

## UFI General Assembly reviews a year of advancements

- UFI's global membership has reviewed a year of activity, highlighting advocacy efforts, events, research, and education
- Leadership reports on record number of members from 86 countries and regions
- New North America Chapter to serve growing membership across that region

**Paris / Las Vegas – 1 November 2023:** Representatives from UFI member companies from around the world met in Las Vegas (USA) today to review UFI's activities throughout 2023 and to confirm plans for the year ahead.

The 2023 UFI General Assembly took place before the UFI Global Congress, which is welcoming around 500 industry leaders from more than 50 countries and regions this week. With the pandemic in the industry's rearview mirror, the assembly reviewed a year defined by new global challenges and opportunities.

Chaired by UFI's current President, Michael Duck, the General Assembly reviewed and previewed the association's initiatives to support UFI's members around the world. Membership has grown to reach a new all-time high of more than 820 member companies, representing 86 countries and regions.

**Michael Duck** summarised the year: "Trade fairs have proven to be powerful catalysts for economic growth. By bringing together businesses, investors, and consumers, they serve around the world as a marketplace for new ideas, products, and services. The successful trade fairs of this year have facilitated numerous business transactions, generating revenue, stimulating job creation, and fostering economic development. They have been instrumental in revitalising industries that were severely impacted by the pandemic."

**Duck** continued: "UFI had a busy and successful year as well. I can report to you today that our community is bigger than ever, with more than 820 companies listed as members."

To reflect the growing number of member companies based in North America and doing business there, the UFI President announced the launch of a dedicated North America chapter in the association. **Duck** said: "Around 7% of UFI's global membership are headquartered in this region, and more than a quarter are active here. UFI's leadership has decided to set up a North America Chapter that will comprise Canada, the US, and Mexico, as a legacy of this year's Global Congress taking place in the US."

**Duck** explained the purpose and role of these chapters in the organisation: "UFI never runs national offices, or chapters. UFI does not compete with national exhibition industry associations, it collaborates with them and supports them. UFI has been a trailblazer for collaboration among industry associations around the world, with a track record of more than 20 years on this."

Summarising UFI's activities for 2023, **Kai Hattendorf**, CEO and Managing Director of UFI says: "The past twelve months have certainly been busy. We ran more event around the world than ever before, and also have seen UFI returning to in person events in Asia. We have been able to extent UFI's educational offers with new on-site editions of our core programmes across multiple regions. UFI research has confirmed our industry has recovered globally from the pandemic slump. And we have seen some real breakthroughs in our advocacy work, being recognised by entities like the UN, the OECD, ISO, and others."

Throughout the year, UFI's work focused on industry reopening and recovery, against a challenging backdrop of world events, fluctuating economic conditions around the world, and ongoing pandemic closures, especially in China.

UFI's main activities in the past year included:

### **UFI Events & Communities**

In 2023, UFI has run the full programme of in person events again. In addition, UFI Connects and other digital formats continue to be used as a complementary type of events.

The sold-out Global CEO Summit (GCS) took place in Lisbon, Portugal. Following the pan-Asian reopening, the Asia-Pacific Conference took place in person again, in March, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The LatAm Conference took place in San José, Costa Rica, in April, followed by the MEA Conference in May in Doha, Qatar. The European Conference in June in Maastricht, The Netherlands, ended the series of regional conferences for the year, collocating two UFI Forum events and launching the initial Event Directors Summit.

In addition, other events were organised as well, serving the need of members to meet and connect. UFI backed and supported the Sustainable Events Summit in New York, USA, in September, as part of New York Climate Week. The association co-organised UFI Expert Days in Malaysia and Bahrain, and – together with AEO, SACEOS, and SISO - organised the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Asia CEO Summit in Singapore in October.

The 2024 UFI events schedule is available at [www.ufi.org/events](http://www.ufi.org/events).

### **Research**

UFI delivers regular research insights on global, regional, and topical themes, most of them are widely considered as the global industry benchmarks. Most notably, two editions of the "[UFI Global Barometer](#)" report were released. Conducted in collaboration with many UFI association members, both editions track the industry's recovery and post-pandemic growth, showing a growing number of markets on course to exceed their respective 2019 record years in 2023. Additional research is to be released around the UFI Global Congress.

UFI's research is available at [www.ufi.org/research](http://www.ufi.org/research)

### **Advocacy**

UFI's engagement around industry advocacy is growing significantly – in line with the fact that the association is being seen and recognized as the global representative of the exhibitions segment of the events industry. By working with global entities like the UNFCCC, OECD, ISO, and others, UFI is able to position and represent the sector's interests. Together with partner associations, UFI is

supporting the work of Industry presences in Brussels (EEIA) and Washington, DC (ECA). UFI continues to host and facilitate “Global Exhibitions Day”, the industry’s annual day of campaigning. The 2023 edition again reached an audience in more than 100 countries around the world.

### Education

As requested by the industry, UFI launched the “UFI Certified Professional” (UCP) designation in 2021. The first UCP programme hosted by an organisation took place in July 2023 in Malaysia, hosted and supported by MyCEB. 20 participants achieved their UCP accreditation there alone. Multiple editions of the “Exhibition Management School” have taken place again in 2023, online and on-site, most recently in Riyadh, Saudi. In addition, the first post-pandemic edition of the UFI-VMA Venue Management School will take place in Shenyang, China, in December 2023.

More on UFI’s education programmes is available at [www.ufi.org/education](http://www.ufi.org/education)

### UFI’s outlook for the year ahead

With the industry embarking on another year of growth despite challenges, UFI will continue to focus on serving its global membership base to drive their ongoing success. Current initiatives will continue, especially around the most pressing industry issues – from staffing challenges to the impact of digital developments, and from economic pressures to environmental necessities.

UFI’s Global CEO Summit will kick off the 2024 events roster, taking place on-site in Amsterdam (the Netherlands) from 31 January - 2 February 2024.

The 91<sup>st</sup> UFI Global Congress will take place in Cologne, Germany, from 20-23 November, hosted by Koelnmesse. For 2025, UFI’s Board of Directors has selected Hong Kong as the destination for the UFI Global Congress, the event will be hosted by Asia World Expo.

**Geoff Dickinson** (CEO, dmg events) is UFI’s next President, taking up office at the end of the Global Congress in Las Vegas. He is joined in UFI’s new presidential leadership trio by **Hugh Jones** (CEO, RX Global) as Incoming President, and **Michael Duck** (EVP – Commercial Development, Informa Markets) as Outgoing President.

UFI is grateful to all its members, partners and sponsors, notably the Diamond Sponsors: Visit Qatar, and Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB).

### Attachments:

- [Geoff Dickinson’s biography](#)
- [Geoff Dickinson’s photo](#)
- [Photo of UFI’s Presidential Trio for 2023-24](#)

***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.*

For more information, please contact: UFI Headquarters: Email: [media@ufi.org](mailto:media@ufi.org) Tel: +33 (0)1 46 39 75 00 or <http://www.ufi.org>