

PRESS RELEASE

The Emirate of Sharjah: a reference point for the culture of the Arab world, and much more In Bologna from 21 to 24 March

At the Bologna Children's Book Fair (BCBF) 2022 with a rich programme of workshops and meetings with children's authors, publishers and illustrators, Sharjah is seizing this opportunity to promote all of its cultural universe.

Bologna 16 March 2022. Sharjah is one of the seven Emirates that make up the United Arab Emirates. Situated on the coast of the Gulf of Arabia just a few kilometres from Dubai, the city of Sharjah is the cultural centre of the United Arab Emirates.

Sharjah is home to a rich network of cultural heritage sites such as museums, souks and art galleries, as well as a vibrant atmosphere for all things arts and culture. The Emirate's leading role in the Arab region's cultural renaissance has been recognised internationally on various occasions: **in 1998 UNESCO named Sharjah the Cultural Capital of the Arab World**; in **2014** it was awarded the title of **Capital of Islamic Culture**. More recently, in 2019, Sharjah was named the **World Book Capital by UNESCO**.

The substantial interest in books and publishing has led to the organisation of important events such as the **Sharjah International Book Fair (SIBF)**, which in 2021, on the occasion of its fortieth edition, attracted 546 publishers and literary agents from 83 countries, making it the world's leading book fair for the year 2021. Also of great international significance is the annual **Sharjah Children's Reading Festival (SCRF)** dedicated to children's literature. The event is an interactive, educational and entertaining experience created to nurture children's imagination and offer them the opportunity to forge lasting friendships through books. These events are combined with a Publishers' Conference promoting international debate on issues related to the culture industry of books, copyrights, translations and the marketing of titles in international markets.

Sharjah plays a specific **role as a catalyst for publishing companies** by offering various opportunities to publishers that choose to open an office in the Emirate. These benefits include the zero taxation typical of a **free economic zone** as well as a whole series of initiatives and specialised events including partnerships with the main book fairs around the world.

This approach, with its all-encompassing focus on books and culture, is the result of the enlightened vision of **Emir Dr Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi**, a member of the UAE Federal Supreme Council and Governor of Sharjah, who has long been committed to cultivating Sharjah's

role as a cultural beacon in the Middle East region, integrating its cosmopolitan perspective with the uniqueness of Arab traditions and cultural heritage.

Leading the delegation of authors, publishers and illustrators from Sharjah will be **Sheikh Fahim Al Qasimi**, Head of the Government Relations Department and the Emir's envoy tasked with taking full advantage of the opportunity of the Bologna Children's Book Fair to promote a complete cultural offer made up not only of books but also of music, theatre, art, moments of interaction and participation in events. The spirit that animates the Emirate's intense cultural activity is aimed at creating a connection between Sharjah and the entire Arab world with the global market.

Specifically, during the Bologna Children's Book Fair there will be a series of events hosted in the Sharjah stands, in the themed areas of the fair (such as the Illustrators Cafe) and in other cultural venues in the city such as the Sala Borsa Library and the Testoni Ragazzi Theatre. These events will feature Arabic authors and illustrators, who will be available to meet young readers, sign copies of their books and present their work and art. The aim of these initiatives by the Sharjah Book Authority is to offer an overview of the lively programme proposed by the Emirate at the 59th edition of the book fair, bringing the best of Arab and Emirati literature and culture to Italy and Europe.

The detailed programme of events is available at the following link:

<https://www.bolognachildrensbookfair.com/en/about/sharjah-guest-of-honour-at-bcbf-2022/9602.html>

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