

South Africa to host UFI Congress 2017



Johannesburg was chosen as the official host of the 84th UFI Congress 2017 at the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry (UFI) Executive Committee meetings, held in Turkey last year.

Africa is now set to take its place at the forefront of the global industry, with South Africa's exhibitions, conferences and events industry as one of the country's most important sectors to attract foreign visitors and investment.

"Africa represents the next frontier for growth and development for UFI and a number of our partners have been working together to grow the continent's share of regional, continental and global business events," said **Craig Newman**, chief executive officer of Johannesburg Expo Centre (JEC) and vice-chair of the Middle East Africa chapter, UFI.

"We look forward to hosting this prestigious event and being involved in Africa's development as a promising future platform for the global exhibitions and events industry."

The 84th UFI Congress, which is open to UFI members only, will take place at the Sandton Convention Centre from 1-4 November 2017.

UFI members include members of the Exhibition Association of Southern Africa (EXSA) and the Association of African Exhibition Organisers (AAXO).

The annual event moves from region to region each year, having been hosted in Italy in 2015 and in Shanghai this

November, bringing together leaders and strategic thinkers for a four-day review of the state of the industry.

With more than 600 members from 85 countries, UFI's main objective is the worldwide representation, promotion and support of its members and the exhibition industry.

As an efficient networking platform, industry professionals are able to meet with key players and exchange ideas and experiences. Members also have the opportunity to improve their expertise, strengthen customer relations, exchange knowledge and share best practices.

UFI plays a major role in promoting trade fairs and exhibitions globally as a unique marketing and communications tool.

In addition, it provides its members with valuable studies and research regarding all aspects of the exhibition industry.

It offers educational training opportunities to both members and non-members through high-level seminars and education programmes, ensuring that the exhibition industry continues to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to hold its position as the top marketing media.

Mr Newman joined UFI in 2014 as a board member in order to draw more attention to the role that Africa can play

in this global industry.

"As the vice-chair for the Middle East Africa Chapter, one of my chief responsibilities is to see to the growth of UFI within Africa," Mr Newman said.

"South Africa, in particular, has the experience, the expertise, the know-how and the infrastructure – all in one place to become the official gateway for large global companies into Southern Africa.

"International exhibitions and events companies will continue to look at new opportunities and partnerships in South Africa as the country's industry becomes one of the top sectors for attracting foreign visitors and investment," he said.

"Large international exhibition companies have recognised the growth potential of this market and they will be looking to Africa to grow their companies, their footprint and their revenue."

The UFI Congress is well-supported and well-attended by the members of the association, and they are regarded as the major players in the exhibition industry.

The UFI Congress 2017 will therefore be a platform, for those who would like to launch their businesses locally, to meet with big potential partners from the international arena. There will also be an array of sponsorship opportunities available.

"We are excited to host the UFI Congress 2017 in South Africa and we anticipate that it will be a fantastic and dynamic programme for all who attend. We look forward to welcoming all members within their unique industries, as well as their colleagues to our country," he concluded. ■