

UFI Middle East and Africa Conference 2021 heralds return to in-person industry events in the region and showcases optimism for the future

- Around 150 participants from Dubai, the Middle East/Africa region and beyond join the first post-pandemic events industry conference in the region
- More than 30 speakers attend on site, at UFI's first in-person event after 15 months of digital events

Paris/Dubai, 27 May 2021: UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, has successfully held the first events industry conference in the Middle East and Africa since pandemic lockdowns. Hosted by the Dubai World Trade Centre, on 26 May, the "UFI MEA Conference" brought together leading players from the region and beyond to network, exchange ideas and forge new partnerships, with participants travelling from as far as the United States.

His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General of Dubai Tourism and Dubai World Trade Centre Authority, and Kai Hattendorf, Managing Director and CEO of UFI, delivered welcome addresses.

Leaders from the regional and international exhibition sector gathered in Dubai – thanks to the city's well-established measures to safeguard the well-being of all visitors – to have the opportunity to see how it has led the way globally in restarting business events in the wake of the pandemic.

With a mix of speakers from inside and outside the industry, participants enjoyed a world-class programme of content, including economic outlooks, case studies, lessons learnt from the pandemic and plans for the future. There were also multiple networking opportunities to catch up with friends and colleagues, meet new people and enjoy the company of colleagues.

Issam Abdul Rahim Kazim, CEO of Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing, says: "Driven by the city's strong, decisive leadership and prudent handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dubai has led the way internationally in safely restarting exhibitions, trade shows and other business events, which play a vital role in economic and knowledge development locally. Just as we've worked with local and international stakeholders to ensure the city has been well-placed to resume events, we are committed to working with the wider industry to share knowledge and learning. Hosting the UFI Middle East and Africa Conference has enabled us to engage with key leaders from the global business events community and provide a platform for its continued rebound."

Kai Hattendorf, UFI CEO and Managing Director, adds: "We are very happy to offer our members and the industry the opportunity to re-connect in person, on site, face to face, this week. You could literally sense the excitement in the conference hall, as colleagues from across the region met each other again, took stock of where we are as markets re-open and discovered future opportunities in the Middle East and beyond. UFI is ready to support the industry across the region in this recovery."

Trixie LohMirmand, Executive Vice President at the Dubai World Trade Centre, says: "The Dubai World Trade Centre is delighted to finally welcome so many UFI delegates to connect again face to face, celebrate the industry's achievements and jointly accelerate the global momentum of events re-opening. On this wonderful occasion, I'm also proud to share the launch of the Sum+ Of Us Women in Events Network, which has received a pledge of support from UFI, whose own Special Interest Group for Female Leadership strives to raise the profile and visibility of female leaders and talents in the exhibition industry. The network will be the region's first women leadership development initiative, and has been established to support talented, dedicated women to evolve, grow and create greater impact in the exhibitions and wider events industry. As founding sponsor of Sum+ Of Us, the Dubai World Trade Centre is delighted to receive the full endorsement of HE Helal Almarri and the support of UFI, which is at the forefront of driving positive change in the diversity agenda."

Naji El Haddad, UFI Regional Director for the Middle East and Africa, says: “This conference is a clear manifestation of the industry’s resilience and determination to thrive, despite the current circumstances. The success of the event wouldn’t have been possible without the support of our host, Dubai World Trade Centre, and our destination partner, Dubai Tourism. I’d like to offer a special thanks to all of our sponsors, speakers and delegates for their contribution and participation.”

The event is the latest in a series of important shows and conferences taking place in Dubai over recent months, following on from Gitex Technology Week, Gulfood and Arabian Travel Market. In the coming months, Dubai will continue to host major events, including Arab Health and The Hotel Show, as momentum builds towards Expo 2020 Dubai.

This year’s conference was supported by UFI’s Diamond Sponsors: the Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), Qatar National Tourism Council (Qatar), Shenzhen World and Freeman. A wide range of sponsors also backed the event. Full details of the 2021 UFI Middle East and Africa Conference can be found at: www.ufimea.org

As always, UFI members can listen to talks and watch presentations from the conference online on demand, by visiting the members’ area of the UFI website (www.ufi.org).

Attachments:

- [Picture of the conference: Issam Abdul Rahim Kazim speaking](#)
- [Picture of the conference: Trixie LohMirmand speaking](#)
- [Picture of the conference #3](#)
- [Picture of the networking #1](#)
- [Picture of the networking #2](#)

About UFI – The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry: UFI is the global trade association of the world’s 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 directly represents more than 50,000 exhibition industry employees globally, and also works closely with its 60 national and regional association members. More than 800 member organisations in 83 countries around the world are presently signed up as members. Around 1,000 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.

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