



MEADFA PRESS RELEASE

جمعية الشرق الأوسط و أفريقيا للأسواق الحرة
MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA
DUTY FREE ASSOCIATION

For immediate release
November 29, 2022

MEADFA Conference welcomes strong number of attendees to Bahrain

This year's MEADFA Conference, which took place in Bahrain, and supported by official host Bahrain Duty Free, welcomed an impressive 441 delegates.

Opening the conference on day one, MEADFA President Sherif Toulan welcomed participants and called for all parties across duty free and travel retail to join forces and act as one body as the industry prepares for recovery.

Participants heard a keynote address from Bahrain Airport Company CEO, Mohamed Yousif Albinfalah during the opening session of the conference. The morning continued with comment from duty free and travel retail industry leaders throughout the region on the current and future state of the market in the Middle East and Africa. Speakers included Rob Marriott, CEO of Aer Rianta International-Middle East, Ramesh Cidambi, COO of Dubai Duty Free and Isabel Zarza, COO North & Central Europe, Russia and Africa at Dufry Group.

Panel sessions concluded day one with discussions on how West Africa is unlocking its tourism potential, the evolution of smart cities and smart airports, and the current regulatory challenges faced by duty free and travel retail businesses. The panellists were Kojo Bentum-Williams, Founder and Publisher at VoyagesAfriq Travel Media and Lead Communications at UNWTO Africa, Gordon Clark, Vice President Business Development at ForwardKeys, Waleed Khalaf, CEO of Smart Way Consultancy, François Bourienne, Chief Commercial Officer at Abu Dhabi Airports, Rob Marriott, Chair of the MEADFA Advocacy Working Group, Roger Jackson and Mazen Kaddoura, MEADFA Board Members and Sarah Branquinho, President of the Duty Free World Council.

Highlights of the conference programme on day two included discussions on sustainability, supply chain challenges and the Middle East & Africa's growth in the cruise market, featuring Munif Mohammed, Lagardère Travel Retail CEO Saudi Arabia, Marcus Hudson, Mars International Travel Retail Global Sales Director, Shivani Sathasivam, Founder of New Normal Consultancy, Sharon Beecham, Senior Vice President Purchasing at Dubai Duty Free, Alasdair Dickinson, Director, Asia and MEA Travel Retail at Beam Suntory, and James Prescott, CEO of Harding+.

Day two of the conference closed on a high with presentations on rebuilding tourism in East Africa and the implications for the duty free and travel retail industry with the rise of the metaverse. Delegates heard from Surafel Saketa, Country Manager at Ethiopian Airlines, Baptiste Duguit, Vice President Business Development at Lagardère Travel Retail, and Kevin Alderweireldt, Metaverse specialist and Co-founder of creative tech company, Bureau Béatrice.

The Opening Cocktail, sponsored by DUFY, was, as always, a spectacular start to the networking programme at the Art Hotel & Resort. The high-quality entertainment continued on Monday night, with a Gala Dinner and the MEADFA Awards hosted by Bahrain Duty Free.

The MEADFA Awards recognise innovative and world-class duty free and travel retail specialists in the Middle East and Africa region. The names of the winners are as follows:

- Best Retailer Award: Bahrain Duty Free
- Best in Marketing Strategy: Nestle International Travel Retail

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- Sustainability & CSR Award (two prizes according to the size of the company):
 1. Dubai Duty Free
 2. Bitmore Ltd
- Customers & Suppliers Award (two prizes according to the size of the company):
 1. Muscat Duty Free
 2. Merlin, Soft Magic Systems Computers LLC

In addition, the Lifetime Achievement Award honours an exceptional leader who has made a remarkable contribution to duty free and travel retail, promoted strong leadership and has considerably impacted the overall strategy, culture, and development of the industry. Dubai Duty Free's Executive Vice Chairman & CEO Mr Colm McLoughlin, who has worked in duty free for over 50 years, was presented with this special award.

“Now is the time to look forward not back. MEADFA is determined to play a central role in the resurgence of duty free and travel retail in the Middle East and Africa region. That role includes defending the interests of our members in the face of regulatory threats and other challenges. As founding members of the Duty Free World Council, we are also keen to support global efforts to defend our industry. As we gather here, it's good to see passenger numbers that give us grounds for optimism, both in our region, and beyond.”

Sherif Toulan, MEADFA President

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