

1<sup>st</sup> July, 2020.

His Excellency Abdullah Al Basti  
The Executive Council  
U.A.E.

Your Excellency,

**RE: EVENT INDUSTRY SUPPORT – COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS**

Under the directive of H.H Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum the Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and the Ruler of Dubai and H.H Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammed Al Maktoum the Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of Dubai Executive Council on the importance of maintaining the business continuance and protection of the investors and Dubai business community, we are writing to you for your kind assistance.

As you are fully aware, COVID-19 has caused catastrophic setbacks to all industries, with the events industry – a key driver of tourism and business in Dubai and the UAE - as one of the worst hit. With the onset of new safety protocols such as social distancing designed to control the spread of the pandemic, the effect on the event SME sector is devastating, resulting in significant employee redundancies and terminations.

The Event and Exhibition industry, a crucial driver of economic growth, was recognized years ago as the main driver for boosting Dubai's economy, positioning Dubai and UAE in general as a global business and entertainment hub of the Middle East. Events at DWTC generated a total economic value of AED 23 Billion with a high AED 13.1 Billion retained within Dubai's GDP. Nearly AED 2.5 Billion on hotels, restaurants, and shops in Dubai was spend from events visitors alone. His Excellency Helal Saeed Al Marri, Director General, Dubai World Trade Centre Authority and Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing quoted ***“Large-scale events held in the city are critical drivers of GDP acceleration and have contributed positively to the economy year-on-year. Our role, as a leading global platform for business events across the EMEASA region, has us ably support Dubai and the UAE in the diversification and sustainable growth agenda”***.

Furthermore, according to the Dubai Sports Councils economic report, USD\$1.7 Billion+ total annual expenditure and USD\$670 Million total economic impact and contribution to Dubai's economy.

Economies all over the world are suffering due to COVID-19 and no industry or sector is immune. However, some sectors have been hit earlier and harder than others – the exhibition and events industry is amongst those who got hit early and hard resulting in universal cancellation of projects nationally, regionally and internationally. And looking forward, it is likely that the event industry will be amongst the last to get back to business as there is little sign yet of when things will return to normal again.

The exhibition and event sector in Dubai are predominantly driven by SMEs who are fundamentally unable to contain a loss of income at this scale. Hence, we appeal to His Excellency to consider our plea that follows and urgently help the industry with our considered support initiatives as listed and detailed below:

**Request for Support (Our Plea):**






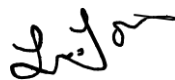
- Government-backed provision of employee retention grants to support the retention of the workforce during the crisis.
- The introduction of a government-backed Business Interruption Loan Scheme offering loans for SMEs affected by the crisis.
- VAT deferral for all businesses until the end of Q4 2020, possibly to be extended depending on how quickly the events market can reopen.
- Immediate full refund of positive VAT balances.
- Regulation through the Central Bank to freeze facility / loan repayments in full until the end of Q1 2021 (without increase in interest or imposition of delay penalties), possibly to be extended depending on how quickly the events market can reopen. Including a review of whether and if so, how the TESS initiative has positively impacted Covid19 impacted events businesses and individuals.
- To encourage UAE licensed banks to offer interest free overdrafts for at least the remainder of 2020.
- Reduce or waive fees for business licences and other governmental fees for 2020 in free zones and mainland UAE.

- Implement rental regulations to avoid increases on rent on any lease renewals due in the current period, at least for the remainder of 2020.
- Regulation to require Government event and related procurement to expend a minimum of 20% of project revenues through duly licensed UAE events companies and freelancers.
- Waive all Immigration and Ministry of Labour visa renewal fees until the events market recovers.
- Government fund to provide emergency health cover for business owners, contractors and laid-off employees to address the costs of COVID-19-related treatment and testing.
- Waive any trade licence related fines including for late renewal of trade licences until the end of Q4 2020, possibly to be extended depending on how quickly the events market can reopen.
- Waive DTCM Fees for year 2020 and/or until the events market recovers.
- Provide a period reduction or removal (minimum 3 months) for all businesses incurring DEWA charges and waive all late penalties for the period.
- Provide a period reduction or removal (minimum 3 months) for all businesses incurring Etisalat or du telephone and internet charges.
- Government fund to provide grants for events that will be hosted in the UAE.
- Create a Government-issued plan for the phased restart of events and live entertainment, including events calendars for each Emirate for Q4 2020 and Q1 2021, with clear required protocols for the recommencement and operation of event activities.
- Initiative for the Government to support events companies in a critical state as a result of Covid19 impact.
- Commitment to give priority to UAE licensed events companies and freelancers for EXPO 2021 initiatives.

We, as the International Live Events Association - Middle East Chapter (ILEA) send you this plea signed by our board members from the industry for your urgent and kind consideration as it is now a simple matter of survival for all of us as we stand together to overcome this unprecedented time to move forward for a better tomorrow.

We remain at your disposal should you require additional information.

Yours sincerely,

<p>Paul Berger <b>ILEA ME President</b></p>	
<p>Saif Ali Khan <b>ILEA ME VP Events &amp; Sponsorship</b></p>	
<p>Harmeek Singh <b>CEO Plan B Group (ILEA ME Crisis Committee Member)</b></p>	
<p>Pach Ang <b>CEO Redfilo Group (ILEA ME Crisis Committee Member)</b></p>	
<p>Robert Duce <b>CEO Outside the Box Events &amp; Theatre by QE2 (ILEA ME Crisis Committee Member)</b></p>	
<p>Terry Miranda <b>MD Lighthouse Productions (ILEA ME Crisis Committee Member)</b></p>	
<p>Sujoy Cherian <b>CEO Option 1 Events (ILEA ME Crisis Committee Member)</b></p>	
<p>Luis Miguel Soares <b>Head of Sales - ADNEC (ILEA ME Crisis Committee Member)</b></p>	

<b>TITLE</b>	ILEA Middle East Plea Digital Signing
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## Document History



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**07 / 06 / 2020**

11:46:35 UTC

Sent for signature to Paul Berger (pberger@arenagroup.com), Saif Ali Khan (saif@ilea-me.com), Pach Ang (pach@redfilo.com), Rober Duce (robert@otbuae.com), Luis Miguel Soares (luis.soares@adnec.ae), Terry Miranda (tmiranda@lhpme.com) and Harmeeek Singh (harmeeek@planbadv.com) from sujoy@option1world.com  
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