

## North Africa under UFI's microscope

*Paris/Marrakech – 31<sup>th</sup> March 2015:*

Hosted by the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade ([ICDT](#)), the UFI Open Seminar in Africa recently concluded in Marrakech, Morocco. This first UFI meeting for many years in the Maghreb countries attracted CEOs, decision makers and industry professionals from the Middle East and Europe, in addition to Africa. This annual seminar is the major UFI event for the region, bringing together exhibition industry professionals, both UFI members and non-members, this year from 15 countries.

Dr. El Hassan Hzaine, ICDT Director General, said in opening the seminar: "ICDT is very happy and proud to join efforts with UFI the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry in bringing this important event to Morocco for the first time. Such meetings are special occasions for Moroccan industry leaders and professionals to meet their counterparts from world over."

Very positive feedback showed that the content of the seminar met delegates' expectations with the theme "Exhibitions in North Africa: today and tomorrow" and informative presentations delivered by industry experts and decision makers from Morocco, Tunisia and Libya, reviewing the current exhibition scene in Maghreb countries and outlining the market potential in a promising but challenging part of the world.

Aziz Alami Gouraftei, Director General of [OFEC](#), emphasized that the government of Morocco is supporting the exhibition sector, ensuring strong and sustainable economic growth, creating wealth and at the same time backing the social development process of the country. "The sectors that generate most events are the ones most present in the structure of GDP" he said, describing examples from Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. Mr Gouraftei mentioned that Casablanca currently has the lion's share of the Moroccan exhibition industry which accounts for 75% of the business in the country.

According to Bisma Hmadi (GECO EXPO), the strong economy in Tunisia boosts consumer shows and she confirmed that following the Jasmine revolution, the sector in Tunisia is in a transitional phase.

The attendees also witnessed an amazing story of business adaptation in difficult times by Damian Casapinta. He shared how [ATEX](#), a private organiser, succeeded in setting up a temporary exhibition venue and hosting an international show while operating in Libya during an unstable period.

International exhibiting industry experts invited the audience on a global tour, highlighting hot industry topics. [Hannover Messe's](#) Andreas Gruchow is convinced that there is only one leading global event for each sector, and that fulfilling the promise of quality is the core of brand strategy worldwide to export the events. JWC's Thomas Pollehn highlighted some of the key measures of competitiveness on which UFI's global membership are focusing.

Ideas for attracting and retaining the best talent of the digital generation in our industry were presented by Gnosoulla Tsioupra-Lewis ([UBM Live](#)), who offered seven tips to work with millennials, the first being flexibility!

Paul Woodward, UFI's Managing Director and the seminar moderator concluded: "There is a growing interest in North Africa among UFI members as we could see from the fact that industry leaders from 15 countries joined us for this meeting in Marrakech. We were particularly pleased to make closer contact with our hosts, the Islamic Centre for the Development of Trade, an important facilitator of trade and

business in 57 countries. We have started some interesting discussions on education and research which we look forward to continuing.”

Key supporters of the Open Seminar in Africa were UFI’s Diamond Sponsors: the Global Experience Specialists ([GES](#)) and the Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau ([TCEB](#)), the UFI Regional Host [Expo Centre Sharjah](#) and the seminar’s Gold Sponsor Riyadh International Convention & Exhibition Centre ([RICEC](#)).

Full details of the 2015 UFI Open Seminar can be found on the event website:

<http://www.ufi.org/marrakech2015>

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**About UFI - The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry**

*UFI is the association of the world's leading tradeshow organisers and exhibition centre operators, as well as the major national and international exhibition associations, and selected partners of the exhibition industry. UFI's main goal is to represent, promote and support the business interests of its members and the exhibition industry. UFI represents over 650 member organisations in 83 countries around the world. Over 900 international trade fairs proudly bear the UFI approved label, a quality guarantee for visitors and exhibitors alike. UFI members continue to provide the international business community with a unique marketing media aimed at developing outstanding face-to-face business opportunities.*

**For more information about UFI:**

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