

Middle East group plans second regional bizav show

by Charles Alcock

September 2006 . Aviation International News

The new Middle East Business Aviation Association (MEBAA) is jointly promoting the new-format Middle East Business Aviation (MEBA) conference and exhibition with Dubai Air Show organizer Fairs & Exhibitions (F&E). MEBA will be staged at the Airport Expo Dubai center in the United Arab Emirates on January 31 and February 1, the venue having been switched from nearby Abu Dhabi.

MEBA was first held as a one-day conference on the eve of last year's Dubai Air Show, which is also held at the Airport Expo Dubai center. The revised timing positions MEBA less than a week before the NBAA-sponsored Asian Business Aviation Conference & Exhibition (ABACE), to be held February 6 and 7 in Hong Kong.

Companies that intend to participate in both events-which target the world's key emerging markets for business aviation

will likely have to move directly from Dubai to Hong Kong.

New MEBAA chairman Ali Ahmed Al Naqbi and F&E chairman Virginia Kern signed the partnership agreement during the Farnborough airshow in July. "This event is totally aligned with the association's goals of enhancing safety, security, efficiency and expansion of business aviation in the Middle East, which, with annual growth rates of 18 percent a year, is now outstripping that of Asia-the region previously acknowledged as the global engine driver for the industry," said Al Naqbi, who is also president of finance and administration for Abu Dhabi's Amiri Flight government/royal flight department.

Return to Dubai

MEBA 2007 is being organized under the patronage of HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, president of Dubai's

Department of Civil Aviation and chairman of the Emirates Group. "MEBA will ensure that the global aviation industry keeps its eyes on the Middle East and its emerging aerospace infrastructure," commented Sheikh Ahmed. "This is a market that no one can afford to ignore."

Dubai was chosen as the venue for MEBA largely because of industry demand for an airside facility immediately adjoining the exhibition center. "We do, however, have plans to roll out MEBA annually around the region as and when appropriate facilities become available," explained Kern.

In recent years, the annual European Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition in Geneva has been drawing increasing numbers of exhibitors and visitors from the Middle East. It remains to be seen whether the advent of a dedicated show for the Middle East will affect this trend at May's EBACE event.

According to Alison Weller, F&E director of aerospace, the MEBA conference will be structured to interest business aircraft buyers and operators. Though no specific speakers have been announced yet, the first day's



Ali Ahmed Al Naqbi, vice president of finance and administration for Abu Dhabi's Amiri Flight government/royal flight department, also serves as the new chairman of MEBAA.

agenda will focus on "the people at the back of the plane," and the second day will be aimed at aircraft operators and service providers. Among the topics to be debated are alternatives to full aircraft ownership.

MEBAA itself was established in May as the world's latest regional business aviation trade association. Its founding members include Abu Dhabi-based charter operator Royal Jet, Saudi

Arabia's National Air Services and Bexair of Bahrain, along with supplier members Gulfstream, Jet Aviation and JetEx.

New Members Welcome

In addition to operator and supplier members, who have full voting rights, MEBAA welcomes non-voting affiliate members who have established interests in Middle East business aviation but who do not fit the other two categories.

More information is available from the MEBA show Web site at www.meba.aero. MEBAA itself can be found at www.mebaa.com.

Before MEBA 2007, Airport Expo Dubai will host the International Helicopter Technology & Operations exhibition from December 5 through 7 (www.dubaihelishow.com). The inaugural show held in 2004 attracted more than 2,500 industry visitors from 20 countries, including official delegations from the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

