

UFI MEA Conference brings region together in Doha, Qatar

- Around 150 participants from MEA and beyond gathered in Doha, Qatar
- Industry experts and speakers discussed present and future opportunities for MICE industry in the region

Paris/Doha, 22 May 2023: UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, held its Middle East and Africa (MEA) Conference in Doha, Qatar this 9-11 May. Hosted by Visit Qatar, around 150 exhibition industry leaders from the region and beyond came together to hear from industry experts and other senior speakers, benefit from numerous networking opportunities, and explore the host city.

The programme kicked off with a presentation by Boston Consulting Group which mapped out the trends in global trade as well as the driving forces behind the shift from the West to the East and Africa while also highlighting its impact on the exhibition industry. It showed that the two major growing sectors for the region are metals and chemicals, presenting the opportunity for exhibition organisers to launch business events related to these specific sectors.

The business shift to the Middle East & Africa was the topic of a panel that included speakers from Saudi Arabia, Rwanda, Qatar and the UAE, representing both the private and public sectors. The panelists explained the increasing importance and popularity of the Middle East and Africa as prime locations for business events, offering exceptional facilities and cultural experiences.

As the host country of the UFI MEA Regional Conference, C-level experts from Visit Qatar, Qatar Airways and Katara Hospitality Group highlighted the state-of-the-art infrastructure and facilities that the country has developed in the past few years that transformed the country into a competitive MICE Hub in the region and beyond.

Another session debated the future of work in light of growing global trends, such as the rise of freelancing jobs and remote/hybrid work conditions. It also discussed issues of diversity, inclusion and talent retention, which are currently being brought to light by businesses and shareholders.

Before the end of the conference, new research about the state of the industry was unveiled by UFI's partner, GRS. The findings showed that the exhibitions NPS have significantly grown among both exhibitors and visitors, from -7.3 points to +23.7 and from 21.5 to 35.3 points, respectively. The research demonstrated that the top growing sectors for B2B trade shows include F&B/hospitality, health, transport/logistics and energy.

Berthold Trenkel, Chief Operating Officer of Qatar Tourism, said, "Qatar Tourism is proud to have hosted the prestigious UFI MEA Regional Conference in Doha for the first time. This event demonstrates Qatar's rising global prominence as a hub for leading business events. Our unwavering focus on specialty tourism sectors like meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) is a

strong part of our long-term strategy and is vital to our vision of becoming the region's fastest-growing tourism destination by 2030."

"I am so pleased to have been able to attend this excellent conference which took place in one of the most active regions of the world. Industry leaders from around the world gathered as they have never done before. Covid and all its damage have been left behind and Qatar acted as a catalyst by showcasing its excellent facilities, tourism and air transport. I thank everyone for attending and participating with such energy and hope for the future," added **Michael Duck, UFI President**.

UFI members from the region also met for an MEA Chapter Meeting, which provided the opportunity for the candidates for the current chapter leadership election to introduce themselves whilst presenting their thoughts and ideas for further supporting the Chapter and the exhibition industry in the MEA region.

In addition to sessions, delegates also enjoyed numerous organised social events, such as a sightseeing city tour. Participants were able to immerse themselves in Qatar's rich cultural heritage during their visits to the National Museum of Qatar, the heritage Souq Waqif market, the Katara Cultural Village, as well as enjoy a Levantine lunch on the city's highest hill, among other sights. A crucial aspect to each of the regional conferences, the social events provide a platform for delegates to network with each other to create new connections or future collaborations. Furthermore, it allows them to gain a better understanding of the host country's culture.

As the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, UFI organises annual regional conferences in Middle East/Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, and Latin America, as well as the UFI Global Congress. The next event will be the UFI European Conference which will be held in Maastricht, the Netherlands this 14-16 June. The Global Congress will take place in Las Vegas, USA, from 1-4 November.

Videos of all sessions will be made available to UFI members and conference participants in the coming days through the UFI website.

Full details of the UFI MEA Conference 2023 can be found on the event website: <https://www.ufimea.org/>.

Attachments:

- [UFI MEA Conference 2023 visual](#)
- [UFI MEA Chapter Meeting photo](#)

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 820 member organisations in 85+ countries around the world are presently signed up as members. 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.

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