

## UFI Releases First Study Providing Data on the Exhibition Industry in the Middle East and Africa

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*Paris, November 20, 2007:* UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, has released its study of the Exhibition Industry in the Middle East and Africa. This comprehensive study, prepared by UFI's Middle East/Africa Regional Office, provides an overview of the exhibition industry in 13 Middle Eastern and 24 African nations. It is the first study to provide documented data on the exhibition industry for these countries. Findings reveal an industry with significant need for quality expansion in some areas while state-of-the art facilities exist in others. The exhibition industry may be seen as an economic indicator for these nations. Ibrahim Al Khaldi, UFI Middle East/Africa Regional Manager, stated, "as the first report of its kind, this UFI study includes verifiable data on the exhibition industry in a region where solid sources of information are not easily available."

The UFI study reveals that there are 34 purpose-built exhibition venues in the Middle East providing a total indoor exhibition space of 633,206m<sup>2</sup>. Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have six venues each. The Tehran Permanent Fairground stands out as the largest venue with indoor space of 120,000m<sup>2</sup>.

In 2006, a total of 568 trade fairs and exhibitions were held in 30 cities in thirteen Middle East countries. This reflects an increase of almost 23% in the number of events over a two year period. Iran accounts for the highest number of trade fairs organized in 2006, followed by the United Arab Emirates and Syria. In the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) states, consumer products and education are the leading exhibition sectors followed by real estate and construction. For the rest of the Middle Eastern countries, industrial and engineering trade fairs take the lead, followed by construction and agriculture.

The exhibition industry is strongly present in some parts of the African Continent with South Africa standing out as the exhibition industry giant. A relatively prosperous exhibition zone is found in the North, including Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. Tanzania, Kenya, Senegal, Mozambique and Zambia also have exhibition industries. Some of these are expected to achieve tangible progress in the future, especially where the exhibition infrastructure is planned to be modernized or renewed. However, in almost half of the African countries, no professional exhibition industry and no purpose-built exhibition infrastructures could be identified.

In the 24 African countries included in the scope of this UFI study, 49 purpose-built exhibition venues were identified. South Africa leads with twelve exhibition venues, half of which 105,178 m<sup>2</sup> are in Johannesburg. Cairo is second with 75,687 m<sup>2</sup>, and Algiers third with 50,000 m<sup>2</sup>. Exhibition venues with more than 25,000 m<sup>2</sup> exist in Pretoria, Tunis, Casablanca, Dakar and Dar es Salaam.

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369 trade fairs and exhibitions in 32 cities in 24 countries on the African continent were documented for the year 2006. South Africa accounted for 75 of these, followed by Tunisia with 62, Egypt 47 and Algeria 46. In terms of exhibition themes, general trade fairs and consumer events take the lead in Africa, followed by IT, telecoms and agriculture.

The constant growth of the number of exhibitions, infrastructure development and the recent tendency to support investment, provide a promising future of the exhibition industry in the Middle East. Iran, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates project additional indoor exhibition space of 146,500 m<sup>2</sup> will be available by the year 2010. In Africa, venue expansion and modernization plans have been announced for Libya and Kenya. However, deficiency of qualified exhibition personnel, weak international promotion, bureaucracy and political conflicts may hamper development.

In conclusion, the study identifies three exhibition market “leaders”: Iran, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates. Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, can be seen as potential exhibition industry “challengers.” Other countries included in this study are considered as market “developers,” due to the relatively small impact of the exhibition industry on their economic and commercial development.

An Executive Summary of the [UFI Study on the Exhibition Industry in the Middle East and Africa](#) is available on UFI’s website at [www.ufi.org](http://www.ufi.org).

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Attached: Executive Summary

UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, promotes, serves and represents the trade fair industry worldwide. Via its member organisations, including the world’s leading show organisers and exhibition centres, national and international professional associations and industry partners, UFI is present in 84 countries on 6 continents. UFI members are responsible for the management and operation of over 4,500 exhibitions around the world.

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