

Interview with Aloysius Arlando, AIPC President

WAS 2017 A GOOD YEAR FOR THE 186 AIPC MEMBERS?

⇒ **In most performance** terms, 2017 was, in fact, a very good year as a continuation of a growth pattern since the GFC in 2008 at a rate that has even exceeded growth in global GDP. However, it was also a time of many challenges as members worked hard to address to constantly changing organizer and delegate expectations and the very nature of events goes through a fundamental evolution that demands constant innovation and adaptation.

What are the biggest future challenges for the convention centers?

The need to generate increasing levels of flexibility in all areas—from spaces and technologies to services and event management—will continue to dominate our environment, as will the need to further enhance and diversify revenues to satisfy owner expectations and support needed new investment in our facilities. We also face new challenges in responding to the increasing importance of digitalization in the global economy in order to be seen as relevant to marketers and organizers who have many other options to choose from as to how they engage with their members and customers.

At the same time, we are also increasingly challenged to compete with other sectors for the human resources we need to deliver service excellence—a challenge that needs to be met with increased training and retention measures as well as an effort to position ours as a desirable career path relative to others competing for the same talent.

Above all, we need to further drive the proposition that convention centers are broadly impactful economic engines whose real function is to support overall economic and community development



agendas in their respective cities and countries, as it is only with this kind of recognition that we will get the kind of support we need to prevail in an increasingly intense marketplace. This latter requirement will be demanding for many; however, it is a far more realistic picture of our true role and we need to be more active in promoting it.

AIPC will be 60 years in 2018. How does the organization stay relevant for the centers and what actions will it pursue for the future?

AIPC is constantly researching industry needs and conditions and creating corresponding programming in response, as this is the only way for an organization to remain relevant in a fast-changing environment. However, our greatest strength—one that has shown its value over our entire history—is the knowledge, insights and experience of our members, so efficient vehicles for facilitating information exchange and collective problem-solving is also a big factor. One of AIPC's greatest

strengths has always been its exclusive devotion to the issues and opportunities associated with international convention centers, and we will maintain this focus going forward to ensure clarity of purpose.

We also believe that the industry in the future will require an even greater level of partnership between centers and their clients that we have seen previously in order to optimize the delegate experience. This means we need to know in more detail our clients' needs and opportunities and have the ability to actively and creatively support them in addressing these. That, in turn, requires a greater investment in joint activities and programming with the broader meetings and events community, so we will be moving forward on this on behalf of our members.

In addition to his role as AIPC president, Aloysius Arlando is the CEO of SingEx Holdings, which comprises several entities focusing on the MICE business; including the management of the Singapore EXPO convention and exhibition center.

AIPC represents a global network of over 185 leading centers in 60 countries with the active involvement of more than 900 management-level professionals worldwide. It is committed to encouraging and recognizing excellence in convention center management, based on the diverse experience and expertise of its int'l. representation, and maintains a variety of educational, research, networking and standards programs to achieve this. AIPC also celebrates and promotes the essential role of the international meetings industry in supporting economic, academic and professional development and enhancing global relations amongst highly diverse business and cultural interests. For more info, contact marianne.de.raay@aipc.org or visit www.aipc.org. ®