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UFI 76th Congress Heads “Back to the Future”

Paris/Zagreb, October 28, 2009: UFI's 76th Congress, hosted by Croatia's Zagreb Fair, brought together 350 of the world's leaders in the exhibition sector. Undertaking to move their industry forward, UFI members from 58 countries exchanged ideas with a roster of speakers charged with providing insight on the current state of the industry and strategic concepts which will guarantee its position in the future as the only face-to-face marketing media. UFI's President John Shaw, kicked off the Congress, stating, “This past year has been a challenging one for the world's exhibition industry as all businesses have worked hard to cope with the impact of the global economic crisis. We have seen, however, that the best quality exhibitions continue to provide great value to marketers and some have even managed to grow in these tough times.”

Dominic Swords, noted economist, highlighted the need for innovation as a driver of growth. “Studies show that the return to innovation is maximised at the turning point of a recession when the market is most receptive and when innovators can develop market share advantages.” Building on this, Werner Dornscheidt (President & CEO Messe Düsseldorf) addressed the value of sustainable service and facilitation management as keys to providing increasingly empowered customers with the added-value benefits necessary to guarantee their loyalty in today's highly competitive and transparent market. Trendwatcher Vincent Everts took this a step further challenging the exhibition industry to adapt to today's digital consumer lifestyle. Exhibition professionals must apply vision and drive to take this digital momentum and use it to create an integrated exhibition experience. Cathy Breden, (CEIR Executive Director) explored the changes ahead as she identified the social media habits of today's young exhibition attendees and how exhibitors can use these exciting tools to adapt yesterday's business model to tomorrow's professionals. A panel of exhibition professionals from AFIDA (Asociacion de Ferias Internacionales de America) and SISO (the Society of Independent Show Organisers, USA) applied these theoretical considerations as they debated the practical application of these factors and their impact on the exhibition industry of the future.

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Manfred Wutzlhofer, UFI's 2009/2010 President, closed the 76th Congress saying, “In these challenging times, it is more important than ever to focus on the quality of events and on improving the professionalism of our industry. UFI has once again succeeded in bringing together the global leaders of the industry to focus on how we can build better exhibitions to serve our customers more efficiently.”

UFI Congress participants were treated to a unique chance to visit the historic Adriatic city of Dubrovnik in celebration of Zagreb Fair's 100th anniversary. Participants enjoyed the “Back to the Future” theme of the 76th UFI congress by profiting from this occasion to exchange knowledge and develop business contacts in a particularly historic environment.

The 77th UFI Congress will be hosted by SACEOS (Singapore Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers) at the Marina Bay Sands in Singapore from 10-13 November 2010.

UFI is the association of the world's leading 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 its members and the exhibition industry worldwide.

By promoting the unique characteristics of trade fairs, UFI:

- Provides an efficient networking platform where professionals of the exhibition industry can exchange ideas and experiences;
- Promotes trade fairs and exhibitions globally as a unique marketing and communications tool;
- Provides its members with valuable studies and research regarding all aspects of the exhibition industry;
- Offers educational opportunities and a variety of professional seminars; and
- Deals with issues of common interest to its members through regular meetings of its regional chapters and thematic working groups.

UFI represents 535 member organisations in 83 countries around the world. 844 of its members' exhibitions have earned the UFI Approved Event quality label.

UFI members are currently responsible for more than:

- 4,500 exhibitions, most of them being international;
- 50 million square metres of space rented annually;
- 1 million exhibitors each year;
- 150 million visitors annually.
- 12 million square metres gross rentable exhibition space.

For additional information, please click on: www.ufi.org.

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