

Networking time opens for ASUTIL border conference

The South American Association of Free Shops (ASUTIL) has announced that attendees at its Brazil duty free border conference next month can now begin to sign up for networking sessions.

ASUTIL said buyers, suppliers, operators and others attending the November 4 - 6 conference can now request meeting times with their counterparts to network and establish future business relationships, as well as to maintain those already in place.

Networking time has been set aside from 3pm to 7pm on November 5 and from 8:30am to 10:30am on November 6.

In addition to networking, those who attend the conference will be able to hear from a number of experts who include Carlos Melconian, Vice President of MACROVIEW, María Villanueva, Senior Consultant for M1nd-set, and Diego Liceo, President of the Chamber of Free Zones of Uruguay.

Melconian will provide a "macro economic and political analysis of the current situation," which will likely include some analysis of the results of the Argentina general elections, scheduled for October 27.

M1nd-set consultant Villanueva will analyze the purchasing behavior and perspectives of border store buyers in the region.

Liceo will share a history of the border duty free stores in the region with a panel that will discuss efforts for all countries to work together "within the framework of MERCOSUR." He will also discuss opportunities for Uruguay to serve as a logistics center for the new Brazilian free shops.

The upcoming meeting marks the first and only time non-members can attend an ASUTIL conference. ASUTIL is giving non-members of the organization this chance in recognition of the new opportunities afforded by the Brazilian law allowing land duty free stores to operate on the Brazilian side of the border.

The ASUTIL conference is being co-hosted with Uruguay's Chamber of Entrepreneurs of Free Shops. The Dufry Group will host a welcoming dinner for those in attendance on Tuesday, November 5.

ASUTIL will provide meeting places at the Sheraton Puerto Alegre hotel, where the conference is being held and will assist in the exchange of names and email addresses for those wishing to take advantage of the networking opportunities.

The opening of the land duty free stores on the Brazilian side of the border is changing the regional duty free dynamic. Although legislation allowing for the establishment of land duty free stores in Brazil was approved years ago, it was just this year that Brazilian customs officials said stores could open.

One of the first to take advantage of the new law was the Dufry Group, which opened a store in Uruguaina, in Rio Grande do Sol, at the border with Argentina in August. Two other smaller stores opened in Barra do Quaraí and Jaguarão, both towns near the border with Uruguay in July.

Up until now, all the duty free action has been on the other side of the border primarily in Argentina

and Uruguay, where the largest land duty free stores attracting Brazilian customers operated. But the new law will allow land duty free stores to open in Brazil in any of 32 Brazilian cities bordering Argentina, Paraguay, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, French Guiana, Uruguay, Guyana, Venezuela and Surinam.

ASUTIL expects several hundred operators and suppliers to attend the conference and participate in the networking sessions. Registration is open online at <https://encuentrodefrontera.com/registration/>

Special room rates are available from October 31 through November 7 at the hotel conference site.