

China dubs SMEs economic drivers, extends support

By CHEN HONG
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Small and medium-sized enterprises around the world are embracing development opportunities arising from a new round of technological and industrial advances, according to a Chinese official.

"SMEs are numerous in quantity, most active in innovation and have had a profound impact on the global community since they have served as a major engine to empower the world economy as a whole," said Wang Jiangping, vice-minister of industry and information technology.

He reiterated the importance of SMEs at the 15th China International SME Fair, which closed on Saturday, in Guangzhou, capital of South China's Guangdong province.

"Many governments are actively exploring new channels, new modes and new techniques to support the globalization of SMEs," said Wang.

In China, SMEs, which account for 99 percent of all registered companies, contribute 50 percent of tax revenue, 60 percent of gross domestic product and 70 percent of the technological innovation, as well as employing about 80 percent of the working-age population, he said.

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology has mapped out a five-year plan, from 2016 to 2020, to support SMEs by helping them to bring in funds, technology, talent and management expertise from abroad, with the aim of improving their strengths and helping them access global supply chains.

According to the Guangdong Business Environment Improvement Evaluation report, which was released during this year's fair for the



Wang Jiangping (third from left), vice-minister of industry and information technology, attends the opening of the Maker in China Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition Final at the China International SME Fair. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Officials mark the opening of the 18th APICTA Awards in Guangzhou, one of the most influential contests in the sector of information and communication technology in the Asia-Pacific region.

first time, the coastal province enjoys a dynamic business environment that is capable of supporting swift, quality economic development. But further improvements are needed in the areas of talent policy, financing support, fundamental scientific support for startups and the provision of venture capital, it said.

Chen Liangxian, vice-governor of Guangdong, said the government has issued a package of new policies and

incentive measures to offer SMEs more support in the future and help them to thrive.

Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates, which co-hosted this year's fair for the first time, is planning a closer partnership with China to develop SMEs, according to Abdullah al-Saleh, the UAE Economy Ministry's undersecretary of foreign trade and industry.

He said during the fair that more than 4,000 Chinese companies have been

attracted to the UAE by its favorable business environment, investing at least \$2.8 billion in the country. Now, many UAE-based companies, especially those in the hospitality and tourism industries, are also planning to come to China, he added.

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization, which promotes industrial development for poverty reduction, inclusive globalization and environmental sus-

tainability, began co-hosting the fair last year and has agreed to extend its support for another five years.

Philippe Scholtes, managing director of UNIDO's program development and technical cooperation division, suggested that the organization collaborate more with China and the UAE to improve internet access in low-income countries, which could potentially benefit local SMEs a lot.

Attendees applaud fair for forging connections

By CHEN HONG

Exhibitors have lauded the China International SME Fair as being a helpful and effective bridge to connect them with potential partners from different markets.

The fair, which began in 2004 in Guangzhou, capital of South China's Guangdong province, has developed into the largest of its kind in China. It creates opportunities for overseas SMEs to enter the Chinese market and supports Chinese SMEs that wish to go abroad.

Nearly 3,020 exhibitors from both home and abroad attended this year, including 668 overseas exhibitors from 39 countries, regions and international organizations such as Brazil, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, the United States and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

O. Ayeni Abimbola Kafilat, CEO of Bimkaf Palace, a Nigerian plant oil and food processing company with 13 full-time workers, said she had found potential partners at the fair that would help her export coconut oil from China.

"It's my first time in China. I didn't really expect it could be so fruitful," she said. "Hopefully we will sign agreements to decide the price and quantities before I leave."

Kafilat added that during a business matchmaking activity at the fair she had met with Chinese company Singfosolar, which offered to provide photovoltaic technology to her factory. Such technology could help combat the frequent power outages the factory experiences, she said.

The two companies will now further discuss the deal and hash out the details, according to Liu Shuiqing, president of the Dongguan-based company.

"Her requirements are very detailed and clear. We hope we can reach an agreement and find the best solution soon," Liu added.

Sri Lankan business owner Chula Samarawickrama, who runs a company with 70 workers called Summerreturn that manufactures and exports garments, handicrafts, tea and gifts, said she had been kept busy at the fair answering queries about her products.

"I am looking for Chinese partners to import our products into the Chinese market," she said.

"Some Chinese and foreign companies have shown an interest and I will keep in contact with them."

Other businesses present at the fair included Sanshin Kako, a Japanese company that specializes in making tableware for schools and hospitals.

Hidemasa Takashima, from the company's overseas business group, said this marked the second time the manufacturer had attended the event, adding that he was confident its products would soon be available in the Chinese market, once the right agents and distributors had been found.



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China International SME Fair



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