

Statement by Manfred Wutzlhofer
UFI President
76th UFI Congress, Zagreb 2009

First of all, I am very thankful for the confidence which has been placed in me by electing me to the position of UFI President. It is a great honor and a challenge to take on this important position in the coming year.

My predecessor, John Shaw, Cliff Wallace and the UFI Team have done an outstanding job helping UFI to further evolve into the unique global organization for the exhibition industry that it is today. The fact that they recently did so during an unprecedented global financial and economic crisis, which of course will have long-term effects on the exhibition industry, makes honoring this accomplishment even more important.

John Shaw has earned our heartfelt gratitude and special recognition. He deserves a great deal of credit for his commitment to UFI. Our heartfelt thanks and special recognition also go out to our Managing Director, Vincent Gerard, and the entire UFI Team which, as always, has done an outstanding job during this last term of office.

I would also like to thank all the members and member organizations that have actively stood by and supported UFI, especially in the various UFI committee meetings and international conferences.

Last but not least, I would like to convey our special thanks to the hosts of the 2009 UFI Congress here in Zagreb – Zagreb Fair and its management and staff as well as all supporting staff in Zagreb and throughout Croatia. You have done an outstanding job. We will always look back on this congress fondly and with thanks.

My term of office continues to be influenced by developments related to the global economic crisis as well as by structural modifications to our exhibition business' changing demands by our customers on our exhibition venues, the fairs themselves and fair-related services. However, severe paradigm shifts in global priorities, especially in the area of environmental awareness, also affect us directly.

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For this reason, I feel that action is necessary in the following areas:

1. Regardless of today's global shifts, it is clearly recognized that trade fairs and exhibitions are still of prime importance to the economy – and in some cases they are even more important than ever before. Especially in times of crisis, domestic and international economic partners need exhibition platforms to send positive signals to their strategic markets to launch innovative products, to discuss crisis-management measures and using this knowledge respond quickly, flexibly and correctly.

For UFI, it is both a privilege and a responsibility to call the attention of the media to the special role of exhibitions as they provide important opportunities to the global and local business communities.

2. When it comes to the quality of our exhibition venues and events, experience has shown that our customers' demands tend to increase dramatically, in particular during times of crisis. Marketing services that showcase the exhibitors' products and services to the greatest extent possible and the presence of as many high-quality visitors from appropriate target groups as possible are particularly important. Exhibition participants also expect to find the best possible service at the venues where the events are held.

This calls for the continuous, creative adaptation of exhibition concepts and the constant development of service quality. This in turn calls for highly qualified, highly motivated employees. The exhibition industry belongs to the service sector and requires quality personnel with a constructive attitude for success and acceptance. For this reason, we must make sure that promoting and advancing the training and qualification of exhibition employees remain UFI's special responsibility and concern, now and in the future.

3. Taking environmental requirements into account, and promoting them, is a global challenge and an important task for everyone, including the exhibition industry. For the global event industry, it is imperative that our behavior be as environmentally friendly as possible, and that we conserve resources. We must systematically promote the themes of environmental protection and sustainability when planning, organizing and holding fairs and exhibitions.

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When it comes to these three tasks – promoting fairs and exhibitions in the media, training and qualifying exhibition employees, and supporting environmental protection measures in the exhibition industry – UFI has the unique opportunity to develop and apply global standards and to provide this guidance to others. This is something that we should all be actively promoting, and I cordially invite all of you to join us and support us in this effort.

Naturally, doing so may not be at the expense of the diverse range of highly appreciated activities and measures provided by UFI and its partner organizations as well as those within UFI.

Above all, we want to further intensify our mutual communication and our joint gatherings. Unlike any other institution, the exhibition industry gives exhibiting companies platforms around the world where people can meet and exchange information and ideas – a unique information and communications opportunity – to promote their commercial success, to improve the decision-making quality of their business partners and – last but not least – to enable wonderful experiences with partners, customers and colleagues.

That also applies to each of us here, and UFI, which we all share, gives us the best opportunities to do so. Let UFI put us to intense use. On that note, I wish everyone here the utmost success in their work and a wealth of helpful, interesting and friendly contacts with one another.

Because we in the exhibition industry want to be helpful and **sustainable!**

Thank you for your attention!