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Meetings Industry Calls for Support Measures in Response to COVID-19 Coronavirus Outbreak

The emergence of a new strain of COVID-19 Coronavirus that is currently the subject of a WHO emergency international health declaration reminds us of how easily the freedom and willingness to travel for the purpose of attending business events and other face-to-face interactions can be impacted, says Kai Hattendorf, President of the Joint Meetings Industry Council.

However he notes that such events also represent the best possible vehicle for addressing these and many other global issues – and for building the required levels of trust and understanding needed to achieve agreements on collective actions in response.

“Our industry will always be impacted by anything that restricts or inhibits travel and assembly – but at the same time the events we support are the means by which these challenges get resolved”, said Hattendorf. “In the face of challenges like these our job is therefore to continually emphasize the role we play in facilitating key interactions and the importance of maintaining them as a way of advancing global progress, while at the same time doing everything in our control to restore confidence in event attendance.”

“We ourselves must demonstrate that confidence by maintaining to the greatest extent possible our ongoing schedule of activities – and where this is not possible, by working collaboratively to develop alternatives that help maintain the exchange of information and insights that account for the benefits we believe to result from this kind of engagement”.

“We therefore commit to doing everything in our collective power to support the continuing role of meetings conventions and exhibitions in global affairs and encourage governments and constituents everywhere to recognize just how important ongoing interactions are to addressing not just to focus on immediate challenges but the many more issues that can only be advanced by maintaining relevant gatherings”.

Hattendorf called upon all industry members to actively support measures that help restore and build confidence in event participation including:

- Ensuring that all policies and procedures within the industry’s spheres of influence that help secure the health and safety of event participants are in place and up to date
- Maintaining detailed awareness of both local and global actions and restrictions in order to be able to advise on factors that may affect upcoming events
- Cooperating with local / national authorities to implement any measures that have been determined to potentially impact event attendees
- Consulting with event organizers and related service providers to explore ways in which any program adjustments that need to be made in response to outbreak-related impacts can be accommodated, and
- Continuing to support awareness of the essential roles of meetings, conventions, exhibitions and business events as drivers of recovery and advancement of global economic and societal development.

The Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC) is an organization that represents the combined interests of 19 international Meetings Industry associations. It has provided a forum for information exchange and recognition amongst industry groups for well over 50 years and has recently become more engaged in the process of documenting and communicating the diverse values of the industry to broader community and governmental audiences.

The active member associations who comprise JMIC today are:

ACCLATAM | the Association of Convention Centres of the Caribbean and Latin America

AACVB | the Asian Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus

AIPC | the International Association of Convention Centres

ASAE | the American Society of Association Executives

Cocal | the Latin American Confederation of PCO and Related Companies

ECM | European Cities Marketing

EFAPCO | the European Federation of Associations of Professional Congress Organizers

EMECA | the European Major Exhibition Centres Association

EVVC | European Association of Event Centres

IAEE | the International Association of Exhibitions and Events

IAPCO | the International Association of Professional Congress Organizers

ICCA | the International Congress and Convention Association

MPI | Meeting Professionals International

PCMA | the Professional Convention Management Association

SACEOS | the Singapore Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers

SISO | the Society of Independent Show Organizers

SITE | Society for Incentive Travel Excellence

UFI | the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry

UIA | the Union of International Associations