The next UITIC congress 2005 will be held in Tunis

After unsuccessfully putting themselves forward as candidates to organise the UITIC Congress for several years, eventually Tunisia, and particularly the National Centre for Leather and Footwear (CNCC) was unanimously elected by UITIC members to host the XV UITIC Congress that will be held on 23-26 November this year. Their proposal was put to the vote during the General Assembly that took place on 11 October 2002 on the occasion of the last UITIC Congress held in Budapest.

Tunisia's leather and footwear industry, counting more than 23,000 employees, is progressing and benefiting from a highly developed artisan sector that employs 36,000 people. Virtually half of these companies are devoted to footwear exports, and Tunisia is the fifth product exported by Tunisia. The rate of footwear exports tripled over the last ten years, and footwear production doubled.

The main buyers of Tunisia’s processed products are Italy (44%), followed by France (13%) and Germany (13%). Some foreign companies outsource their production to Tunisia, such as Adidas, Palladium, Eurostar, etc.

The Tunisian footwear industry has several advantages, such as: skilled labour force, several vocational centres for the leather industry, free access of industrial products into the EU market, and support infrastructures such as the National Centre for Leather and Footwear, which is equipped with testing and analysis laboratories. This is the framework chosen for our next Congress, which differing from the structure followed in previous editions, will adopt the following conference scheme:

1. Opening session: Welcome speeches by local authorities and introductory speech on the global situation of the footwear industry.
2. Response to consumer expectations: Adaptation of products to consumer requirements, user perceptions of product innovation, etc.
4. Production management: Globalisation of footwear production, including competitiveness assessment aspects, quality assurance and the use of IT and Telecommunications in the exchange of information among the footwear value chain components.
5. Closing session: The definitive conference programme will be available very soon, as well as registration forms and detailed information about hotels and participation fees.

UITIC Awards

At the last UITIC Congress, held in Budapest, during the official dinner the UITIC Awards were presented in three categories: technical, scientific and managerial. On that occasion the award winners were Mr Pietro Torrielli (Italy) Wilfried Schreier (Germany) and Pierre Bonnet (France) respectively.

Mr Torrielli joined the Torrielli company in 1957, and became its president in 1966. The company was founded in 1933 with the aim of producing and distributing machinery for shoe production. Pietro played an important role in the expansion abroad of the so-called "made in Italy" slogan. Among the posts he held, the following could be highlighted: President of ASSOMAC (1995-1999); President of SIMAC and Running Tech Journeys; President of the Technical Committee, created by EEK, for the safety standards of footwear machinery; Member of UNIDO Leather Panel; Member of NLDTP (National Leather Development Programme) named by the Indian government as a foreign expert in footwear.

Mr Schreier was a leading researcher at the former Weissenseif Research Centre (previously in East Germany), currently an associated member of the Firmanse Institute (PTI). Mr Schreier has spent decades as one of the most important researchers in Eastern Europe, dealing with different subjects in the textile field and the testing of shoe quality.

Mr Bonnet was the director of ISN Plc (1993-1995) and president and managing director of ISN Plc (1985-1993). ISN is a high technology business which designs and produces water cutting machinery created by Mr Bonnet in 1987 in order to satisfy the need for modernisation in the cutting workshops in the footwear industry. He was also Foreign trade adviser for France (1985-1992, Bordeaux); Administrator of CICE, the French Foreign Trade Centre (1988-1991); Representative of the Consulta, associated director of Lot et Garonne CCI, since 1982, President of AFTIC, the French Association for Footwear Technicians (1978-1985), and he is currently responsible for the footwear, leather and bags department of the company Leerta Systèmes.

With a view to vote the next UITIC awards that will be presented during the XV Congress in Tunis, the period nominations is already open to all members of the Association. We kindly ask those interested in submitting a proposal to send the Secretariat a one-page resume of the candidate.

As it is well known, UITIC awards are presented in three different categories to recognise the merits of those people that stand out in the following domains:

- Technical: Experts in the footwear industry, employed workers.
- Scientific: Technologists or scientists, self-employed or belonging to technical organisations in the sector.
- Managerial: Managers, associates or high level executives in the Sector industries.

We hope this initiative will contribute to acknowledge the importance of our sectors and the professionals working in it.