

- Business-as-usual with a narrow focus and no significant changes to current functions;
- Full conversion to a membership-oriented organization with no government support; and
- Abolition of the current CGCC system, accompanied by transfer of its public functions to other official bodies, and of its membership services to private industry associations.

Given the budgetary costs of the CGCC system, the view of the IC is that the days of the first option are numbered, and that either the second or third option would be an improvement compared with the *status quo*. Of course, during a transition period, governments at all levels might still wish to finance certain activities of the CGCC, and to use the CGCC system as a way to communicate with the nonstate business community.

Summary

Which strategy the CGCC adopts will depend, of course, on several factors, including the demands of private enterprise, the activities of other organizations, recent and prospective economic changes, changes in the role of public organizations, etc. In our view, the way the PRC's economic scene is changing means the CGCC will be unable to continue in a business-as-usual mode for long, especially given its continuing dependence on scarce government resources. At the same time, we judge that the Government is unlikely to be willing to shut down the CGCC system completely in the near future (as it has done in the case of some government departments). That gives the CGCC a respite in which to begin to implement a transformation that will attune it better to the needs of the PRC private economy. Of course, that conversion will take time, and abrupt attempts to convert the CGCC to a membership-funded organization independent of official financial support could be undesirably disruptive. A scenario that is both appealing and feasible would see CGCC's narrow functions continue to be financed by governments (with budgetary support declining over time), while new membership services would be introduced more or less gradually, depending on the capacity of individual LCs and the willingness of their memberships to pay.

Section 5: Assistance to the China General Chamber of Commerce

Several types of information could facilitate the CGCC's efforts to devise a working strategy. This section contributes information on the objectives and activities of modern chambers of commerce in more advanced economies throughout the world. Obviously, not all of those activities will necessarily be appropriate for the CGCC in the PRC. Hence, the CGCC needs to be selective in defining its role in promoting the growth of private enterprise, and also of SMEs. In this context, the feedback received from the Tsinghua University survey provides valuable information about the potential demand for the CGCC's services from its membership. In addition, lessons learned from the study tours about operating and managing chambers of commerce in other countries should be a major source of supplementary input. Once its leadership reaches a consensus on the future role of the CGCC and devises a strategy to attain its objectives, the next step should be to evaluate the system's current capacity to implement the strategy, and to develop an action plan to shore up that capacity where necessary.

In terms of the immediate constraints on private business, the CGCC's comparative advantages seem to lie in more comprehensive dissemination of information, selective provision

of upgraded services, and more effective intercession with all levels of government. Despite efforts to assist members gain access to finance, and experiments of the kind that were described in Box 2, there seems to be little call for the CGCC and LCs to engage in credit guarantee schemes or other initiatives to channel funds to enterprises. Clearly, however, in outlining a revised strategy and developing business plans, the CGCC and LCs can benefit from more knowledge of how foreign chambers collect, manage, and distribute information, as well as how they respond to their members' demands for services.

A revised strategy should specify general objectives for the whole CGCC system, leaving it to individual business plans to go into the nuts and bolts of particular activities. Inevitably though, CGCC's transformation will require adjustment to its existing organizational structure; a significant upgrading of its managerial and staff skills in such areas as business advisory services, database management, negotiation, etc.; considerably improved infrastructure (especially, information technology (IT) and physical resources); better procedures for expanding and retaining membership; and a major enhancement to its financial management. The upgrading of the skills of CGCC's staff to enable it to improve services to members might involve an expansion of the current team (that implies recruitment, but there should be an offsetting reduction of staffing in some low priority areas), especially in the main regional industrial centers where first class services are needed most. The objective should be to equip the CGCC with a substantially enhanced capacity to provide valued services to its members and to participate in the delivery of some publicly funded and/or donor assisted programs to assist members (and indeed the entire PRC private sector) to enhance their competitiveness.

Best Practices of Foreign Chambers of Commerce

In general, the broad family of chambers (including Chambers of Commerce, Trade, Industry, Crafts and Exporters) representing business fall into two main types: first, those established by statute and having a formal quasi-governmental function (Type 1) and, second, those that are voluntary membership organizations governed entirely by their members (Type 2). The first category predominates in continental Europe, while the second reflects more the Anglo-American tradition. An advantage of chambers of Type 1 is that they can be well resourced from compulsory membership fees, which gives them a sound, permanent financial footing. In addition, they can administer such governmental or quasi-governmental requirements as licensing or certifying businesses. Their drawbacks are the tendency to become bureaucratic and captured by the local political system in ways that cause them to fail either to provide valued service to members or to represent the general body of entrepreneurial interests. The main strength of Type 2 chambers is their ability to tap the genuine interests and energies of their members. By volunteering to join, members indicate their strong interest in supporting the activities of their chamber, and governance by members can ensure that their chamber represents their interests and provides services they both need and will pay for. The drawbacks are that these chambers are often poorly resourced and they can be "hijacked" by factional interests to the detriment of their ability to represent the general membership, which can cause them to be ineffective. The reality is that in both traditions there are some chambers that are effective and respected and others that are ineffective and irrelevant.

Typically, both types of chambers perform four main functions. They are: (i) to represent members' interests in political and policy discussions; (ii) to perform regulatory and other official or quasi-official functions relating to a particular area of business or trade; (iii) to supply services to their members (e.g., training, professional business advice, and information); and

(iv) to coordinate social and mutual support activities for business groups and individuals. The balance between these functions will vary with chamber type and location, and will reflect also the particular priorities found in different chapters of a national body.

Representation in Policy Forums: The Advocacy Function

In Type 1 chambers, where membership often is compulsory for all enterprises (in some circumstances there are choices of which chamber to join but membership in one from an approved list is mandatory), there are often formal processes for consultation (which can include business councils, and membership of special committees dealing with regulations and related policy matters) side-by-side with other less formal, but no less important, lobbying tasks. Where a chamber serves as the administrative body for registration of business and certification of origin for goods, for example, its official responsibilities lends it authority in its interventions for the membership. The combination of official responsibility and universal membership allows Type 1 chambers to be perceived to be in touch with the real interests of their members, and so able to represent them with governments, even when the reality is less clear cut.

In Type 2 chambers, where membership is voluntary, formal consultation processes do occur, but the norm is more likely to be informal lobbying and ad hoc representation. Being voluntary can mean that officials take them more seriously; their memberships clearly feel strongly enough to form a lobby, which shows their views must be genuine. In other circumstances, they might be dismissed out of hand as representing only narrow or vested interests. In no country, however, has this consideration prevented the proliferation of business associations that represent very specific interests—for example, bodies focused on a single policy issue (e.g. import tariffs); representatives of a single region; bodies speaking for a single industry, trade, or exporting group—from emerging as active policy players, rather than entrusting their interests to a single chamber with a broad representational remit.

Regulatory and Quasi-Official Functions: The Facilitation Function

The compulsory membership bodies (Type 1 chambers) are the main actors in this field. Often they are used to administer business licenses and certificates of various types—for example, they might certify that businesses have met all their statutory registration requirements and are known to have paid all relevant taxes. They also might be involved in liaison with central and local governments as well as their regulatory bodies on behalf of the membership, and could facilitate members' dealings with governments at all levels in complying with regulatory requirements and clarifying tax and other enforcement matters. Chambers also assist their memberships through the provision of arbitration services, and in organizing better business bureaus; services that frequently substitute for those that public agencies supply in other circumstances. Usually, each service that a chamber provides has an associated fee, which provides additional income for the chamber, or, at least, covers the cost of the service. Where chambers perform these functions well, they efficiently provide a business service that frees clients from having to contend with the vagaries of bureaucracy.

Member Services: The Service Function

This is the area of greatest variation in both coverage and quality of performance by all chambers. Virtually all provide at least a business-oriented information service, which covers

initiatives of and programs from public agencies working with business, essentially a signposting service that covers laws, rules and regulations. In relation to public programs, this can also extend to a gateway service: initial advice on eligibility for programs, and on how to apply for business licenses, environmental clearances, export permits and related customs clearances, etc., sometimes including direct help in making formal applications. Chambers also often act as a clearinghouse for business-to-business requests from nonmembers interested to buy goods and services or make commercial alliances with agents or partners in their region. Advising members on potential sources of finance is another area where chambers could be helpful and, to the extent that chambers do help firms to apply for bank loans, they might assist in preparing business plans, filling out loan applications, and meeting other requirements of lenders such as registering collateral, securing land titles or mortgages, and so on.

Additional information services include compiling registers of members to show their business competence and interests, essentially the basis of a chamber's promotional service. Even-handed treatment of members makes it difficult to extend this service to making recommendations about particular members. But that does not preclude hosting promotional events, including local buyer-seller meets; or organizing marketing missions to other localities to promote members' services and products; or hosting investors or other incoming groups looking to do business in the area. Indeed, in performing these functions chambers are often at their most visible. Their information services could include advice on the availability of equipment and technology, and their prices; on sources of training from domestic and foreign sources; on product markets and prices; on economic and other developments in the private and public sectors; on intellectual property protection systems; tax and other regulations; ISO certifications; impact of WTO requirements; and so on. In most cases, the provision of information also requires monitoring of the media for reports on developments in the private sector, and often involves the chamber directly in the collection and analysis of statistics and the conduct of periodic surveys.

The third category of services in which many chambers commonly involve themselves is training. This can be a very far-reaching activity, and because of the potential scope of training activities, more often than not, they are organized with the involvement of local training providers from both academia and the private sector. Training services are more prevalent where chambers have a significant membership of small firms, as larger firms are usually equipped to fend for themselves. The virtually unlimited options for training range from the basics of "doing business;" through advanced technical topics, especially where there is a particular craft or sectoral emphasis to the chamber's membership; to such specialist management areas as finance, taxation, marketing, human resources, management information systems, patent and license rights, standards, exports and foreign trade legislation, productivity and total quality assurance, and so on. Frequently, the chambers will need to institute training programs for their own staffs, in order to facilitate the provision of consulting and training services to clients, especially SMEs. Ideally, training services for SMEs respond to problems and issues that the SMEs themselves have identified, as member firms are best placed to determine what they need to improve their capacities and performance.

Another important area where chambers typically have a useful function is in providing information on the supply of consultant services, typically by preparing a roster of consultants who are able to supply technical and business services. Most SMEs are infrequent, and often very reluctant, buyers of consultancy services of any kind. Some of the reasons for this attitude lie in the actual or perceived cost, in the specialized nature of infrequently needed services, and

in the paucity of information on the quality of service providers. In offering this service, a chamber seeks both to improve the availability of information to its members and to help upgrade the quality of technical consultants.

Chambers can also be involved in the hybrid area between information and training typified by topical workshops and seminars, which often are led by “best practice” companies among the chambers’ memberships, and leavened by high status external contributors. In some instances, these workshops also perform a policy and lobbying function, as a sufficiently high profile event can raise an issue’s visibility on the political agenda. Chambers can also assist in organizing or operating business incubators and technology parks. Although it may be less relevant for the CGCC in the PRC, chambers in other countries are also involved in administering “matching grants” programs, which extend grants to those SMEs willing to acquire better technology to boost their competitiveness and so facilitate penetration of international markets.

Social and Mutual Support: The Networking Function

One class of activities of successful chambers that is crucial but often forgotten is the provision of a forum for social interchange. Running a business—especially a small business—can often be a lonely affair, and the chance to network with peers (and public officials) in a social setting can be invaluable. Raising the status of businesses in social and political life also helps with the broader local climate or culture, and serves to encourage more and higher quality participation in commercial activity. Events can range from something as simple as a “private club” where members are known to congregate, to glittering public social events where people of note will clamor to be present. An active, restricted program of social events held more frequently can complement such “one-off” events. Another associated area is events that celebrate local achievements: for example, such awards as “Young Businessman of the Year,” also can serve to heighten social standing and create a positive climate for entrepreneurship.

Once the effort has been made to establish an extensive network of businesses then chambers often become potential partners for the delivery of such additional third party services as buyer-seller contacts or links to potential investors, and they can play a value-added targeting role for business-oriented economic development projects. The marginal cost of adding extra services is lower than is setting up an independent delivery system; and targeting services as the need becomes apparent can lead to faster and deeper penetration among the beneficiaries.

Redefining the CGCC’s Mission and Strategy

The case for a change in the role of CGCC is compelling. The IC’s view is that the change scenario most likely to succeed is one where some of the current functions supported by governments will continue (but decline over time) and new membership services will be introduced gradually (and increase over time). The strategy would be to establish the CGCC as a modern organization delivering valued services to its membership, and as an influential voice with the government and business community for reforms—of policies, institutions, laws and regulations—that improve the PRC’s business climate. To succeed in practice, change would have to be designed for implementation in a phased manner, taking account of members’ demands as well as the CGCC’s institutional and resource capacity. To carry out its future mission, the CGCC will have to transition from being a one-way bridge between the government and the business community to a two-lane expressway that carries government’s message to the

business community and, even more importantly, carries back to the government the concerns and aspirations of that community. Development of a vigorous two-way dialogue between the private sector and the government will serve the membership better and also improve the formulation and execution of public policy.

Under its new strategy, the national chamber could become a loosely centralized federation with essentially autonomous local chapters serving the grass-root level members. The changes to be introduced at the national level will differ from those at the LC level; however, at both levels, the emphasis should be on efficiency and real accountability to a chamber's members rather than to the Government. Although the advocacy function will benefit the entire business community, the improved service function should serve predominantly private SMEs, especially startups. The strategy should outline how reform will be implemented nationally and locally. This may lead to the abolition of certain functions and downsizing of the current organization, including closure of some LCs. To bolster its credibility with the actual and prospective membership community, the CGCC will need gradually to reduce its emphasis on its political role and focus more on its services to members. As the CGCC's quasi-official role declines, the members of the CGCC and LCs should elect their boards of directors. In turn, the boards should appoint the chambers' managers and determine their compensation. Such a strategy could also involve the CGCC in enhancing liaison and coordinating more effectively with other national and international organizations. As the CGCC's members increasingly involve themselves in international trade and investment, the CGCC eventually might need to establish an international presence by establishing branch offices in countries that have extensive commercial links with the PRC.

As well, reforms might require changes in the way members are selected. The focus probably should be on private enterprises, with clear guidelines for membership eligibility and annual fees. Over time, the existing membership roster will need to be purged so that only active dues-paying members remain on the list. This is likely to result in an initial reduction in membership; thereafter, membership growth will be determined by the value that members obtain from joining the CGCC system. Once the new role and membership criteria have been established, the CGCC will need to undertake a nationwide promotion campaign to publicize its new image and to raise its credibility with the business community. The campaign will have to emphasize new activities, and might need to be waged over a sustained period by the CGCC and its LCs. A professional public relations organization could help greatly in designing and implementing the promotion.

Various governments provide most of CGCC's current budget. However, the higher costs likely to accompany a substantial expansion of CGCC activities (as would be expected if it begins to lead the private sector in improving productivity, boosting exports, and developing a better business climate for SMEs in the PRC) will be unaffordable if using public funds alone. To finance its expanded mandate and to make it accountable to its members, CGCC should investigate ways to generate more resources from private sources, with the obvious and most promising candidates being through membership fees and grants, as well as fees for services. In this regard, the experience already gained from the fee-based services provided by the Information Center and the Training Center should help considerably.

Financing for CGCC's operating expenses could include, therefore, membership fees, direct and indirect government support, fees for services, and domestic and foreign grants. The costs of CGCC's projects could be met entirely by the project sponsors or shared in some manner, for example, on a 50-50 basis with the participating firms contributing their half. The

shared-costs model would ensure the attention of the beneficiary firms' managements to the project; they are more likely to be concerned with the performance of any project that is funded at least partially from their own pockets. That might help, too, in recruiting members if they can be assured that they are genuinely likely to benefit. Of course, the introduction of cost recovery mechanisms might need to be gradual, and could depend on the content and objectives of the services provided, as well as the capacity of members to pay. Under no circumstances should plans to expand services to members be based on expectations of increases in the governments' support for the CGCC system; participating members should finance all new activities.

Study Tour: Purpose and Lessons

The main objective of the study tours was to familiarize CGCC and its LCs with the operations of chambers in selected countries (United States; France; Germany; United Kingdom; and Hong Kong, China) under different economic conditions, in order to benefit from their experience in serving their members. The focus of the tours was on operating modern chambers, developing partnerships and exchange relations with chambers, identifying organizational and staff skill requirements, participating in selected activities organized by chambers, and gaining familiarity with service delivery. The delegations comprised personnel from the CGCC national headquarters and the LCs, including managers and staff. The delegations visited national and local chambers, their clients and members, and financial institutions. After the tours, the delegations prepared reports identifying the lessons from their visits, in order to share their experiences with their colleagues in the CGCC system. These lessons should become an important input in redefining the role of the CGCC, determining its skills and training needs, and choosing the mix of services and delivery mechanisms of most benefit to members.

Training and Recruitment Strategy

In general, a training strategy is based on organizational objectives, and comprises job descriptions in line with those objectives, and analyses of training needs (to identify the gap between the existing skills base and future skills needs), and how to provide training. After CGCC reaches consensus on its new role and organizational objectives, it will need to redefine job descriptions in line with these objectives. This process involves considering the following:

- What new functions (or activities) are required from the organization? The organizational structure itself might need to change, with the abolition of unnecessary positions, as well as consolidation or elimination of some units.
- What new institutional arrangements are needed to support the new functions?
- What changes in personnel are needed to perform the new functions?
- What are the responsibilities of each job, especially the new ones?
- To what extent can training of existing personnel substitute for recruitment?

How these questions are answered will depend largely on how ambitious CGCC is in defining its new goals. A training program is the action plan for a training strategy; a good one comprises organizational objectives, training goals, training methods, and identification of the trainees and the trainers. In the PRC, there have been cases where, despite good design, training programs failed because either the participants were unfit for the training topics or the trainers were ill-equipped to present them.

New job descriptions will point to the need for a comprehensive training program for the entire organisation based on the skills needed by individual staff members to attain the new corporate objectives. For example, if CGCC decides to assist its members with business development, it will need expertise in helping members prepare business proposals, apply for business licenses, and seek financial resources. If the objective is to provide more comprehensive and better quality business information, it needs more expertise in media and industry monitoring, as well as database maintenance and management. The training program should say what goals are to be achieved by training and proceed to identify what types of courses are needed and their frequency, duration, content, and location. Some courses may need to be offered regularly, others occasionally. Much of the training might focus on “training of trainers;” the trainers would then supply, in turn, the training needs of the staff of the LCs or, in selected cases, the needs of employees of member firms.

Training can either be on-the-job or off-the-job, the choice depending on circumstances. On-the-job training has the advantage of allowing the employees to perform their regular jobs at the same time. It can include such techniques as orientation seminars, job instruction training classes, apprenticeships, internships and assistantships, job rotation, and mentoring. On-the-job training often can be conducted in the CGCC’s or member firms’ own facilities, and, in most cases, it can be added to the responsibilities of an employee’s supervisor.⁵⁵ Off-the-job training might comprise formal diploma or even degree courses in universities or similar tertiary institutions, but it could also be based on more informal and short duration activities, for example, lectures, special studies, case studies, conferences and seminars, and so on. Irrespective of location, CGCC and its LCs are likely to find that out-sourcing most training activities to experts is the most cost-effective way to keep knowledge up-to-date. In this regard, CGCC could consider making formal long-term arrangements to hire some colleges in the PRC and foreign chambers of commerce to perform off-the-job training.

Recruitment should be based on the need for specific skills, in turn largely depending on actual demands of members for services, and not simply to replace retirees. Well-designed job specifications are an essential prerequisite for recruitment decisions. The job specification details the education, skills, experience, and other personal qualities needed to perform the job satisfactorily, and sets standards against which a candidate for the position can be measured. Because skills can be developed through training, the cost of acquiring skills through new employees should be weighed against the cost of training. In some cases, however, the services of independent contractors, (for example, for IT, training, accounting and legal services), can be procured at lower cost than developing the capacity in-house.

Pilot Program to Introduce Changes

Any institutional reform is challenging, time consuming and costly. Especially in the PRC, change is best introduced gradually and with commitment from the top. Also, the introduction of new services by CGCC and the LCs should be gradual and in response to the memberships’ demands. What appeals as a useful pilot for the PRC is to initiate reforms in a few LCs that have begun to adopt international standards. The pilot would be introduced more widely (and adapted to local conditions) based on the experience of the pilot LCs. In selecting LCs to participate in the pilot, the emphasis should be on their willingness to innovate, and on the attitudes of their

⁵⁵ Obviously, CGCC’s own Training Department is equipped to provide needed facilities and already supplies training in some of the suggested areas.

members and local governments. Well-executed pilot programs would contribute importantly to the overall success of the reforms. Beginning with the pilots, local chambers should be free to determine the services they will provide and the activities they sponsor (as some now do) without instructions from CGCC central. Depending on membership demands in particular chapters, the CGCC and its LCs could introduce some of the menu of services discussed earlier and highlighted in Box 5.2.

Box 5.1 The Training Program for the CGCC

For this project, a training program was designed and implemented from 11-14 March 2002 for an average of 15 participants per day from various departments of CGCC and representatives of LCs. The training program had three parts: the role and service to members of chambers of commerce in other countries; best practices in business, financial and information services that can be provided by a chamber of commerce to its members; and evaluation of the training needs in CGCC and its LCs. The training program aimed to familiarize the participants with the practices of chambers of commerce in other countries; identify which existing services of CGCC and LCs can be improved; project future functions and services of CGCC and its LCs; evaluate the training needs of their staff; and review a draft training manual. As part of their training, participants in the study tours were to prepare a questionnaire to enable them to acquire the information needed for their reports.

The training director introduced the two types of chambers of commerce (described in section 4) and compared them with the CGCC. Representatives from the British Chamber of Commerce in the PRC, Chamber de Commerce et d'Industrie de Paris, and Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce presented their associations' roles and services. The British Chamber of Commerce is a self-governed organization with a voluntary membership and fees (Type 2); the other two chambers are organizations with a compulsory membership and fees that perform quasi-governmental functions. The presentations illustrated the commonalities among the chambers, and also their differences. Following the presentations, the program participants compared the foreign chambers' practices with their own and identified areas for improvement.

The training director also presented materials on best practice in business, financial and information services, including standard formats that are commonly used in preparing a business plan and applying for a loan. The participants were exposed to the documentation required for bank loan applications in the PRC, and learned about the functions of a credit guarantee system.

The participants were shown how to locate information on the Internet. (More hands-on Internet training was conducted for the Economic Department of CGCC in advance of the training program.) By searching for information from useful web sites, for example, those of the SETC, United States Small Business Administration, British Chamber of Commerce in the United Kingdom, and CGCC's own web site, the participants recognized deficiencies in their current information services to members, as well as the need for training to improve their skills in finding and disseminating information.

To identify the training needs of trainers, the director prepared an outline of a training manual geared toward the needs of small businesses; this was distributed to and discussed by participants in the program. The training manual covered strategic planning, business planning, financial management, marketing, human resource management, and foreign trade. The participants saw potential uses for the manual, especially in pointing to important topics for members from which informational pamphlets could be produced and distributed; the same materials could be disseminated through their web sites. The training program materials were left with CGCC to serve as input for a similar program that CGCC might develop for its staff.

Summary

The profound changes in the PRC economy and the improved climate for private business create opportunities for CGCC significantly to transform its role and functions. Indeed, in the absence of some fairly major changes, CGCC risks becoming an increasingly marginalized organization. There is considerable potential, however, for CGCC to reorient itself from its traditional role of linking private enterprise to the state system, to an expanded role emphasizing service to members. Any expansion of the activities of CGCC and its LCs should be in response to the demands of members as indicated by their willingness to pay for the services the CGCC system provides. Over time, CGCC should expect that the budgetary support provided by governments will be withdrawn; certainly the governments' support cannot be expected to expand in a way that creates a basis for a sustained expansion of activity. The Tsinghua University survey of

CGCC members indicates where an expansion of CGCC's activities might be valued most: better information, better professional advice, and better representation with governments at all levels. To deliver better services in these areas, CGCC and its LCs will need to raise the skills of their employees, which means both enhanced training and recruitment.

Box 5.2. Menu of Services

The menu of services that might potentially be supplied by CGCC and its LCs is virtually limitless and, as the text emphasizes, individual local chapters should have considerable autonomy to supply those services for which their memberships are willing to pay. Within the broad classifications of functions of chambers (advocacy, facilitation, professional service provision, networking, etc.) the areas in which CGCC and its LCs might provide services include:

- liaison with national and local governments and regulatory agencies;
- representation on statutory bodies, business boards, committees, and other national and international forums;
- liaison with international bodies and foreign firms, including by maintaining a presence for the CGCC abroad;
- arbitration services for disputes between members, and with non-members by prior agreement of the parties;
- performance monitoring of third party providers of goods and services, and other activities of better business bureaus;
- assistance in establishing "business incubators" and technology parks;
- research on national business issues with the objective of influencing policy formulation and implementation;
- compilation of business surveys and hosting policy forums on important business policy matters;
- dissemination of information on policies, laws, regulations, domestic and international trade, markets, products, and services;
- organization of benefit plans for members, including pension plans; health, life, and disability insurance, etc.;
- assistance to small businesses to secure inputs needed for their growth;
- help to members in exploring new business and investment opportunities, and in meeting visiting businessmen and officials investigating opportunities for trade;
- organization of formal trade and investment forums, trade fairs, and other exchanges promoting business opportunities in the PRC;
- organization of training conferences and seminars in such areas as trade, investment, economy, tax, standards, and marketing;
- assistance on WTO-related issues, and ISO standards and certification;
- advice on patent and brand protection, and dealing with infringement;
- promotion of members' products through the CGCC website (for example, by posting company profiles, logos, and brands);
- publication of a monthly magazine on latest business news and CGCC activities, including updates on important events organized by CGCC; and
- organization of social events, including those that recognize the achievements of members.