

Exhibition World Bahrain Hosts a UFI Expert Day for the First Time in Bahrain

Sakhir, Kingdom of Bahrain – October 02, 2023: The first UFI Expert Day in the GCC, a special gathering for regional leaders of the exhibitions and business events industry, was successfully hosted by Exhibition World Bahrain (EWB) on 1st of October 2023. EWB is the Middle East’s largest and newest exhibition and convention centre. UFI is the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, and its main goal is to represent, promote and support the business interests of its members and the exhibition industry.

The one-day event focused on attracting new events and exhibitions, announcing new projects in the Kingdom, and saw over 60 leading Industry experts from the International and regional MICE communities take part. This included a diverse group of senior industry leaders and decision-makers from convention and exhibition centres, professional associations, prominent event organisers, MICE planners and other key organisations.

The UFI expert day attendees took advantage of the UFI network to build strong ties and connections with MICE new partners and private sector key players, in addition to showcasing Bahrain’s appeal as a leading regional hub of MICE industry, supported by well-advanced infrastructure, business-friendly ecosystem, and the state-of-the-art ultramodern venue (EWB).

The UFI expert day provided insight into the “Status of the MICE Industry in the Kingdom of Bahrain” and its contribution to the local economy and business community during the last two decades, as well as EWB’s vital role in supporting Bahrain’s Tourism Strategy 2022-2026 to become a major regional player in the MICE industry. In addition to examining the “Impact of AI and the Future Role of Data in the Exhibition Industry”, how artificial intelligence is powering the exhibitions of the future and how artificial intelligence can help complement face-to-face events and in-person functions with the rise of virtual meetings and hybrid conventions amid and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

An elite roster of tourism and MICE industry experts took part at the UFI expert day, namely: H.E. Dr. Nasser Qaedi, CEO of Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA); Dr. Debbie Kristiansen, General Manager of EWB; Mr. Naji El Haddad, MEA Regional Director of UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry; Dr. Jeffrey Goh, CEO, Gulf Air Group (GFG) ; Mr. Peter Hall, President of EMEA, Informa Markets; Ms. Marie Berengere-Chapoton, General

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Manager of Al Areen Palace & Spa; Mr. Wilbert Heijmans, MD of Info Salons ME; Ms. Lulwa Sami Ebrahim, Director of Marketing and Communications at IGA; Mr; Ameen Al Tajer, CEO of Infinitware; and Ms. Mona Mirza, Information Technology Manager at EWB.

EWB is a proud UFI member and aims to make the most of such an affiliation by allowing for active knowledge transfer and networking with international MICE contacts. The centre's membership is a clear indication of its level of professionalism and competence as the Kingdom's driving force to place it at the forefront of the MICE industry regionally and internationally. With a strategic location as well as being a cross-cultural hub, it is an added value to be part of an international association that will open doors with other MICE centres across the globe.

On the occasion, Chief Executive Officer of the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA), H.E. Dr. Nasser Qaedi, commented, "We are delighted to welcome top MICE experts to Bahrain, hosting UFI expert day for the first time at Exhibition World Bahrain. MICE & Business is one of the leading seven pillars of Bahrain's Tourism Strategy 2022–2026 that will contribute to diversifying tourism products in the Kingdom and increasing the tourism contribution to the national economy. EWB is an iconic milestone for the Kingdom's infrastructure and will add value to the tourism sector, leading Bahrain to transform into the ideal regional MICE choice, and we are steadily committed to achieving the tourism strategy goals to promote Bahrain as the international hub for business tourism. As part of our vigorous endeavour to boost inbound tourism, we'll be unveiling several brand-new major global events and projects soon, which will have a positive impact on the tourism attractiveness of the Kingdom."

Dr. Debbie Kristiansen, the General Manager of Exhibition World Bahrain, added: "We are honoured to have hosted UFI Expert Day for the first time in the Kingdom of Bahrain as an active member of UFI. This prominent event comes at a time when Bahrain has become exceptionally competent to lead the MICE industry regionally and internationally with its largest convention and exhibition centre (EWB), providing the premiere momentum to attract world-class events and promoting the Kingdom as a top destination for MICE, entertainment, business tourism, hospitality, large weddings and much more. EWB collaborates very closely with the Ministry of Tourism, BTEA, Gulf Air and other local stakeholders to take Bahrain's business tourism industry to new heights and foster further growth and development in this promising sector."

Mr. Jeffrey Goh, Group CEO of Gulf Air Group Holding, mentioned: "What is key for us at Gulf Air Group Holding (GFG) is connectivity. We are actively working with BTEA and the private sector to promote Bahrain as a preferred destination for MICE events. One of many events

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we are about to host is a global aviation event together with Informa Markets in 2024. Our strategy is clear as an enabler for MICE industry top organisers and visitors to Bahrain.”

Mr. Peter Hall, President of EMEA at Informa Markets, said: “Bahrain’s market is very vital component for our business, and our plans are crystal clear when it comes to bringing MICE events on a massive scale to the Kingdom. Thanks to the inauguration of EWB, we managed to double the size of Jewellery Arabia last year, providing extra spaces for exhibitors, and we are optimistic for a brighter future for our cooperation with BTEA and EWB to host more grand conventions and expos here in Bahrain.”

Ms. Marie Berengere-Chapoton, General Manager of Al Areen Palace & Spa, added: “Based on Accor’s 30+ years of being a pioneer in bringing sustainable development to hospitality, Al Areen Palace & Spa is highly committed to shaping a more sustainable future of hospitality and travel by building a model where we contribute more than we take and collaborating closely with various teams to embed sustainability across all our activities, and we are constantly striving to attract the best Bahraini professionals to our workforce and to the MICE and hospitality industry as a whole.”

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About Exhibition World Bahrain (EWB):

Inaugurated in November 2022, Exhibition World Bahrain (EWB) is the Middle East’s newest exhibition and convention centre and the largest in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Spanning over an area of 309,000 SQM, EWB encompasses 10 versatile exhibition halls of different ceiling heights and a total area of 95,000 SQM, all of which are equipped with the essential technical services and storage spaces for each hall, together with independent exits and entrances, which makes it the ideal spot for all types of occasions of different sizes and arrangements, from big conventions and exhibitions to conferences and meetings, live entertainment performances, large-scale weddings, galas and celebrations, corporate functions and much more.

Exhibition World Bahrain is owned by the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA), and it’s operated by BTEA’s strategic partner, ASM Global, the world’s leading venue management company with over 350 venues under its portfolio worldwide.

EWB is committed to continuing to host and attract large-scale international, regional, and local exhibitions, conferences, live performances, large weddings, and events from around the world, further elevating the Kingdom’s position as a regional pioneer in the MICE industry.

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For more information about EWB and its state-of-the-art features and facilities, please visit:
<https://www.ewbahrain.com/>

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