

BRITAIN IN THE REGION



UK Trade & Investment, supported by Emirates Airlines and HSBC, organised their largest business support event of the year in Dubai on 27 November 2008. It was marketed under the umbrella of 'Britain in the Region' which is UK Trade & Investment's vehicle to promote bilateral trade between the UK and regional trading partners in the Middle East and North Africa. The objective is to get UK companies to look at all their potential markets in the Region rather than concentrating on one. This year's event was held in Dubai and was timed to coincide with the Emirates 7-a-side Rugby Tournament and the arrival of the RMS Queen Elizabeth 2 on her final voyage before being converted to a floating hotel.

The event attracted more than 150 British companies who were able to meet and discuss business opportunities with UK Trade & Investment staff from 15 different markets including Saudi Arabia. There was considerable interest in Saudi Arabia to the extent that we had to improvise to provide two meeting venues for Saudi Arabia in order to deal with the number of enquiries. Individual clinics were scheduled throughout the day while a programme of seminars ran in parallel covering business opportunities in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, all of which are regional priority markets for UK Trade & Investment. Other seminars included coverage of the construction sector and the financial services sector.

Lord Digby Jones led the British delegation in his capacity as one of UK Trade & Investment's Business Ambassadors. Lord Jones had visited a number of the markets represented at the event earlier in the Year, including Saudi Arabia in March. At that time he had been the UK Minister for Trade.

Lord Jones opened the event with a typically rousing speech in which he rightly extolled both the virtues and the successes of the UK as a trading partner in the North Africa and Middle East regions. He focussing particularly on the growth of knowledge based and niche professional companies in the UK as well as reminding delegates about the substantial manufacturing capability in the UK.

In the evening Lord Jones invited the delegates and local businessmen to a business reception on the Queen Elizabeth 2 which he addressed jointly with the Captain of the Queen Elizabeth 2.

This was the latest in a series of events that UK Trade & Investment has managed under the mantle of 'Britain in the Region'. It was also the largest event of its kind to date. All the indications are that it was a successful occasion although it will be some time before it is possible to accurately assess the amount of business it has delivered.