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MTC GLOBAL WOODMART 2012 TO BOOST REGIONAL TIMBER INDUSTRY

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The Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF) 2011 ended on March 5, 2011 after hosting more than 6,500 overseas buyers from 140 countries with US\$778 million sales generated during the five days, surpassing last year's figure of US\$755 million.

The global economic recovery has spurred a robust growth in the property market evident in the increased demand for office and home furniture at the Fair. MIFF Sdn Bhd also announced the dates for MIFF 2012 which would run from March 6-10. Held for the 17th consecutive year, MIFF 2011 showcased a wide range of furniture from about 500 exhibitors including local and foreign furniture makers from countries like China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, South Korea, USA, Japan and Egypt. The Fair received encouraging feedback from both exhibitors and international buyers, with many exhibitors making bookings for larger exhibition space next year.

More than half of the international buyers were from ASEAN (21.4%), Europe (14.5%), Far East (13.4%) and the Middle East (11.9%). The Fair saw a significant increase in buyers from the Middle East, India and Africa. International buyers were encouraged by the high quality and

competitive pricing of furniture showcased in the show.

Overall, exhibitors were pleased with the show which attracted many quality buyers. Many exhibitors noted that there was a slight decrease in the number of buyers compared to last year but were pleasantly surprised by the fast pace of negotiation in terms of purchase orders and business from non-traditional markets.

"It has been a real eye-opener. I am tickled to death with the traffic and the business written. It has been a pleasant surprise – people actually come in and give you [purchase orders] and down payments. They want to do the business on the spot," remarked Bob Hudgins, Business Development Manager of Hume Furniture Industries, Malaysia when interviewed by an international furniture publication. Safari Office System Sdn Bhd Director David Kiew said that the company received more buyers at his booth this year. "Enquiries for our office furniture at MIFF have been increasing year-by-year. This year alone, we saw 10 to 15% jump in sales compared to last year," he said.

Participants to the show also felt that the true value of MIFF was not just "direct sales" but the opportunity for them to meet

with their peers to exchange information on the growth and future trends of the furniture industry.

One of the MIFF 2011 highlights was the Ideation Award organised for the second year which targets young designers from local institutions to come up with innovative and creative furniture design. This year's competition, themed "New Urbanism, Innovation and Sustainability", included prototyping of the shortlisted designs. The international judges highlighted the higher standard of entries as well as the technical advice from participating manufacturers who produced prototypes of 11 contest finalists. The judges also felt that many of the final designs possessed commercial potential.

MIFF Sdn Bhd organises the annual event which is ranked one of the top ten world's leading furniture trade fairs. MIFF 2011 which featured almost 70% of Malaysian furniture players was held at the Putra World Trade Centre and the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, covering an exhibition area of more than 75,000 square metres.

MIFF 2012 is open for booking now and the response from existing and new exhibitors have been very encouraging.