

Dubai welcomes the return of the MEADFA Conference

The travel retail industry in the Middle East and Africa reconvened in Dubai this week for the first MEADFA Conference in over two years.

The event, held from November 21-23, welcomed more than 460 delegates to the Jumeirah Creekside Hotel, with nearly 100 more connecting to the conference livestream on TFWA 365.

The event was hosted by Dubai Duty Free, organizer of a memorable gala evening at the Jumeirah Creekside's Secret Garden.

Highlights of the conference program included a candid discussion of the key challenges facing the industry featuring Aer Rianta International Deputy CEO Anthony Kenny; Ramesh Cidambi, COO of Dubai Duty Free; Frédéric Chevalier, Chief Operating Officer - Europe, Middle East and Africa at Lagardère Travel Retail; Isabel Zarza, Chief Operating Officer - Central and North Europe, Russia & Africa at Dufry; and François Bourienne, Chief Commercial Officer at Abu Dhabi Airports.

Perspectives from the aviation industry were provided by Kamil Al Awadhi, IATA Regional Vice President Africa and Middle East, and Airports Council International Africa Secretary General Ali Tounsi.

Day one closed on a high with a presentation of Bahrain's new commercial offer, given by Bahrain Duty Free CEO Bassam Al Wardi.

Among highlights on day two was a panel discussion devoted to the African market, featuring Africa Airlines Association Secretary General Abderahmane Berthe; Chief Executive Officer of Abidjan International Airport Aka Manouan; Africa Tourism Association CEO Naledi Khabo; and Dufry General Manager Africa Isaias Diaz.

A session entitled Futureproofing Retail provided an upbeat end to the conference, courtesy of Dr Jennifer Cords, Gebr Heinemann Director Corporate Affairs, Business Compliance & Corporate Responsibility; and Richard Gray, CEO of Aer Rianta International - Middle East.

MEADFA President Sherif Toulan said: "It has been a huge pleasure to welcome our industry to Dubai this week. Not only have we enjoyed a stimulating and thought-provoking conference, but also wonderful hospitality thanks to our host and sponsors. On behalf of the MEADFA Board, our sincere thanks to our host Dubai Duty Free, to all our sponsors, to TFWA for their assistance, and to all the delegates who took part, live and online. It has been a fantastic few days that I feel sure will help to reignite our industry in the region."