

First line-up of speakers for 20th IPRA World Congress

DUBAI, UAE: Malaysia's former deputy prime minister, Anwar Ibrahim, the British public relations guru Lord Bell and the former head of *Al Jazeera*, Wadah Khanfar, will headline the line-up of 35 speakers from the worlds of politics, public relations and the media when the 20th IPRA (International Public Relations Association) World Congress (PRWC) comes to Dubai next month.



Held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, vice president and prime minister of the UAE and ruler of Dubai, and in partnership with the National Media Council of the UAE, PRWC will take place at the Grand Hyatt Dubai over three days from 13-15 March 2012.

Anwar Ibrahim, now a Malaysian opposition leader and leader of Keadilan, the People's Justice Party; Lord Bell, who played a key role in former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's three successful election campaigns and now the chairman of Chime Communications; and Wadah Khanfar, who now leads the Sharq Forum, an independent think tank, lead a roster of thought-leaders who will address the core theme: *From the Arab Street to Wall Street, Communications in the Age of Dialogue*.

Other high-profile speakers include Lord Chadlington, chairman of the Huntsworth group and Mohamed Abu Hamed, vice president, Free Egyptians Party and an MP in Egypt.

Abdullah Jum'ah, the former president and CEO of Saudi Aramco, will deliver the welcome keynote for the Congress, which is being organised by the International Public Relations Association - Gulf Chapter (IPRA-GC).

Faisal Al Zahrani, the president of IPRA-GC, said: "We are delighted that the first Congress to be held in the Middle East can boast not only an impressive list of speakers, but also a hugely exciting programme.

"Given the events of the past year, these themes are especially relevant to those of us who practice public relations in the Middle East, and we are sure that industry professionals will be extremely keen to hear these diverse voices debate the real issues facing PR today."

Sunil John, chairman of the Organising Committee of PRWC Dubai, and chief executive officer of ASDA'A Burson-Marsteller, said: "In the wake of the Arab Spring, the financial crisis and the digital revolution, politics, business and media in the Middle East are all undergoing significant upheavals.

"As PR professionals, it is up to us to help manage that change. The IPRA World Congress offers us the opportunity to hear first hand the ideas, trends and concepts that will form the basis of successful communications strategies in the years ahead."

Among the other speakers are:

- Mark Kimmitt, former US assistant secretary of state for Political/Military Affairs
- Dr Herbert Heitmann, executive vice president of external communications at Royal Dutch Shell
- Khaled Al-Maeena, editor at large, *Arab News*, Saudi Arabia
- Richard C. Powell, Jr, chief of communications at Bloomberg
- Jamal Khashoggi, head of the new Bahrain-based *Al Arab* news channel
- Michael Peel, Middle East correspondent, *Financial Times*
- Jay Walsh, head of communications, Wikimedia Foundation
- Daniel Tisch, chair, Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communications Management
- Hoh Kim, founder and head coach at THE LAB, a Korean consultancy that provides leadership communications coaching and crisis management.

The PRWC Organising Committee will shortly announce the second line of speakers. At least 500 PR professionals are expected to attend the PRWC, where they will have the opportunity to participate in Master Classes and Training Workshops, creating a compelling platform for information sharing and knowledge transfer.

Registration is now open on the Congress website www.prwcdubai.com.

A biennial event, the last IPRA World Congress was held in 2010 in Lima, Peru, and attended by industry representatives from 39 countries, while the 2008 Public Relations World Congress was held in Beijing, China.

For more information go to www.ipra.org.

For more information on the Gulf Chapter of the International Public Relations Association go to www.ipra-gc.org.

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