

UFI Global Congress in Las Vegas “goes beyond”

- 90th edition of the event welcomed around 500 participants from 50+ countries and regions as well as more than 60 speakers
- Content, business exchanges, networking at first ever US edition of the event
- Geoff Dickinson takes over as UFI President for the 2023-2024 year
- New North America chapter set up as Congress legacy to serve the region

Paris / Las Vegas – 7 November 2023: UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, welcomed around 500 participants from 50+ countries and regions to its 90th UFI Global Congress in Las Vegas, USA this 1-4 November, for four days of business exchange, content, and networking. With around 40 percent of participants attending the Congress for the first time, many of them from North America, the event managed to introduce many new industry colleagues to the global community.

Held annually, the UFI Global Congress is the largest and most international gathering of exhibition industry leaders, open exclusively to UFI members as well as members of AIPC, ICCA, and SISO associations. The 90th edition was hosted by the Las Vegas Conventions and Visitors Authority (LVCVA) at the ARIA Resort & Casino.

Summarising the event, UFI CEO **Kai Hattendorf** says: “Despite challenges around the world, the global exhibitions and business events industry is growing to reach new record levels. As we literally go beyond old limits, the Congress was perfectly timed to drive our industry’s conversation and agenda forward. The energy at the event was felt by everyone.”

Commenting on this year’s destination, **Hattendorf** adds: “Holding the event in the US has been one of many ‘firsts’ for UFI in the past ten years, as our association continues to grow and evolve, and as more and more US businesses have joined, looking to partner and expand into other markets. In addition, ever more organisers are looking to launch and expand show brands into the US. Forging these connections between one market and the global industry is what UFI excels in. In partnering with the LVCVA as our host, we have been able to deliver both a memorable and successful Congress.”

Speakers & content programme

The Congress offered a wide mix of programmes, sessions and exchanges. On the main stage, the first sessions zoomed in on the state of the industry at large, before dealing with the five most relevant industry trends in dedicated strategic sessions in a variety of formats. From the “Exhibition Industry Board Meeting,” to a top-leader conversation as well as to the newly launched “How I see it” talks, delegates could get a multitude of perspectives from top industry leaders.

On Friday, parallel “spotlight sessions” offered hours of operational insights into best practices from across the industry as well as updates on AI applications or advocacy. This year’s group of UFI Next Generation Leaders took the main stage as well to present their take on a new blueprint for the design and development of our industry’s core product – the show floor and its surroundings.

The main stage also hosted hours of special programming focusing on the US exhibitions market, welcoming State Senator Julie Pazina who spoke on how to build public and private coalitions to create meaningful impact.

On the Xchange stage, event tech businesses and destinations were able to showcase their products and offerings.

All Congress sessions will be made available for UFI members and Congress participants on demand to re-watch through the UFI Website in the coming days.

Net Zero Carbon Events initiative

Across many of the sessions, the topic of sustainability stood out as a central challenge for our industry. UFI remains on the forefront of the “Net Zero Carbon Events” Initiative that is hosted and facilitated by the Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC). JMIC ED Alexander Alles gave a status update from the initiative during the Congress.

Special moments and memorable experiences

With the Congress taking place in Las Vegas, and thanks to the Congress hosts LVCVA and the teams from MGM Resorts and the ARIA Resort & Casino, there was no shortage of special experiences for Congress participants.

A rooftop welcome reception with reminiscences of the ‘old’ Vegas set the mood, while a spectacular “Grand Night Out” on Thursday let participants take advantage of the city’s most prominent club spot Drai’s, overlooking the Las Vegas strip.

On the closing Saturday, many delegates took advantage of a number of excursions and experiences offered to combine relaxed networking and exploration. From a hike in nearby Red Rock Canyon to visiting an old gold mine at Eldorado Canyon, or from a speed car experience to a Hoover Dam excursion, there were plenty of options. Many delegates also took advantage of a dedicated concierge service for individual arrangements to explore even more options.

Matchmaking sessions see hundreds of 1:1 meetings to foster new industry connections

Ahead of the Congress, special matchmaking sessions were arranged to ensure that participants could begin their time at the event with new connections right away. Around 550 such meetings were arranged through the collaboration with mdg (a Freeman company) and Grip.

Welcome to the 2023/24 UFI President

At the close of the Congress, Geoff Dickinson, CEO of dmg events, formally took over the office of UFI President for the year to come.

Addressing the global UFI community, **Dickinson** said: “We need to position ourselves as an industry always striving to be better and an industry that creates platforms for our customers to positively develop and grow their opportunities for a better future. Together we can use our events to continue to be a catalyst for change for a better sustainable inclusive world – this is our purpose as it has been for thousands of years and I am sure for thousands of years to come.”

Dickinson succeeds Michael Duck, Executive VP Commercial Development, Informa Markets. In 2024, both will serve as part of UFI's Trio, which includes the incoming, present, and immediately past Presidents of the association, along with incoming President Hugh Jones, CEO of RX Global.

A new Term, and a new Chapter as Congress legacy

The Congress week also included meetings of UFI's governing bodies. Following the regular elections for chapter, committee, and working group leaderships as well as the elections for the UFI Board of Directors, the week marked the beginning of their new three-year terms respectively.

Reflecting the growing numbers of UFI members based in North America, the association has set up a North America Chapter to serve these members better. UFI now operates five chapters around the world: Asia-Pacific, Central & South America, Europe, Middle East & Africa, and North America.

The new chapter got founded under the leadership of Michael Duck as UFI President. A long-time supporter of the chapter idea, he was already involved when UFI opened its first regional chapter more than 20 years ago - called the "Asia/Pacific and Middle East and Africa Chapter".

The UFI Global Congress – context and outlook

Open to more than 50,000 industry professionals globally who work for UFI member companies, the UFI Global Congress takes place each November and is known as the exhibition industry's largest global meeting of the year, combining international networking with unique content and experiences.

In 2024, the UFI Global Congress will take place between 20-23 November in Cologne, Germany, hosted by Koelnmesse. For 2025, Hong Kong has been selected as the host destination.

Recent hosts have been Muscat, Sultanate of Oman (2022); Rotterdam, The Netherlands (2021); and Bangkok, Thailand (2019). In 2020, due to COVID-19-related global travel restrictions, the Congress was held digitally, with programming from Hong Kong, Dubai, London, and Bogota.

Sponsors and partners

UFI is grateful to the many sponsors and partners that helped to make the Congress a success, first and foremost UFI's Diamond Sponsors, TCEB and Visit Qatar, and the Congress Gold Sponsors Asia World Expo, Freeman, and Hong Kong Tourism Board. The full list of Congress sponsors and partners is available here: <https://www.uficongress.org/en/sponsorship>

Attachments:

- [90th UFI Global Congress key visual](#)
- [Photo of UFI President Geoff Dickinson during his inaugural speech](#)
- [The new Trio](#)
- [Pictures of the Congress 1](#)
- [Pictures of the Congress 2](#)
- [Pictures of the Congress 3](#)
- [Pictures of the Congress 4](#)

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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