



8th IMEX POLITICIANS FORUM

Frankfurt, Germany, Tuesday May 25, 2010

MEETINGS AND EVENTS BRING FAR-REACHING REWARDS

The message repeated more than any other at this year's Politicians Forum was that meetings are integral to the economic development process. Recognising them as such benefits national and local governments and the people they serve, but the rewards are much more than financial – the real value of meetings is what they achieve for the delegates, the organisation and the wider community.

The differences between business tourism (meetings, conventions and exhibitions) and leisure tourism were reiterated and debated. There was also strong emphasis this year on the positive impact hosting other types of event - sporting, celebratory, governmental and cultural - has on the future meetings business of the host destination.

An IMEX New Vision Project, the Politicians Forum is held under the auspices of the Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC) whose membership comprises international meetings industry associations. The Forum is organised by IMEX in collaboration with European Cities Marketing (ECM), a network of leading tourist offices and convention bureaux representing 100 cities in 32 European countries, and the International Association of Congress Centres (AIPC).

The eighth Forum was attended by a record 32 politicians and civic leaders from 16 countries and 63 worldwide meetings industry representatives. The first open session at Messe Frankfurt was followed by a tour of the IMEX show floor, enabling the politicians to meet exhibitors and witness the scope of the meetings industry and the competition that exists among destinations to win meetings business. The second session, by invitation only, was at the Westin Grand Hotel, Frankfurt.

The moderator was Michael Hirst, OBE, chairman, UK Business Visits & Events Partnership, director of The Tourism Alliance and member of VisitBritain's British Tourism Development Committee. He represents event and business tourism's interests at Government consultation meetings and is advisor to several hospitality companies.

THE FORUM PART 1

Michael Hirst introduced the Politicians Forum as a two-way dialogue between the meetings industry and politicians to enable a better understanding as to how meetings and events can deliver far-reaching economic and social benefits to destinations and communities, especially at this time of global economic recovery.

He said they facilitate job creation, training and skills, information exchange and research. They enable trade and inward investment and generate tax revenues. They optimise creative enterprise and their impact is highly sustainable, especially for local businesses. "Whether these are conferences and conventions, exhibitions and trade fairs, outdoor events, sporting and cultural occasions or music and artistic festivals, they all have the power to shape a political agenda and can and should be used as strategic tools for economic and social development."

MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS AS STRATEGIC TOOLS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Speaker: Rod Cameron, Criterion Communication Inc, Vancouver, Canada, and director of international development for AIPC

Addressing his comments to the politicians, Cameron said, "If we have learnt anything at all as an industry over the last few years, it is that in order to speak effectively to you as governments we need to make sure we're addressing your issues and your concerns and speaking your language in order to resonate and make any sense with your particular interests. And when we are talking about what is interesting to governments after this past year or so, then only one word comes immediately to mind and that is 'economy'.

While there are signs of recovery, it is very uncertain and uneven, he said, especially looking at events such as the current currency issues in Europe and in other parts of the world. He also pointed out that a fallback into protectionism could easily derail recovery as it is unfolding. "Governments are bearing the brunt of economic recovery and getting heavily indebted as a result and they can't carry on being the driver for ever. The priority pretty well everywhere is for stable economic growth and in that respect most of us believe that the knowledge economy has the greatest potential."

He explained the transition to the knowledge economy will mean that many jobs in the future will be very different from the work we've been doing to date and a lot of retraining will be needed in order to get the workforce to participate effectively in the new knowledge economy. This is where the meetings industry comes, in as conventions, meetings and exhibitions address all these concerns very effectively.

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He took time to explain that meetings are not tourism, as in the leisure sense, but all about business. "We tend to measure our success in terms of increased tourism spending from delegates but nobody plans, organises or attends a meeting in order to stay in a hotel room or dine in a restaurant. The outcomes are what it is all about, achieving things such as professional development, knowledge transfer, research and product development, business advancement, technology development and education and innovation."

He talked about the bad press the meetings industry received during the economic crisis and how in the past it has failed to explain that meetings are integral to the economic development process. He also told the politicians that they are big investors in the industry, because more than 70 per cent of all the world's convention centres are owned by governments and therefore they have the responsibility to maximise the return on their investment in such facilities on behalf of the people they represent.

He described the meetings industry's three key roles within a community, as outlined here:

Economic role

- Meetings generate delegate/exhibitor spending
- They promote visits and utilise the hospitality infrastructure, eg hotels and restaurants, with valuable off-season implications
- They promote tourism by way of pre- and post-conference tours, accompanying person tours and events and return visits
- They attract and support new infrastructure investment such as hotels

Business development role

- Meetings attract business audiences that wouldn't otherwise visit
- They expose local businesses to new products and technology
- They generate exposure for business and investment opportunities
- They showcase local products and services

Professional development role

- Meetings create local access to world-class knowledge and expertise
- Meeting networks stimulate research and collaboration
- Meetings act as vehicles for local business, academics and professionals to host colleagues
- They facilitate the retraining of the local labour force
- They promote cooperation and collective action

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Cameron recapped by saying that politicians have to stop thinking of their local convention centre as a device for generating revenues and think about it in terms of their economic policies and aspirations. "It means taking a strategic approach to the market because, if your community is involved in any particular activity such as medical research, animation or engineering and you want to push it, there will be many different events all over the world that focus on that activity. By hosting events like that you get the chance to profile yourself, show off your local community, build those networks and do all of the things that will help you advance not just your tourism business but your whole economic development strategy."

THE MIRACLE OF SEOUL

Speaker: Samuel Koo, President and CEO, Seoul Tourism Organisation (STO)

Koo began by explaining that Seoul Tourism Organisation & Convention Bureau is just entering its third year and the concept of meetings marketing is very new to the city. This year marks the anniversary of the start of the Korean War, which lasted three years and decimated the capital. From 1953 the emphasis was on supporting enterprises related to rebuilding and education – "Tourism, if not an outright dirty word, was far from everybody's mind," he said.

Fast forward to 1996 when Korea became a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and subsequently moved from aid-receiving to aid-giving. Today it is ranked as the world's largest economy and a leader in IT, shipbuilding, cinema, fashion and sport and its people travel abroad extensively. Seoul hosted the 1988 Olympic Games and the 2002 FIFA World Cup and is now preparing to welcome world leaders at the November G20 Summit, the first ever to be held in Asia. It gets very favourable reviews in the news media and is rated one of the top five cities in the world to visit.

Another turning point came four years ago when the newly elected mayor identified tourism as key to Seoul's sustainable economic and cultural development and quickly decided to focus on transforming it into a design capital, along with cities such as New York, London, Milan and Sydney, to attract more tourists and visitors. Combining the two central themes of culture and tourism, the STO was created as part of the mayor's master plan and this year Seoul holds the title of 2010 World Design Capital.

The STO is a public-private cooperative venture between the city government and private corporations such as airlines and major hotels. It has had to prove itself and produce results for a government sceptical about the return on investment tourism would bring. But, since January last

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year, both the national and city governments have agreed that the tourism industry is capable of revitalising and expanding the economy. And, as a result of the relationship built up between the meetings industry and city politicians and officials, special emphasis has been put on meetings, conventions, exhibitions and incentives as the sector with the greatest potential.

In 2007 Seoul spent five million dollars to boost its image through overseas media campaigns. This year it has spent more than 30 million on advertising alone. In addition, more than 50 million dollars is being invested in tourism and meetings marketing at home and abroad, including 30 million dollars worth of projects the STO has undertaken on the city's behalf.

It has mounted a vigorous advocacy campaign to mobilise politicians, city officials and the media. "Our strategy was for them to see us in action, bring them with us to attend trade shows and witness exactly what marketing the city entails," said Koo. "They have seen it requires contacts, networking presentations and long, long sessions with meeting planners, association representatives and industry professionals."

In an effort to win more bids and raise Seoul's standing in the annual city rankings of the International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA), the STO has encouraged senior officials from diverse sectors to organise events in their own respective areas. Koo said they are now much better informed about the economic potential and prestige to be gained from attracting major meetings.

The river Han, which runs through the city, is to become a central attraction for Seoul's tourism industry and millions of dollars are being spent on its renaissance. It will become a maritime tourism mecca and include a new passenger terminal to accommodate 5,000 cruise ships linking Seoul with cities all over the eastern coast of China. There will be riverside hotels, a major arts centre on a river island and three floating islands with conference centres on them will be completed this autumn.

As well, work is to begin on a new, 35-storey convention centre next to the main train terminal in the city centre, due for completion in 2014 or early 2015. Currently ranked fifth in Asia, Seoul is determined to move into the world's top five convention destinations. "The job is already half done and with that spirit and determination we march on," Koo declared.

THE RICH LEGACY OF HOSTING THE OLYMPICS

Speaker: Hein Verbruggen, President, SportAccord, and Honorary Member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC)

Verbruggen set out to demonstrate how hosting an Olympic event enriches a destination and enables economic and social benefits to be realised. While the Games offer an experience for athletes, partners, the media, spectators, volunteers and fans, he said they also offer a major development opportunity for the city, region and country that hosts them. The aim of the IOC is to stage the Games in a sustainable way so that they leave a valid legacy for future generations. "It is made up of a unique combination of sport, culture, education, new public infrastructure and environmental improvements, and that is our raison d'être."

First of all, however, he wanted to clear up the general confusion that exists regarding the cost of the Games. There are two separate budgets, he explained. One is the operational budget, which is the IOC's responsibility, and the other is the infrastructure budget controlled by the host city and host nation.

Taking the 2008 Beijing Olympics and this year's Vancouver Winter Olympics as his main examples, Verbruggen described the enormous range of benefits they have brought to the cities and countries concerned, making them much more attractive for business and tourism - not only because of the iconic new venues, such as Beijing's Birds Nest Stadium, whose names resonate worldwide, but thanks to the many other infrastructure improvements which have accelerated job creation, revitalised urban areas and generally improved the quality of life for residents. "In the seven years of preparing for the Games, Beijing experienced a golden period of development and its GDP increased from 64 billion dollars in 2002 to 150 billion in 2008. The Winter Olympics sealed the deal for considerable investment in Vancouver and were excellent for bringing business people together from around the world, introducing them to the local business community and building partnerships and relationships. International firms are now setting up offices in Vancouver."

Environmental issues are now increasingly linked to the economic development of a destination and another spin-off of the Games for Vancouver was the green status it now enjoys, having reduced the event's ecological footprint. In September 2009 the mayor had announced 'Vancouver Green Capital' as the city's official brand. Its objectives are to promote sustainability and be recognised as the world's greenest city by 2020. "The city now has a clear strategy in place to attract international investment from green industries such as digital media," Verbruggen added.

The social legacy is huge as well. For instance, over 400 million children in 400,000 Chinese schools learnt about Olympic values as part of an Olympic education campaign before the Beijing Games. Vancouver's 2010 Legacies Now programme has touched the lives of more than two million British Columbians so far and people with disabilities are enjoying new opportunities and contributing to community life.

Verbruggen said that these days a host city has a unique opportunity to show the world its culture, its people, its attractions and its attractiveness. For instance, there was 47 per cent more TV coverage for the Vancouver Games than there was for the Turin Winter Olympics four years ago. "Major sporting events such as the Olympics and football and rugby world cups now enjoy a blaze of publicity in the world's media and have a real impact on tourism, foreign investment and exports."

OPEN DISCUSSION

When Michael Hirst invited questions from the floor, Alain Dayan, Deputy Mayor of Tours, France, wanted to know whether support for the meetings and event activity described should come from the city or the country. The consensus was that a city will be much more specific about the kind of economic development it wants with particular sectors in mind while a country will probably be much broader in how it looks at economic development.

Hirst said that Rod Cameron makes the point every year that meetings and events are not in the tourism industry. He asked for a show of hands from those in the audience who think they are - the result was about 35 per cent. Cameron responded by saying it is really about image and expectations. "When we say tourism, the typical expectation is leisure and that doesn't help the meetings industry take the serious position of being a serious part of the economy. The point is, if you think the delegates are there for leisure, you're underselling the industry and your expectations are limited to what they're going to spend before they leave. My statement makes the point that meetings and the delegates who attend them are not about leisure – they're about doing business."

Samual Koo said that when 20,000 people upwards come to Seoul for the G20, he doesn't count them as tourists although a number of them will be shopping, sightseeing or enjoying a show. When persuading a destination to bid for SportAccord, Hein Verbruggen tells them they will be bringing 1,500 or 1,600 people to the city for the business of sport but hosting such events is very attractive to a city in many other ways, too.

Finally, Hirst asked each speaker to give a piece of advice to the industry in looking for more political support. Cameron said they should make sure they look at the prospects within the industry

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very broadly, not only the immediate or obvious benefits but the long-term, far-reaching policy impacts. Koo said it's well worth getting politicians on your side - it takes a bit of doing but once you succeed they can be extremely helpful. Verbruggen said that, although it is always the city that organises something like the Olympic Games, it is totally impossible without the 100 per cent commitment of the national government as well.

THE FORUM PART 2

IMEX Chairman Ray Bloom was delighted to welcome the largest ever gathering of politicians to the Forum. He said, "This bears testament to the clear and consistent message we've been trying to promote for the past eight years. Meetings mean business and it is important to develop and understand the vital relationship between local government and the industry. We're still in challenging times and we must continue to underline the importance of the role the meetings industry can and will play in driving economic recovery."

Moderator Michael Hirst added, "It's a political reality that events can shape the future. And while this phrase has been used previously to describe the world's tendency to spring surprises when you're least expecting them – and there have been plenty of those lately – it could be applied equally to how meetings and events have the power to fulfil public policy priorities, transform destinations and contribute to the social well-being of local communities.

"Past speakers have pointed out that the agendas of the industry and government do actually coincide and it's important to make the relationship more collaborative and effective. It's also vitally important to make you, the politicians, feel more part of this industry, instead of just nagging you for scarce resources and more money which we know you don't have."

He went on to introduce representatives of the industry associations involved with IMEX in the organisation of the annual Politicians Forum.

A VERY SAVVY POLITICIAN

Speaker: Leigh Harry, JMIC President and CEO of Melbourne Convention Centre, Australia

Harry chose to demonstrate how useful it is when a politician really understands the broader value of the meetings industry with a video clip from a recent conference in Melbourne of the national association, Meetings & Events Australia. It showed an excerpt from a presentation by the Hon Tim Holding, Minister of Water, Finance, Tourism & Major Events in the state of Victoria, as he outlined the importance for local government to support the meetings industry.

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Holding said research had revealed that international visitors coming to conventions and meetings spend five to six times more than leisure visitors, nearly half of them are likely to include a tour somewhere else in the country and more than half are likely to return within five years. For that reason, 400 million dollars had been invested in building Melbourne's iconic new convention centre and this had triggered huge investment by the private sector, such as hotels and restaurants, in the now thriving new South Wharf development.

He also emphasised the importance of specialising in the destination's strengths – in Melbourne's case, science, technology, innovation, medical research and biotechnology – and how Melbourne works with city leaders and an ambassador programme to identify and attract the very best events in those fields to fill the city's meeting facilities. "This is an industry that's worth 1.2 billion dollars to our state economy, it creates thousands of jobs and we want to see it grow," he said.

Harry concluded by saying, "The challenge for us in the meetings industry is to continue to convert our argument into those you, the politicians, can use as you talk to your colleagues or your fellow cabinet ministers, as the case may be, and I hope by the end of the session today that everybody has the same depth of knowledge that Minister Holding demonstrated."

MAJOR EVENTS ON THE CONFERENCE CALENDAR

Speaker: Olivier Lépine, Chairman, Convention Division, ECM and Director of Biarritz Tourism, France

Lépine explained how European Cities Marketing (ECM) brings together the convention bureaux and tourist boards of 100 European cities. "We have heard today that meetings are not the tourism industry," he said. "Of course they're not, but they contribute a lot to the tourism industry so one way or the other we believe we must work together."

ECM members support the Politicians Forum because they feel they can help a destination's elected representatives achieve what they want. "If we have results, you get results," said Lépine. "Not the same results. We talk money; you talk votes. But in the end it's the same thing. We are there to serve our cities, like you are, so we'd better do things together and be on the same level when it comes to discussion."

The second major event ECM organises is its annual Summer School programme. It has been running for 40 years, bringing people from all over Europe and other parts of the world to explain what the congress business is and how to get it. "When you work in the leisure business, you do IMEX Politicians Forum, 25 May 2010, Frankfurt, Germany

promotion," he said. "But when you work in the meetings industry you do sales, because association meetings which travel the world only come once and for corporate meetings you have to be very creative."

Through these two key events, said Lépine, ECM can explain to politicians that the meetings industry needs their help. "And we can explain to young people that we are working for the best business in the world and that is to please people when they come to our cities."

WORKING TOGETHER IN AN INCREASINGLY COMPETITIVE MARKET

Speaker: Edgar Hirt, President AIPC and Managing Director, Congress Centre Hamburg, Germany

Hirt said he was very pleased to welcome the visiting government representatives on behalf of the International Association of Congress Centres for the simple reason that over 70 per cent of such facilities are government owned, as Cameron had mentioned earlier. "This means we need to be able to compete successfully in an increasingly competitive global market while still respecting the processes and priorities of the government which are generally quite different. Some would call it the worst of both worlds, but we like to think of it as something that adds an interesting dimension to our work!"

He said that one of their greatest disappointments during the economic crisis was that so many governments failed to appreciate the key part that conference centres can and do play in supporting economic growth. "Our great hope for the future is that recognition of this will increase and our much wider role will be utilised. A convention centre is a major investment for any government, particularly when finances are tight, and we understand that there needs to be a good return to the community. But return on investment takes many different forms, some of which are barely understood by their owners, let alone the community as a whole.

"The fundamental reasons why meetings take place should be of much more interest to government owners because they go straight to the heart of what drives the global economy," Hirt continued. "Whatever kind of business or professional activity you can imagine, the chances are there is a major convention, exhibition or meeting associated with it. These are the activities that produce economic stimulation and are key to long-term economic stability. Working together, we can help each other a great deal, you by advancing your economic agenda and us by getting the support we need to attract more high-quality event business."

QUITE A CELEBRATION!

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Speaker: Régis Labeaume, Mayor of Quebec City, Canada

Mayor Labeaume described – and illustrated with some exciting images - a whole year of festivities, starting on New Year's Eve 2007, when Quebec City celebrated the anniversary of its founding on the banks of the St Lawrence River. Preparing for the event, in fact, for very many different events, started in 1999. "Planning was the cornerstone," said Labeaume. "For several years, various levels of government and the main local economic and tourism department stakeholders pooled their efforts and channelled their creativity in search of powerful moments that would wow the crowds throughout the celebrations."

Potential participating organisations were encouraged to choose 2008 without any knowledge of the programme that was coming. Festivals redesigned their agendas to make 2008 memorable, conventions were invited, the city's top talents worked tirelessly to organise unique events, shows and artwork, museums joined in the effort and, thanks to significant funding from the federal, provincial and municipal governments, a major facelift transformed the city's urban landscape, particularly along the riverbanks.

Although Quebec was always confidence of success, the results exceeded all expectations, particularly by way of visitor numbers and the number of room nights generated. But the city also hosted 544 conventions in 2008, the highest number ever recorded and the equivalent of 1.5 per day for an entire year, and this earned its position in the ICCA rankings as North America's top convention destination.

International events included the general assembly of the International Association of Francophone Mayors and the Francophone Summit. "The extensive activity of the Quebec City Convention Centre was not in vain," said Labeaume. "Through the celebrations it hosted 177 events, including 72 conventions and 33 international congresses. It was the best year in its short history. We can see that many organisations chose to hold their events in Quebec City on the basis of the festivities and this clearly demonstrated the impact of the celebration on the convention world."

Spending in connection with 21 events which came especially because of the festivities totalled 62 million dollars, which represented 22 per cent of all visitor spending throughout the anniversary year. They brought 45 million dollars of revenue from outside the city, the equivalent of all the new money generated by the convention centre in a normal year, and also represented 26 per cent of room nights hosted in the city that year. "For those who remain doubtful, it is clear such festivities had a direct impact on attracting and holding major congresses and conventions," said Labeaume. "Overall, the celebrations generated half a billion dollars for the local economy."

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Of the intangible benefits, Quebec City earned new recognition around the world which has helped position it on the international scene. Over 700 journalists visited in 2008, articles about the destination grew accordingly and the media impact was estimated at over 12 million dollars. The success of the celebration imparted a new sense of pride and vitality among the population and increased confidence among the higher levels of government. The legacy of 2008 can be seen and felt at many levels, in addition to the new facilities that have added to the natural beauty of the city, said the mayor. "Quebec is again a lively city where young families want to live, performing artists choose to stop on their North American tours, businesses can more easily attract researchers in their field and where convention goers love to meet. Last year was also a good year in terms of conventions, despite the economic crisis. We have the lowest unemployment in Canada at about four per cent and we shall be hosting new sporting and cultural events in the coming years. We have shown we can organise outstanding events and that spirit of pride is just as strong today as it was in 2008."

THE POWER OF ADVOCACY

Speaker: The Hon Bruce Baird AM, Chairman, Tourism and Transport Forum (TTF), Australia

Looking back on his time as a member of parliament, Baird said he had seen some of the worst and some of the best advocacy programmes and he warned that you won't achieve what you want by banging on the table and arguing with the minister! He had also learnt a great deal about lobbying when he was Minister for Sydney's 2000 Olympics bid from 1990 to 1993. "We knew all 90 members of the IOC for three years, what their particular interests were, where they go on holiday and so on, and the importance of these relationships was established when we won by two votes."

Now he is chairman of the TTF which represents some 200 top companies in the tourism, events, aviation, infrastructure and transport sectors, also including major hotel chains and Australia's major convention centres. "Because of that we have considerable political clout." He said people tend to think of 'lobbying' as a dirty word but it's essentially about building relationships, presenting ideas and presenting a case for both growth and opportunity, not only to the government but also to the opposition as well.

To achieve this, the TTF has 13 full-time research staff producing studies on projects, such as the need for an expansion of Sydney's convention and exhibition space in Darling Harbour. They have detailed information about the level of tourism employment in every parliamentary seat around the country, so they can tell MPs how many people are involved in tourism in their areas, and an electoral pendulum that tracks marginal seats with tourism implications.

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They believe in the importance of strategic engagement with ministers and also with people in the travel and tourism industry. An annual summit is held in Parliament House in Canberra to which several hundred people are invited and the speakers include the prime minister, CEOs and leaders from within the industry. They invite key politicians to lunches and dinners where members of the industry outline their issues and Baird has started a group in parliament called Friends of Tourism. "I discovered a lot of members have tourism backgrounds and we have lunches together with industry sector representatives. People heard about this group. It has grown larger. We can have anything between 60 and 80 people joining us on what have become weekly luncheons and we have them captive there."

A very successful example of lobbying was by Emirates Airline when it wanted more access to Australia. The company hosted an extravagant luncheon for MPs, offered to build an eco tourism retreat hotel and also pushed hard for sponsorship of Australian cricket and the Sydney symphony orchestra. "It went on and on and it was not surprising that they had the doubling of their flights approved!" said Baird.

The TTF group was also used by the minister of tourism when he wanted a substantial increase in the amount of funding for the tourism and events industries. "A white paper was produced. We had lunches with key people who came along to say we are having trouble competing and need more money and the result was the doubling of tourism funding."

Baird said lobbying is a process of well developed research politics, engaging interesting advocacy tools, well organised strategic engagement and understanding election cycles and the political process. "It doesn't happen by chance. It doesn't happen just because you think you've got a good idea. We come here to IMEX and see the competition from countries lobbying to put more events in their space and know Australia has a long way to go. But we're working hard on it."

USING A CONFERENCE TO HELP BRAND A CITY

Speaker: Svend Olling, Head of Department, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark

Olling was made responsible for organising COP15, last December's United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. It was the first and only event he has ever organised, by far the largest political conference ever hosted by Denmark and turned out to be the largest summit ever outside the UN's New York headquarters. Offering to host the conference was a political decision by Denmark which, therefore, had to bear the cost. Olling undertook to explain what this involved, what the outcome of COP15 was, its economic and social impact on Copenhagen and Denmark and IMEX Politicians Forum, 25 May 2010, Frankfurt, Germany

whether the huge outlay – the final budget was 72.5 million US dollars – was worth it for a country of only five million people.

COP15 was particularly important as the Kyoto Protocol adopted at COP3 expires in 2012. A few days before it started, the UN had estimated an attendance of 12,000 to 15,000 delegates. In the event, 47,446 registered, of whom 32,000 managed to get access to the conference in Copenhagen's Bella Center, the only venue in Denmark capable of hosting such numbers. Other events took place throughout the city in parallel and in total over 1,000 events were held over the whole conference span of two weeks.

Denmark undertook this immense task because a large majority of the parliament and of the electorate wanted to get the ball rolling on climate change. They also saw it as a tremendous way to align the way Denmark projects itself to the world and an opportunity for nation branding. "We were aiming to break the fairytale kingdom image which is still in the tourist brochures and do what really matters to us economically," explained Olling. "That is green technology, which is by far the fastest growing export sector in the country."

He therefore set out to make sure the conference was the greenest event the planet has ever seen, although this wasn't without its challenges. His aim was to take it to new levels of sustainability, but not at the cost of the security of participants, especially with 126 heads of government attending. Nevertheless, with fantastic backing from sponsoring companies, hotels and other suppliers, who all had to adhere to the UN Global Compact on Sustainability, he managed to achieve his ambition.

It was the first summit ever to be certified as sustainable under the British standard 8901 which is also being used in preparation for the London 2012 Olympics. They achieved 100 per cent offsetting of emissions, including air travel to Copenhagen; 93 per cent of participants used public transport to get to the venue; 40 per cent of food supplies came from within 160km of Copenhagen and 67 per cent was certified organic; the Bella Center erected a windmill to produce climate-friendly electricity; 53 per cent of hotels in Copenhagen are now certified green and the COP 15 organisers won the GreenBiz award 2009 for green procurement. In addition, two documents have since been published, a report on the event's management, step by step, and the Copenhagen Sustainable Meetings Protocol which is now available on [.csmp.](#)

Olling also mentioned the conference's 'zero gift policy'. It was risky for fear of offending the VIP guests but they stuck to their guns and, in order not to appear to be a cheap host, they used the funds to finance scholarships for MA students all over the world to come to Denmark to study IMEX Politicians Forum, 25 May 2010, Frankfurt, Germany

energy and climate sciences. "It saved us money and made us popular," he said. "And that way we also got some branding."

Did they do a good job? Although the conference may have fallen short of some people's expectations, Olling reported that 126 nations out of 192 have now signed up formally to the Copenhagen Accord, which was the most important outcome. A poll by Deloitte's gave them high marks for making the event sustainable and people were satisfied with the logistics in general.

For Olling, the power of collaboration throughout the country was astonishing. "Everybody knew about it. It was a national event and every kindergarten student was doing projects about it. Once we had agreed on the brand strategy, from Danish industry to the convention bureau to the city of Copenhagen and the government, it was easy to get the momentum going." He was amazed by the knowledge of people in Copenhagen about what it takes to be sustainable in their organisations and he said that external certification, such as that of the hotels in a joint programme with the convention bureaux and tourist authorities of Copenhagen and Denmark, had helped increase performance and credibility.

Sustainability is not expensive unless you start doing it too late, he commented. "Sustainability is about aligning your social impact, your environmental impact and your economic impact, so it's all about saving resources and saving resources means saving money. In addition, some of these stories have sold really well to visiting journalists. 'Copenhagen' was the most Googled word at the time of the conference."

NEW LOBBYING CLUB

Speaker: Thierry Baudier, Director, Club France – Terre de Tourisme, France

Club France was launched on July 15 last year because the French government unfortunately does not recognise recognise tourism as 'fair value', according to Baudier. Nevertheless, certain members of the French parliament were well aware of the potential opportunities tourism offers for economic development and shared a common will to change the picture. "It is more vital than ever these days to support the business which faces intensifying competition and the emergence of new consumer patterns," he explained. "The club was launched with 25 members and I'm very proud that we have already succeeded in attracting 180 members of parliament from both houses and, of course, the Senate."

The Club is headed by a board, representing a balance between the majority and the opposition and headed by Daniel Fasquelle, a member of the National Assembly and mayor of Le Touquet. Its aim
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is to influence legislators and other public officials to encourage the development of French tourism and act as a think-tank to conduct research, try to predict changes in the economy and anticipate how they will impact the industry. The Club is funded entirely by sponsors from within the tourist industry, in order to be as independent as it can be of public institutions and the authorities. Their sponsorship entitles them to participate in its activities, contribute to debates and enlighten politicians with their professional point of view.

Since its formation, the Club has organised two forums, the first about the impact of congresses and events on a destination and the second about building a more competitive destination. Every two months, it organises a luncheon or dinner with members of parliament to try to increase the level of understanding. It has produced a study based on a survey among parliamentarians to discover their knowledge and views of tourism, issues press releases which have generated 40 articles since the Club's launch and also publishes a quarterly newsletter.

The next meeting will be with the French Secretary of State for Tourism where he will present the government's plans for tourism and in the autumn they will meet with the Secretary of State for the Forward Planning and Development of the Digital Economy, to discuss the impact of the internet on tourism.

So a good start but the Club has more objectives for the future, said Baudier. In particular, it wants the major political parties to include tourism in their 2012 presidential agenda and make a real issue of it. It wants recognition of tourism in all its aspects as a tool for economic development and growth opportunities, especially in these times of recession, and it wants to mobilise MPs to make sure the pressure comes from within the parties and not from outside. It would also like to create a tourism charter which would be signed by national and local candidates at the forthcoming elections. "I hope this presentation will inspire you to form such clubs in your countries," Baudier suggested to the other politicians in the audience.

OPEN DISCUSSION

Former British MP John Greenway said he was shadow minister for sport and tourism when the government was bidding for the 2012 London Olympics and he agreed with the speakers who had said that, when a destination is bidding for a huge event, cross-party support is absolutely critical. As for the legacy of an event, whether it is the Olympics or a convention, he said it is not just about what you do with the facilities but about the branding that is left and the things that Rod Cameron had mentioned earlier, such as professional contacts, education and public knowledge.

Michael Hirst asked speakers from both sessions of the Forum what lessons there are to be learnt from the economic downturn.

Cameron said it had done the meetings industry a favour by forcing it to do what it should have done 20 years ago. This was to push the message that meetings are about much more than the immediate obvious economic effects, but about the legacies they leave in terms of what they achieve.

"Other sectors in Australia were quick to say if you don't support us we can go under," said Bruce Baird. "The car industry, retail sector and bankers of all people were asking for all types of guarantees. We weren't quick enough to put our hands up. I think we have learned the next time round we would need to."

"We went out for enormous sponsorship for COP15 but told companies if you want to support it we want proof that you are sustainable," said Svend Olling. "Then the financial crisis came and we thought we won't have any sponsors – they won't have any money. But we got ten times as much in sponsoring funds as we had hoped for. We asked some companies why they weren't put off by such gigantic demands of their sustainability. They said that was exactly the reason why. We had set the bar so had that they wanted to prove they were the right kind of company. There is money in sustainability and we came in under budget."

Hirst commented that Asia hadn't suffered the downturn the same way as Europe and North America had but he put it to Samuel Koo that as Seoul was ploughing such enormous sums of money into the city and new convention facilities, obviously the municipality was persuaded about the return on investment. "They are not in the slightest," said Koo. "They have yet to be persuaded. We were successful in delivering sharply focused messages based on authoritative facts and figures, comparative figures showing how other great cities have reaped enormous benefits. So it's blind trust at the moment. I think the politicians have been willing to give us the benefit of the doubt."

Hirst asked Hein Verbruggen if the Olympic movement was thinking of changing its thinking in recessionary times in terms of what it will require from host nations in the future. Verbruggen responded that the world of sport has suffered very little impact, even in terms of sponsorship and the TV money that is paid for events. Judging by all the interest there is in organising the Olympics and hundreds of other sporting events, he felt there has been no negative impact.

Earlier, Hirst had asked for a show of hands to find out how many in the audience thought the meetings industry was part of tourism. Cameron and Baird continued the argument that associating it with leisure tourism is difficult to reconcile with positioning it as an essential and integral part of global, broad-based economic development. The key thing is for the industry to be taken seriously.

In France, said Thierry Baudier, they speak of leisure tourism on the one hand and business tourism on the other, meaning meetings and events. To him, whatever the reason someone comes to the country, for business, leisure or visiting friends, he or she is a tourist. "But I agree that we need to focus on this sector of the industry and emphasise the real global impact of meetings on a destination and, in times of recession, make the politicians understand that they can hasten regrowth."

Olivier Lépine feels it's time this debate stopped and time for everyone to understand they are part of the economic development of their cities, their countries and the world. "We may do it differently but money is still coming from outside into the country and we export a lot of money." He looks forward to the time when there is only one name for the whole of the industry.

Verbruggen said as an outsider he was a little bit puzzled. "I continuously get the impression that we are talking about two different industries and I can't fit it into my mind they are the same thing. Surely the customers are different and the meetings and events industry is totally different from tourism."

What other challenges does the convention industry face? For Cameron, it's accountability – how to be cleverer in measuring why people engage in meetings, conventions and exhibitions and what the return is. "Governments expect it of us and the users in the form of delegates expect it of themselves."

Verbruggen agreed that accountability is important for the whole industry, tourism included. He was also worried about countries which damage their branding and the example he gave was that of Switzerland which, a few years ago, let its national airline go bankrupt. "If a label is Swiss people are prepared to pay 15 per cent more, so it is a very, very high-quality label. Can people imagine what something like this does to a label within the tourist industry throughout the world?"

For Koo, the problem is an increasing difficulty in attracting top brains to the meetings industry. "This is mainly because we have failed to articulate a successful and important career path for young people coming out of graduate schools. I am seeking help from experienced colleagues to try

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to come up with a satisfactory answer so we can actually present to our younger generation that this is a profession worth serious considering and worth pursuing.”

From the floor, Sherrif Karamat, COO of the Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA), Chicago, USA, said that when he was an undergraduate no-one from the meetings industry ever came with the purpose of recruitment or mentorship. However, in the past 10 to 15 years he felt universities were taking the industry much more seriously and organisations such as the PCMA are taking a proactive role in shaping that and it's changing slowly. “It would make a major difference if employers would make it part of their strategy to go to universities and start recruitment drives and really take much more interest in the mentorship of young people coming into the industry.” Annette Stavenow, a member of the city council of Uppsala, Sweden, identified a similar situation but felt that low salaries are the stumbling block.

Svend Olling could see the sky-rocketing of air travel costs causing problems for the meetings industry. He also advised the industry to watch out for the rise of virtual meetings. “People like them once they've tried them. They cut costs, make meetings much more accountable and much more sustainable and are egalitarian for people who don't have the resources to participate in person. This is not science fiction.”

Baudier called for fair statistics to convince political leaders and officials of the strategic importance of the meetings industry. Koo was all in favour of obtaining facts and figures. He also said they should be more bullish in collecting success stories, such as that of Singapore.

In Baird's opinion, it was significant that China hadn't been mentioned in terms of trends and key issues. “You can't discuss what's happening in the world of the economy or tourism without mentioning China.” He also repeated his advice to the audience to develop a relationship with the people they are planning to lobby.

Hirst concluded the session by hoping that the politicians present felt more part of the industry as a result of attending the Forum and had a much better understanding of how it wants to engage with them.