

Prepared by the New Zealand Embassy Abu Dhabi and the New Zealand at Expo team in Dubai

Summary

- The UAE is steadfast in its preparations to be able to host not only a successful, but a safe World Expo in Dubai with doors opening on 1 October 2021.
- Both the Expo International Participants Meeting and Expo Steering Committee Meeting were held in person in Dubai in early May, as planning for the six-month long World Expo forges ahead.
- While COVID continues to present worldwide uncertainty for both participants and prospective visitors in the four months prior to the opening the UAE is seized of the opportunity to host one of the first major events since the beginning of the pandemic, with all efforts being undertaken to ensure Expo can go ahead safely.
- These efforts will also benefit those working for Expo, with Dubai offering free COVID vaccinations to all official Expo participants and their staff, as well as ensuring all those working on site for Expo 2020 are vaccinated.

Report

In early May the UAE hosted a series of in-person meetings with Expo 2020 International Participants providing key information on operational plans for the event, which will begin in 4 months' time. These events follow the recent New Zealand Expo launch hosted by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, which took place in Auckland on 18 March where she emphasised that Expo 2020 was an opportunity for New Zealand to "reconnect with the world".

The significant attendance and enthusiasm at the recent IPM, in addition to the high vaccination rates and regular Ministerial visits already made to the UAE are encouraging signs as countries look to ramp up their plans for high-level visits to the UAE for Expo. With Expo hoping to draw international visitors, as well as high-level delegations, many countries are seeing Expo as a prime event to anchor further bilateral initiatives while at the Expo site.

Expo 2020 will take place in Dubai from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 (one year later than originally scheduled). New Zealand remains fully committed to participating in Expo - with a clear Government mandate for New Zealand to reconnect with the world, funding and support from stakeholders. Both public and private stakeholders and sponsors alike are heavily invested in New Zealand's Expo 2020 presence, including Fonterra, Comvita, Città Design, Tate Industries, Gallagher Security, David Trubridge, Kaynemaile and many government agencies.

Expo 2020 Dubai Steering Committee of Commissioners-General

The Expo 2020 Dubai Steering Committee, of which New Zealand's Commissioner-General is a member, convened on 6 May in Dubai for its first in person meeting since the beginning of the pandemic. The meeting centred largely on COVID, with the UAE hosts explaining the significant measures being taken to ensure a successful Expo and safe event for all. Central to discussions was Dubai's offer of free COVID vaccinations to all official Expo participants and their staff. Such an offer to safeguard all Expo workers, aligns with the UAE's aggressive national vaccination campaign which has vaccinated over 80% of the eligible population as of 1 June. These vaccinations will also supplement the extensive vaccination drive for Expo employees and their households, which launched at the beginning of 2021.

The Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), the intergovernmental organisation in charge of overseeing and regulating World Expos, will ultimately be responsible for setting the COVID safety policies for Expo 2020 Dubai. The specific details of the policy are expected to be released in July, and will further guide how the UAE as Expo host implements specific COVID measures.

Sixth International Participants Meeting

The sixth and final International Participants Meeting (IPM) took place in the days prior to the Steering Committee on 4-5 May in Dubai. It was the first IPM to be held in person since the beginning of the pandemic and drew more than 370 senior representatives from 173 countries.

In an opening statement at the IPM, Minister of State and Expo 2020 Dubai Director-General Reem Al Hashimy assured Participants that Expo will go ahead as planned, “we are resolved to deliver on our promise, which has never wavered, to deliver an event with purpose and meaning with the hope our collective presence and collaboration will leave a lasting positive legacy for all.” She noted that Expo was one of the first global gatherings during the COVID era, and that the UAE was both a “ready and welcoming host”. The UAE continues to plan for Expo welcoming 25 million visits over the six-month event, an estimate originally established pre-COVID.

During the two-day IPM, Participants were briefed in detail on the latest developments with operations, security, readiness, communications and programming, while organisers also presented the stringent COVID measures being taken to ensure a safe event for all. With regard to Participants’ workforces, IPM presenters made clear that “all workforces should be vaccinated” and that those who are unvaccinated, should take a weekly COVID test at their own cost. Organisers noted that Dubai Health Authority is currently working with Emirates and the aviation industry on a process to ensure validity of international vaccination cards.

One session focused on Expo worker welfare, with Expo organisers noting that they were committed to fostering a positive worker culture of worker welfare. To date, Expo has delivered more than 235 million work hours. Expo is expected to create more than 300,000 jobs, with the January 2020 construction peak reaching 44,469 people in the workforce. Critical infrastructure to support Expo has been completed, including improvements to the Dubai Metro system which has seen a stop for the Expo 2020 site open from 1 June for those working on site.

Further relaxation of Dubai COVID restrictions

With COVID case numbers across the UAE holding steady averaging 1987 per day for the last 7 days, Dubai’s COVID restrictions were reduced in mid-May which has both tourist operators and Expo organisers feeling positive. Hotels, restaurants and entertainment facilities are now able to operate at higher capacities than before, and permits may be granted for concerts and large-scale social events but under the condition that all attendees and staff are vaccinated. As of 3 June, the UAE has administered 13 million vaccine doses. Currently the UAE is offering Pfizer BioNTech, Sinopharm and AstraZeneca vaccines. It was recently announced that the UAE will embark on a campaign for booster Sinopharm vaccines providing a third shot 6 months after the second dose as part of the proactive strategy to provide maximum protection for the population.

New Zealand remains committed to Expo, with the event a prime opportunity for New Zealand to reconnect with the world. Work on the New Zealand pavilion site began in May 2019 and will continue in the months ahead of Expo to complete the site ready for visitors. Work is ramping up with engaging New Zealand businesses to participate in Expo, with a variety of ways businesses can plug in. Notably the NZTE Expo Business Leveraging programme, which provides support to exporters new to the Middle East and surrounding markets, and those keen to grow their existing business in the region. With both virtual and in person streams available to exporters, the Business Leverage programme has already enticed many interested kiwi exporters, see more information [here](#). On 1 June, New Zealand at Expo released a video trailer showcasing the New Zealand Pavilion, which can be viewed here: [New Zealand Pavilion at Expo 2020 - YouTube](#)

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