

Speech by Renaud Hamaide, UFI President 2013/2014 – Seoul, November 15, 2013

Dear colleagues and friends,

I am delighted to be with you here today in my new position as UFI President. This is so important to me: being President of UFI is a great job!

It is a real privilege for me to stand here before you as the head of this big, global family devoted to the exhibition industry. It is also an honour to succeed Chen Xianjin, the first Chinese President of our organisation, who did such an outstanding job. This past year he has led us with strength and determination, helping UFI to assert itself more and more.

Today our passion for this exciting trade fair media brings us together from around the world. Since 1925, UFI has spearheaded the creation of this unique multicultural association that now has 638 exhibition organizers, venue managers and partners of the industry as our members.

But before presenting my vision of our association for the coming year, I would like to thank some groups and individuals in the room. First, the UFI Board of Directors, whose members think I will make a good president. Thank you very much.

I would also like to thank AKEI, the Association of Korea Exhibition Industries, which is hosting us today in the magnificent city of Seoul, in the heart of South Korea. With a population of around 10,000,000 and over 25,620,000 in the greater metropolitan area including Incheon, Seoul is the world's third most populous megalopolis. Its residents enjoy economic and cultural wealth combined with traditional heritage stamped with modernity. At a time when South Korea is undergoing brisk economic growth, especially in the congress and exhibitions sector, and with no fewer than 19 Korean organisations as active UFI members, it seemed almost natural for us to hold our Congress here this year. To you, and to Coex our Congress venue, thank you very much for your hospitality. The teams at UFI, AKEI and Coex have done an outstanding job here.

How can UFI be summed up in a few words? It is of course the organisation that is the most-representative, and also the most in tune with the business trends and realities of the exhibition industry around the world. UFI allows us to speak the same business language in every product sector, to everyone, regardless of whether they are professionals or members of the general public.

I would add that UFI publishes the bi-annual Global Barometer, one of our industry's most valuable research tools, so that each of us can develop a sound business strategy and comprehensive approach to our exhibition products.

My vision as this organisation's President is very clear. I hope it will encourage you to fully back the team of efficient, well-informed professionals around me today. They strongly support you in your activities throughout the year. More than ever, UFI will be the special partner in our world of exhibitions, blending local, international, global and multicultural dimensions.

UFI's membership is truly global. My aim is for us to be even more economically, socially and environmentally representative of this global industry across borders. Growth, development and unity are my top priorities. The stronger we are in each of our activity sectors, the less vulnerable we will be to the world's economic fluctuations. That is one of the key items I would like to develop with you during my term.

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As someone who has much more faith in union than in division, I am an ardent proponent of the recent merger of the UFI CEO Forum (UCF) and tfconnect's Global Event Summit, which will take place in 2015. 2014 will be an important transition year to jointly redefine the objectives and programme of this event, which is guaranteed continuing success. Merging these two major events, two of the most important gatherings in our industry, will undoubtedly bring together the best attributes of each to make an even better event, one that will meet our expectations with the continued quality and professionalism we expect. We will keep the best elements and build upon these to make the UCF even better! This merger reminds me of a quote in which I sincerely believe and that appears as an inalienable factor of success: "Alone we can go faster, but together we can go much further".

Last but not least, I am convinced that today the exhibition industry is one of the surest and most economical ways of doing face-to-face business. I do not believe in total virtualisation leading to a "100% digitised" world. But I am certain that the world of IT will be key to promoting the growth and development of our real-world events.

Dear colleagues,

By now you understand that I intend to develop these points in 2014. I will tirelessly organise and expand on them as I carry this message on behalf of UFI. Thank you for your attention. I am counting on your active support during my term as your UFI President.