

Leading smart cities event draws huge crowd to Doha, Qatar

/EINPresswire.com/ Attracting in the region of 500 registered delegates from over 20 countries, government dignitaries, urban development experts and the world's leading smart city technology firms to showcase their solutions, the Arab Future Cities Summit has secured its place as the leading [smart cities](#) event in the region.

Held last week at the St. Regis [Doha](#) in Qatar, the 2nd annual event brought together key public and private stakeholders including city planners, ambassadors, green building experts, technology thought-leaders and investors to discuss the development of smart cities in the Middle East.



Ali Al Khayat, Senior Urban Planning Researcher, Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning, State of Qatar

Under the patronage of Qatar's Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning, delegates and press filled the venue for the inauguration by His Excellency Rashed Saed Al Naimi, Director of Al Rayyan Municipality, and for the opening presentation of the Qatar National Masterplan by the Municipality's Senior Urban Planning Researcher Ali Al Khayat.

"There are lots of projects lined up for the coming years but the priority for us now is to prepare the regulation and zoning maps, which will help determine what types of buildings are to be built including commercial buildings," said Al Khayat.

"The latest update will focus on sustainable designs in every sphere of infrastructural development, be it roads, transportation systems or other public utility systems".

Qatar's Ministry for Municipality and Urban Planning has earmarked more than US\$140 billion for mega projects across the energy, transport, education, health and tourism sectors, much of which is expected to be completed in time for the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Presentations from a variety of smart city experts including Christopher Sorensen, Global Strategic Partnerships at Masdar, Robert Lee, CEO at Bahrain Bay Development, Eng. Meshal Al-Shamari, Director of Qatar Green Building Council and Graham Bodell, Director of Transport Planning at Atkins Qatar kept the audience engaged across the 2-day event.

Key international speakers included Manel Sanroma, CIO at Barcelona City Council and Volker Schaffler, Project Manager at TINA VIENNA Technologies & Strategies GmbH in Vienna who shared some European smart city successes and green policy with the largely MENA based audience.

Summit highlights included panel discussions and the roundtable sessions, which saw delegates brainstorm solutions to challenges faced by Arab Cities. Seven BlackBerry phones were also won in a lucky-draw on Day Two.

The Future Cities Lounge showcased cutting-edge city technology from leading urban technology companies including IBM, Philips, Thales, Schneider Electric, Microsoft, SAP and Blackberry, all eager to get involved in the mega projects planned for the region.

Commenting on smart city development at the Summit was Sean Patrick O'Brien, Vice President, Urban & Public Security at SAP, and one of the keynote speakers.

"Rapid urbanization demands sustainable growth, smarter economies and, most importantly, people power," said O'Brien,

"What we need is good governance through efficient strategies, resource optimization and smarter transport grids. We need user empowerment stemming from real-time, data-driven enlightenment and a new level of transparency that helps populations connect, collaborate and prosper".

David Burrow's, Microsoft's Managing Director, Government Industry for Europe, Middle East & Africa, was also a speaker at the event, and Microsoft a Gold Sponsor.

"The Arab Future Cities Summit has been a great opportunity to meet, network, share and learn", said Burrows. "Here in the Middle East there is a lot of investment going in to the cities which makes it a great place to be."

Organizers of the Arab Future Cities Summit expect the continued growth of the event over the next few years.

"Considering the ambitious plans for development and a growing sense of responsibility for better resource management, it is not surprising that government and industry are using the Summit as a platform for strengthening their working relationship," said JoAnn Jain, Director at

[Expotrade](#) Global.

“The Middle East is unique in the sense that it has strong visionary leadership placing significant emphasis on developing and implementing new sustainability initiatives and world-class infrastructure projects, and the Summit will continue to reflect this exciting progression”.

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