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Russia & CIS Hotel Investment Conference (RHIC) Announces Leadership Panel and Key Educational Sessions as Part of 2009 Conference Program

30 July 2009 – St. Petersburg, Russia:

The Russia & CIS Hotel Investment Conference (RHIC) recently released their 2009 conference program to give insight on how the conference will address the economic uncertainties for the region and the opportunities that remain available for 2010 and beyond. The programme includes several key sessions such as “Why Russia....Why Now” on Monday, October 26 at 10:15 and a leadership panel featuring prominent global hospitality leaders on Tuesday, October 27 at 12:00.

The “Why Russia....Why Now” session will revolve around the low construction and land costs, the “safety” of retail and office space and why it’s an ideal time for hotel investment. It will also delve into the hurdles in Russia and how they be overcome.

Led by moderator Mark Wynne Smith, Chief Executive Officer (Europe, Middle East & Africa) of Jones Lang LaSalle Hotels, the panel will be comprised of Audrey Yakunin, Partner and Chief Financial Officer of Venture Investments & Yield Management; Boris Chemiakine, President, CJSC Kuznetsky Most Development and Advisor to the President at the Bank of Moscow; Kurt Ritter, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Rezidor Hotel Group and Paul White, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Orient-Express Hotels Ltd.

“Russia enjoys such a rich history in art and culture that it’s a natural fit for foreign tourists to start counting it as a new leisure destination. Based on that fact and that it continues to be a developing market in the hotel industry, opportunities abound and it should be considered as an ideal location for hotel investment,” states Jonathan Worsley, Chairman of Bench Events, co-organiser of RHIC. “However, certain issues must be considered including choosing the right local partner and having good connections within the region, corruption and getting experienced labour to expedite your project. This panel will address concerns that you might have about investing in Russia and how you can move past them.”

The leadership panel “Setting the Scene for Effective Hotel Development” will be led by Michael O’Hare, Managing Director at Horwarth HTL Hungary & Russia, and will discuss how to optimize the development pipeline and how to continue to do so in the current economic climate. The panellists will also examine opportunities in secondary cities.

Panellists will include: Igor Romanov, Member of the Board of Directors of Azimut Hotel Company, Kirk Kinsell, President (EMEA) of Intercontinental Hotels Group, Petr Chitipakhovyan, President of the CH-Group and Roeland Vos, President (Europe, Africa and Middle East) of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc.

“Opening a hotel in the Russia and CIS regions is not always an easy undertaking at any time. Developers face a host of problems including infrastructure issues, financing difficulties and a lack of a hospitality culture throughout. In the leadership panel, some of the most brilliant minds in the industry will explore how to bypass these barriers and move forward with your project even in the less than optimal state of the economy,” says moderator Michael O’Hare. “We believe that Russia, in the primary and most definitely in the secondary cities, have an undersupply of quality rooms and we want to go into the opportunities that are available in these developing markets among many other things.”

The Russia & CIS Hotel Investment Conference will be held October 25-27, 2009 at the **Corinthia Hotel**, St. Petersburg, and is jointly organised by Questex Media Group, Inc. and Bench Events.

[Click here](#) to view the detailed programme or to download a copy of the full conference programme as a PDF.

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