRICTIONS

On February 16, 2022, the OCCI International Division held an online exchange event together with the American Chamber of Commerce Japan, Kansai Chapter. The event was planned to provide a safe forum for participants to browse and meet amid the drastic reduction in networking opportunities caused by Covid-19.

Event attendance exceeded expectation (anticipated to be around 30 people but ultimately being 50+) and 80 percent of attendees surveyed responded that they were happy with the program. It was “the perfect networking event in today’s environment,” said one respondent, while another said it was, “Great to have dialogue without wearing a mask.”

OCCI will continue to leverage the online format and hold digital events (including exchange sessions and more) in light of Covid-19 related limitations.

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4. OCCI SUBMITS A WIDE-RANGING PROPOSALS TO GOVERNMENT ON IMMIGRATION RELATING TO THE SPECIFIED SKILL WORKER PROGRAM

The OCCI recently submitted a proposal to multiple government agencies, including the Minster of Justice and

Immigration Bureau Director General, suggesting a variety of improvements to immigration policy regarding the Specified Skill Worker program. The program allows foreigners with a degree of professional specialization and technical skills to work in Japan in 14 sectors experiencing a critical labor shortage. In a survey conducted by OCCI last year, only 11.4% of respondents had made use of the program. Respondents also noted the program's impracticality and Japan's waning attractiveness as a potential place to work.

OCCI's proposal, organized by the Human Resource Development Committee (chairman: Keiichi Hasegawa, president of Ehle Institute, a Japanese language school), consists of 13 suggestions across four key pillars.

Pillar 1. Easing restrictions on entry into Japan while maintaining thorough Covid-19 protections:

Gradual elimination of upper daily limit on entry numbers; relaxing of restrictions on entry of skilled workers, business visitors, and exchange students.

Pillar 2. Expansion of support for SMEs using the specified skilled worker program:

Increase awareness of the program among businesses; more publicity of Japan's merits to overseas talent; establishment of "one-stop" advisory services regarding skilled worker immigration; enhanced assistance to match businesses with specified-skill workers.

Pillar 3. System reforms to improve the efficacy of the specified skilled worker program:

Extend the maximum stay for Class 1 specified skilled workers to 10 years (currently 5-year maximum with no provision for dependents); broadening the fields of industry eligible for this program and for Class 2 specified skilled workers (unlimited visa renewals, visas for dependents); reconsideration of the maximum number of visas permitted for each industry; more visas allowing dependents to accompany.

Pillar 4. Other immigration policy reform:

Reviewing the specified skilled worker program necessitates thorough discussion and consideration around ways to improve the program and immigration policies as a whole.

Further information available online:

https://www.osaka.cci.or.jp/Chousa_Kenkyuu_Iken/press/220218tokutei.pdf

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VIP REPORTS

1. COURTESY VISIT BY THE TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR

On March 1, Tunisian Ambassador to Japan Mohamed Elloumi made a courtesy visit to OCCI Vice-Chair Akihiro Kuroda.

With the 8th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 8) scheduled to be held in Tunisia on August 27 and 28, 2022, Ambassador Elloumi noted that this would be an ideal visit his country, which boasts many advantages as a free trade gateway connecting Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. He emphasized how Africa could help “expand the future” for Japanese companies and asked for support to help promote Tunisian goods in the Kansai region.

In response, Vice-Chair Kuroda noted that opportunity is ripe, with Japanese companies considering new ventures as they emerge from the chaos caused by Covid-19, with many recognizing the potential benefits lying in building relationships in Africa. He also remarked that the OCCI was capable of providing support to local Osaka businesses looking to enter the Tunisian market.

2. OCCI INVITED TO ROUNDTABLE WITH ITALIAN CONSUL GENERAL

On March 1, Italian Consul General Marco Prencipe hosted a roundtable discussion with OCCI and Osaka’s other resident international business support organizations.

The meeting kicked off with OCCI, JETRO, OBDA, and SME Support Japan each presenting their recent

international business support initiatives. OCCI expressed its hope that Italy would exhibit at GIF Osaka, noting the chambers longstanding relationship and robust track record of mutual collaboration with Italy.

Prencipe said, “Italy has so much in common with Osaka, being home to many SMEs with advanced manufacturing technologies and highly skilled craftsmen.” Italy’s candidacy for the 2030 World Expo means opportunities for more meaningful partnerships to be established-to help guide its vision as an Expo host-if it wins the bid. He also remarked on learning about Kansai’s strong health-tech sector and recent tourism efforts and that he would like to continue future discussions dedicated to these specific areas. Prencipe also said he hoped to bring a delegation of Italian businesses to Osaka.

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3. OFFICIAL VISIT FROM CONSUL GENERAL OF THE NETHERLANDS

The OCCI was honored to receive a visit from Consul General Marc Kuipers of the Netherlands Consulate General in Osaka on February 10, 2022, for a meeting with Ako Makiyama, Executive Director, Director of Industry Division; Keisuke Matsumoto, Director of the Industry Division; and Takayoshi Negoro, Director of the International Division.

With the 2025 Osaka-Kansai World Expo on the horizon, the OCCI shared its various initiatives, including a progress report of its activities related to “wellness acceleration field,” and discussed new directions and progress of various trials. The chamber also introduced GIF Osaka, the forum for exchange among regions of innovation, as well as the Osaka Business and Investment Center (O-BIC), which serves to support foreign business investing in Osaka.

Consul General Kuipers expressed great interest in these initiatives, noting that environmentally-considerate medical equipment, comparing global standards and trends, and digital health were key priorities and that he hoped for increased collaboration within these sectors between Osaka and the Netherlands. He also described his hope to leverage OCCI’s support in these efforts and to proactively promote the benefits of Osaka to Dutch companies.

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BUSINESS SEMINAR COSPONSORED BY EMBASSY

1. TUNISIA BUSINESS SEMINAR

The meeting was followed by the Tunisia Business Seminar, which was held online. During the seminar, Ambassador Elloumi discussed recent economic and investing trends in Tunisia and the population's high education levels and manufacturing power. The session included a virtual appearance by Mr. Abdelbasset Ghanmi, general director of Invest in Tunisia. In addition, Saraya Co., Ltd. presented a case study of its efforts as a Japanese company expanding into Tunisia.

Feedback from attendees was positive, with many saying that they had gained a deeper understanding of the current environment in Tunisia and its potential future, and that they now see Tunisia's potential as a country full of talented resources.

2. TURKEY BUSINESS SEMINAR

The OCCI and the Turkish Embassy in Japan jointly held a Turkey Business Seminar on March 9, 2022. The seminar kicked off with remarks from Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey Korkut Gungen, OCCI Vice-Chairperson Kyoko Hirose, and Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Turkey in Osaka, Kajiyama Ryusei.

Turkish Embassy Chief Commercial Counsellor Murat Yapici's presentation, "Turkiye : Economy, Trade and Business Opportunities," addressed the latest outlook on the Turkish economy and trade relationships, and introduced case studies of Japanese companies investing in Turkey. Commercial Counsellor Zeynep Kalahisal gave a presentation on "Start-up Ecosystem and Investment Opportunities in Turkey," discussing the opportunities in Turkey's thriving start-up scene.

The event wrapped with a lively Q&A session, with many engaging questions about doing business in Turkey.

OCCI will continue its efforts to strengthen its relationship with Turkey to help expand mutual business opportunities.

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INFORMATION FOR COVID-19

Japanese Government

<https://japan.kantei.go.jp/>

Osaka Prefecture Government

<https://covid19-osaka.info/en/>

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[O-BIC as one-stop service center for creating a foothold in Osaka]

<http://o-bic.net/>

[Information about scheduled events (in Japanese only)]

<https://www.osaka.cci.or.jp/event/index.php>



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