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24th July 2026

To all the Members of the AIPPI - UAE National Group

13th Circular/ 2026

Subject: Exhibiting in the GCC? Consider Temporary Trade Mark Protection

We are pleased to share our 13th Circular for 2026, authored by Mona Saleh, on temporary trade mark protection for exhibitions in the UAE and GCC.

Trade fairs and exhibitions are often the first platform where businesses introduce new brands, products, and services to the market. However, publicly displaying a new trademark before filing a trademark application may expose it to the risk of unauthorized copying, misappropriation or registration by third parties.

To mitigate this risk, many jurisdictions provide temporary trademark protection for marks exhibited at officially recognized exhibitions. While this form of protection is well established under international trademark principles, it remains relatively underutilized and frequently overlooked in practice across the GCC region.

An international concept

The concept originates from Article 11 of the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, which requires member states to provide temporary protection for industrial property exhibited at official or officially recognised international exhibitions.

Each country may determine the procedures, requirements and duration of that protection under its national laws.

As a result, the scope and implementation of temporary protection vary between jurisdictions.

Temporary protection vs. exhibition priority

Temporary protection and exhibition priority are often confused, but they serve different purposes.

Temporary protection protects a trade mark during the exhibition itself, usually through a temporary registration or certificate issued by the relevant register or authority.

Exhibition priority, by contrast, does not provide immediate protection. Instead, it allows the exhibitor to rely on the exhibition date as a priority date when filing a trade mark application within a prescribed period after the exhibition. This mechanism is not currently available in the UAE or GCC, although evidence of exhibition use may still be relevant in proceedings such as appeals or oppositions.

Temporary protection in the GCC

The GCC Trade Mark Law expressly recognises temporary protection for trade marks used at exhibitions. Article 21 of the GCC Trade Mark Law, together with Articles 19 to 22 of its Executive Regulations, provides the framework under which trade mark owners may obtain temporary protection for marks displayed on products or services at official exhibitions held in GCC member states.

In general, applicants must:

- notify the competent Trade mark Office at least one month before the exhibition opens (This may require submitting an official letter or certificate issued by the exhibition or trade fair organizer confirming the applicant's participation and the exhibition details);
- submit the prescribed application form with the mark to be protected.
- pay the applicable official fees; and
- ensure that the mark satisfies the normal registrability requirements.

Applications are entered into a dedicated register, after which the relevant register or authority may issue a temporary protection certificate. Importantly, this protection does not replace a trade mark registration. It applies only during the exhibition period and should be followed by a regular trade mark application where long-term protection is required.

The UAE

The UAE has incorporated temporary exhibition protection into its national trade mark legislation. Trade mark owners exhibiting products or services at official or internationally recognised exhibitions in the UAE may apply to the Ministry of Economy and Tourism at least one month before the exhibition opens.

Once accepted, the mark is recorded and a temporary protection certificate may be issued. Protection remains in force for the duration of the exhibition unless cancelled earlier at the owner's request.

As this procedure remains relatively new for the Trade Mark Office, practical filing requirements may develop further. The UAE has set an official fee for the service, and until the new portal is available, enquiries should be directed to the Trade mark Office by email.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has implemented the GCC provisions through its national legislation and Executive Regulations. Applicants may obtain temporary protection for trade marks displayed at official exhibitions held within the GCC, provided the statutory requirements are met. The Regulations also provide for a temporary protection certificate to be issued once the application has been recorded.

Qatar and Bahrain

Qatar and Bahrain have adopted the GCC Trade mark Law and are therefore required to provide temporary protection under Article 21 of the Law and Articles 19 to 22 of the Executive Regulations. In practice, however, neither Trade mark Office appears to have published dedicated official fees or introduced an online filing service specifically for temporary protection applications.

This appears to be an administrative, rather than legislative, gap. Article 22 of the Executive Regulations provides that temporary protection certificates are issued only for exhibitions designated by official decision, suggesting that applications may be handled on a case-by-case basis depending on the exhibition concerned.

Businesses planning to exhibit in Qatar or Bahrain should therefore seek local advice well before the exhibition to confirm the available procedure.

Practical considerations for exhibitors

Businesses planning to launch new brands at exhibitions in the GCC should:

- identify whether the exhibition qualifies as an official or officially recognised exhibition;
- review whether temporary protection is available in the relevant jurisdiction;
- prepare and submit the application at least one month before the exhibition where required;
- ensure the trade mark is capable of registration; and
- file a regular trade mark application promptly if long-term protection is required.

Although temporary exhibition protection is not a commonly utilized mechanism, it can serve as a valuable safeguard for businesses launching new brands at trade fairs and industry exhibitions across the UAE and the GCC. With the region continuing to host major international exhibitions, securing temporary exhibition protection at an early stage can help minimize the risk of third parties copying, misappropriating or seeking to register valuable trade marks before a formal trade mark application is filed, thereby preserving the brand owner's rights during the critical pre-filing period.

Thank you.

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