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**Dominican Republic Minister of Tourism Presents Tourism, Economic and Infrastructure Developments at 2008 Dominican Annual Tourism Exchange (DATE)**

*U.S. \$1 billion in tourism infrastructure developments to be invested before 2012*

**BAVARO, PUNTA CANA – April 3, 2008** - Minister of Tourism Felix Jimenez recently announced the Dominican Republic (DR) government's plan to invest approximately U.S. \$1 billion in tourism infrastructure developments by 2012. Discussed during the Dominican Annual Tourism Exchange (DATE), the country's annual gathering of leading tourism buyers and suppliers, the DR's significant investment demonstrates their commitment to enhancing their growing infrastructure as the destination continues to welcome international visitors and enhance its world-class destination status.

Jimenez noted that the DR is one of the leading Caribbean travel destinations. In fact, 25 percent of all travelers to the Caribbean picked the DR as their vacation spot of choice in 2007. "Last year, tourists from North America exceeded tourists from Europe," said Jimenez. Forty-eight percent of visitors to the DR originated from North America with 34 percent from the U.S. and 14 percent from Canada. Thirty-nine percent came from Europe and the remaining 13 percent from Latin America.

Jimenez also highlighted new developments to the North and East Coasts, as well as the South Central region. The East Coast has attracted four prestigious U.S. hotel developments, including Aman, Four Seasons, Ritz Carlton and Westin luxury brand hotels. According to Jimenez, there are a wealth of international investment opportunities developing as celebrated hotel chains purchase property and high-level real estate projects develop. "Ten years ago, only Casa De Campo existed in the high-level real estate development market. Now, we boast prominent projects such as Cap Cana, the Punta Cana Resort and Club, and Roco Ki."

Along the North Coast is Cabarete, an emerging destination that boasts a recently regenerated beach – named one of the world's best spots for the sport of kiteboarding as it features the perfect combination of wind and waves. This year Jimenez announced that additional developments to this vibrant surf town will be added, including a boutique hotel and bar/restaurant.

In the South Central region, a new convention center is being planned for Santo Domingo, which will be the first for that area of the DR. Moreover, the new Sans Souci Port will be formally inaugurated in the next few months and is now known as the DR's "mother port" for prestigious cruise lines. Additionally, cruise ship



tourism to the DR continues to increase. Vice Minister of Tourism Magaly Toribio stated, “due to the DR’s growing cruise ship industry, the country has seen a vast improvement in the number of cruise ship passengers, rivaling Puerto Rico. In fact, last year cruise ship visitation to the DR represented 34 percent of overall tourism and 500,000 cruise ship tourists are forecasted to visit the DR this year; a 60 percent increase over 2007.”

Jimenez also provided updates on the DR’s growing investment in development to transportation infrastructure, including improvements to the highway from Punta Cana to Santo Domingo. This should shorten drive time between the areas from three and a half hours to just two. In the near future, visitors to Bavaro will easily reach Samana upon completion of the Bavaro tourism corridor. Located between Macao and Sabana de La Mar, it will feature a port to provide a one-hour ferry crossing between the East and North Coasts (completion date and details to be announced). Once this new ferry is operating, golf enthusiasts will be able to enjoy the sport on the East Coast, the golf mecca of the country, as well as the North East Coast, which will soon feature a course of its own.

Rich in history, the Dominican Republic’s first tourist was Christopher Columbus in 1492. Since then, it has developed into a diverse and luxurious destination offering both Dominican and European flavors to more than one million U.S. visitors each year. At 10,000 feet, the Dominican Republic is home to the highest point in the Caribbean. It also features some of the best golf courses and beaches in the world, the largest marina in the Caribbean and is a chosen escape for celebrities, couples and families. For additional information visit [www.godominicanrepublic.com](http://www.godominicanrepublic.com) or call 1-888-374-6361.

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