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## UFI Congress in Cairo Focuses on Strategic Industry Issues

**Paris, France:** Attended by 327 participants from 51 countries, UFI's 70<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress, examined issues which will be impacting the trade fairs and exhibitions industry in the years ahead. Hosted by UFI's Africa/Middle East Chapter, the Congress brought together the world's industry's leaders to examine the strategic issues which will be confronting professionals in the trade fair sector in the future. Hisham El Haddad, Chairman of the hosting UFI Africa/Middle East Chapter, noted "we are at a commercial crossroads and trade fairs are one of the most efficient means for bringing the supply and demand elements together."

As emphasized by Prof. Dr. Klaus Goehrmann (UFI VP and Chairman of the Board, Deutsche Messe Hanover), "while the main mission of a trade fair continues to be the facilitation of information exchange, the development of information technology has had a big impact on the evolution of trade fairs."

The Congress observed that while independent virtual trade fairs have not proven successful, information and communication technology has nevertheless made positive inroads into exhibition operations. Over the past decade, widespread implementation of online services and IT techniques into the trade fair environment has facilitated the exhibition experience for both the trade show exhibitor and visitor. The next step will be to apply data mining techniques to improve analysis capabilities in the future.

"Soft" factors such as trust, sensorial response, and personnel communication are also key determining elements in any successful trade show exchange. In this regard, UFI Congress speaker, sociologist Bernard Cathelat, identified personal contact as the one unswerving constant in a "world of virtual change". In a process of mass customization, trade fairs can be expertly matched to their beneficiaries by converging data collected with business objectives and a variety of communications channels to increase their value for all concerned.

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Ruud van Ingen, newly-elected UFI President, summed up the Congress' findings by stating that, "we have the capacity to become masterful information logisticians. Ultimately the continuing success of our industry relies on our ability to harmonize the knowledge of the needs of our clients - the exhibitor, with those of his client – the visitor."

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*UFI, the International Association of the Exhibition Industry, represents the trade fair and exhibition industry worldwide. Via its 248 member organisations, including the world's leading show organisers and fairground owners, 37 professional associations and 11 industry partners, UFI is present in 74 countries in 154 cities on 5 continents. UFI members around the world organize and operate over 4,000 events every year.*

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