

giovedì 12 dicembre 2019 15:30

Dear Gabriela, Roberto and Ermanna,

I would like to reassure you that APLF will be held as scheduled and provide you with detailed information on the situation in Hong Kong which I have communicated already to other exhibitors who had contacted me earlier.

In fact I have been in regular contact with some of the group pavilion organisers for months and was able to reassure them that other trade shows had not been so affected by the protests in Hong Kong and that APLF had been proactively implementing measures to ensure international buyers will attend our fair.

I have personally been travelling extensively to meet customers face to face which is I believe the best way to address this issue. I was in Tokyo last week where I had the opportunity to meet with tanners from France, Italy, Japan and Turkey exhibiting at APLF as they were attending the Tokyo Leather Fair and they all confirmed their participation at APLF and are in the process of settling their balance payment before the end of this month...But I know that despite this, rumours still circulate..

Please find attached a slide presentation that you can use to communicate to your members that APLF will go on and that we have been dedicating extra effort and budget to ensure buyers will attend the fair next March.

In case you have not read it already here is the link to an article in ILM publishing my answers to their questions on Hong Kong and APLF:

https://internationalleathermaker.com/news/fullstory.php/aid/7686/Hong_Kong_protests_not_expected_to_impact_APLF_2020_.html

Here are a few points to complement the attached slides.

1- What are we doing to ensure visitors will attend?

In addition to the planned media and visitor promotion:

- We have started our visitor promotion much **earlier than last year**.
- We are sending [a personalised letter to all buyers](#) to get them to confirm they will visit.
- We are increasing the number of partner hotels to provide **more incentives rates** for our overseas attendees
- We have increased the number of hosted buyers and the scope of the programme:
In the past we used to focus our recruitment on specific segments but we are now:
 - Recruiting in all segments for the 4 fairs
 - Approaching new targeted buyers
 - [Asking exhibitors to nominate the buyers they expect us to invite](#)
- We are increasing telemarketing effort to ensure key buyers are all contacted more personally
- We have been intensifying our Social Media marketing by appointing an agency to boost promotion
- As Mainland Chinese buyers are the most hesitant about coming to Hong Kong, we wish to meet them face to face to reassure them personally, answer their questions and present to them the measures we have implemented to ensure their personal safety as well as our extra effort and investment to attract buyers to the fairs next year. A programme of Roadshow Presentations started in Guangzhou earlier last month.

2- What is the situation in Hong Kong really? Is it safe?

For the APLF team, living in Hong Kong is very different from what you may see in the press or in social media, in fact **it is largely business as usual** (at least for our trade exhibition industry). We took some photos of the streets surrounding our office and the HKCEC in Wanchai, I am sure you will recognise some of them and see that people go to work as usual, (including people working in the government buildings in the neighborhood). Some mainland Chinese banks or some businesses which are seen as not supporting the movement like Starbucks have blocked off their windows... but true to Hong Kong's spirit, they are still open and indeed doing business as usual.

We ran recently our 2 days [Leather Training Course](#) in Wanchai. Two Shanghai-based attendees from Kering were hesitating to come to Hong Kong as they initially feared for their safety. They eventually were very happy to have attended the course and said they felt safe in Hong Kong and that the situation was not as bad as they expected. One of them even posted her positive comments on WeChat (see slide 59).

In fact, Mainland Chinese tourists and traders have started to come back to Hong Kong. When I took the photo of Tsimshatsui promenade, one of the key tourist attractions, I could only hear Mandarin spoken around...

Of note, Hong Kong's District Council Elections were recently carried out (on 24 Nov) peacefully without major disruption. Traffic in the past week has been slowly resuming to normal, and the Cross Harbour Tunnel, one of the tunnels connecting Kowloon and Hong Kong Island, is now reopen. Our team is monitoring closely on any public incident plans ahead and will keep you informed of any updates.

3- **What extra measures will be taken to reassure our customers?**

We will dedicate extra effort and budget to arrange:

- Cross-border shuttle bus services to pick up buyers from key cities and manufacturing clusters in South China
- Coaches between airport and train stations to main hotels and HKCEC
- Shuttle buses to and from HKCEC and main hotels occupied by our customers (that is why we are asking buyers to advise us which hotel they have booked).

4- **Are trade shows being cancelled?**

A number of concerts and public events have been cancelled but public incidents have had minimal impacts on exhibitions and several international [trade exhibitions](#) continue to take place each week at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre and Asia World Expo. The trade show sector has not been as affected as companies still consider Hong Kong as the best place to do business.

Although the total number of Mainland Chinese attending trade shows may have dropped, exhibitor numbers are still strong as testified by many trade shows held in the past few months.

Here is a link to a recent newsletter where you can read two articles about trade fairs successfully held in Hong Kong in the past few months:

<https://mailchi.mp/d0a3565423bf/asian-business-media-tracker-newsletter-no-867?e=83f1d3ab47>

5- **Are people in the leather industry concerned?**

When I discussed with the representatives from BLC we co-organise the Leather Training Course with two weeks ago, not only did they not ask any questions about the fair going on, but they even recommended that we arrange a new training course on the day before the fair next March. They know everybody in the leather industry and have not heard of people hesitating to come to APLF. In fact, Karl Flower, who delivered the training, commented on the [article about APLF in ILM](#) posted in social media: "I have just been there [Hong Kong] and was kept very well informed by news and the visitors' home office. In Wanchai, where the HKCEC is, there were no signs of any problems. I didn't go anywhere near Kowloon or the universities or the MTR where the protesters aggregate. Most importantly Joe Bananas was open and functioning normally."

In fact, at APLF-Leather, space booked is 20% higher than at the same time last year. Please refer to the slides where we have posted the logos of some selected exhibitors who have confirmed their participation and buyers we have invited.

It's also been very encouraging to receive positive comments from exhibitors and visitors from other shows run by colleagues at Informa Market in the past three months. We believe these amazing outcome is resulted from the hard work and devotion of our colleagues to deliver the shows the best way possible despite the challenges.

I hope that clarifies and is helpful in dispelling rumours. Patrizia and myself remain at your disposal should you have any more questions or require further assistance.

Best regards
Perrine

Perrine Ardouin
Director



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