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## ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS TO TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE MAKES PUERTO RICO TOPS FOR GREAT MEETINGS

*-- Hotel Development, Property Upgrades, New Meetings Facilities & Outstanding Communications Services Makes for Prime Meeting Destination --*

**SAN JUAN, November 14, 2007** – With the Puerto Rico Convention Center quickly approaching its second anniversary, Puerto Rico has continued an aggressive transformation into a new era in its tourism history. With sell-out exhibitions, record convention attendees and brisk convention bookings, the new Puerto Rico Convention Center is serving as an impetus in growing the Island’s economy as it is able to serve more and larger groups in the meetings and conventions arena.

“Meetings and conventions infuse more than US\$900 million dollars into our local economy each year, which means big business for our Island and a strong commitment within our local industry to ensure that our delegates are enjoying an outstanding convention experience,” stated Ana María Viscasillas, president and CEO, Puerto Rico Convention Bureau. “In addition to adding the new Puerto Rico Convention Center to our mix, Puerto Rico has also been under-going a transformation of its infrastructure, with the addition of new hotels, significant property upgrades, increased airlift and other improvements to ensure that our infrastructure is on par with that of our competitors.”

### Aggressive Hotel Development

Currently, Puerto Rico boasts more than 1.2 million square feet (111,483 sq. m.) of meeting space with more than 13,300 hotel rooms -- offering meeting planners an unprecedented range of top-name hotel brand choices in a variety of price ranges to suit any group. As Puerto Rico’s popularity continues to grow among both the leisure and meetings market, the Island is currently spending more than US\$1 billion in hotel development, expansion and renovation projects to meet the demand and needs of today’s savvy world travelers.

Construction of the headquarter hotel at the Puerto Rico Convention Center District continues and is on schedule for opening in September 2009. The US\$209 million, 500-room **Sheraton Puerto Rico Convention Center Hotel** will be an urban resort property, featuring a contemporary design with a large, open lobby, casino and entertainment complex for live music performances. Also included in the plan are two ballrooms, banquet and meeting rooms, a full-service spa, restaurants, shops and parking space.

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The bidding process for the development of a second, 400-room hotel property has already begun, with a goal that the District will house 1,770 hotel rooms by 2012 to provide convention delegates and other visitors with ample and diverse accommodation options.

Other major convention and meeting hotel developments include the opening of the 248-room **Renaissance La Concha Hotel & Casino**. Scheduled to open in December 2007, the property will feature 15,000 sq. ft. (1,394 sq. m.) of meeting and function space. Its sister property, the **Condado Vanderbilt Hotel**, is schedule to open in late 2008 and will feature 300 rooms and 20,000 sq. ft. (1,858 sq. m.) of meeting space.

As part of its US\$400 million investment in Puerto Rico properties, LXR Resorts has put US\$52 million into the **El San Juan Hotel & Casino** to update the property's guest rooms, main lobby and pool areas, complete with luxurious cabanas feature WiFi Internet access, mini-bars and flat-screen televisions. This month, Pasha restaurant will open in the hotel's lobby featuring Middle Eastern delicacies. US\$65 million has also been invested at the **Condado Plaza Hotel & Casino**, featuring a complete guest room redesign, along with refurbishment of the property's meeting space and lobby, and the addition of a Strip House restaurant. In June, LXR's **El Conquistador Resort & Golden Door® Spa** opened a new 21,090 sq. ft. (1,958 sq. m.) **Grand Atlantic Conference Center**, making it the largest resort conference facility in the Caribbean. Other major renovations include the completed Marina Wing, as well as the Olas and Vista Wing, and the addition of a new water park and renovated Casino Bar on schedule for completion by the end of 2007. The property is now also completely wireless, including pool areas and all of Palomino Island.

Also nearby the Puerto Rico Convention Center, the **Caribe Hilton** continues its ongoing renovation project with renovations to the property's Garden Wing and Executive Tower including upgrades to guestrooms, corridors, lobby, landscaping, public areas, dining and meeting space. In addition, the property recently completed its Executive Floor lounge and 168 Condado Lagoon Villas, making the resort the largest in San Juan. With four meeting rooms and an executive board room added last year, the 184-room **Hotel Pierre at Gallery Plaza** has just begun an \$18 million multi-phase hotel renovation throughout the property to become the **Doubletree by Hilton Hotel San Juan**. Renovations to meeting rooms and the lobby already complete and guestrooms are currently under renovation for completion in December 2007. The Main Tower will undergo renovations in March 2008 for completion by mid-June 2008. Additional upgrades to leisure

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Sales and Marketing Agent for the new Puerto Rico Convention Center



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facilities and dining outlets are scheduled for completion in mid-2008. The **Ritz-Carlton San Juan Hotel, Spa & Casino** is adding balconies to 35 guestrooms with estimated date of completion for mid December 2007, while the **Intercontinental San Juan Resort & Casino** has nearly completed a soft-goods renovation on all of its guestrooms.

The **Sheraton Old San Juan** recently re-inaugurated its casino following a US\$3.5 million renovation and expansion for 10,000 sq. ft. (929 sq. m.) of gaming space, including new slot machines. An additional US\$1 million is being invested into the property to include a new restaurant called The Chicago Burger Company to add to the recently opened Palio restaurant, serving Tuscan specialties and steaks. Guest rooms are being updated with flat-screen televisions, and there will be upgrades to hallways and the addition of a private lounge with television monitors and complimentary Internet service.

Other updates around Puerto Rico include the opening of the new **Angora Convention Center in August 2007**, which features 9,200 sq. ft. (855 sq. m.) of meeting space, including four Wi-Fi enabled conference rooms and a banquet hall able to accommodate up to 400 people in the fast-developing area of Caguas. The **Mayaguez Resort & Casino**, which features 12,000 sq. ft. (1,115 sq. m.) of meeting space, recently renovated all guest rooms and in September 2007 a river pool and water slide was added to the property's amenities. The **Hilton Ponce Golf & Casino Resort** is opening a new 6,000 sq. ft. (557 sq. m.) exhibition center in mid-January 2008. The Westin Rio Mar has been reflagged as the **Rio Mar Beach & Resort, a Wyndham Grand Resort**, and features US\$36 million in upgrades. All guest rooms now feature Be Well beds, with new sofa beds being added to suites, and all rooms will be equipped with flat screen monitors by late December 2007. The newly expanded and renovated casino opened in October 2007 and the beach side restaurant will also be converted to a chapel perfect for destination wedding by the end of the year.

**Increased Airlift and Airport Upgrades**

Puerto Rico offers more than 1,300 weekly non-stop flights from the U.S. and internationally and is the hub for American Airlines' service to the Caribbean. Major air service providers to the Island include ATA, Continental, Delta, JetBlue, Northwest, Pan Am, Spirit, United, US Airway, as well as international carriers such as Iberia, Copa and Transmeridian Airlines.

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At Puerto Rico's major airports, upgrades and renovations currently include a US\$390 million capital improvement project at the **Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport** in San Juan. The project, which began in 2003 and is scheduled for completion in 2009, includes the construction of a new US\$35 million terminal to serve the convention and cruise market, a new runway, as well as increased retail, food, service and entertainment offerings throughout at the airport.

This summer, a new control tower was inaugurated at the airport in Aguadilla (**Rafael Hernández Airport**). With more than 350,000 passengers each year, the airport is used by JetBlue, Continental, Spirit, with 84 weekly flights from locations in the continental U.S. including Fort Lauderdale, Newark, Orlando and New York. The airport serves much of the Porta del Sol Region in Puerto Rico.

**The New Puerto Rico Convention Center**

At 580,000 sq. ft. (53,882 sq. m.), the new Puerto Rico Convention Center is the largest convention center in the Caribbean. The state-of-the-art facility can accommodate groups of up to 10,000 attendees.

The new Convention Center offers a 152,700 sq. ft. (14,186 sq. m.) Exhibition Hall and 36,200 sq. ft. (3,363 sq. m.) of high-tech meeting space in 15 rooms (28 breakout rooms) on two levels. Spanning 39,500 sq. ft. (3,670 sq. m.) the Ballroom is the largest in the Caribbean.

"The addition of the new Puerto Rico Convention Center is changing the landscape for meetings and conventions on the Island by allowing us to host larger groups that provide an enormous benefit to our local economy," stated Viscasillas. "The new and visually inviting Center extends our living room, allowing Puerto Rico to welcome delegates from all over the globe with a world-class facility the utilizes the latest technologies for state-of-the-art business and association gatherings."

As the most-technologically advanced convention center in the Caribbean and Latin America, full fiber optic broadband and wireless Internet access is available throughout the Center with additional services, including video-conferencing, satellite up-link and down-link; simultaneous language translation can also be arranged. Other technological highlights include controllable lighting, electrical and utility connections readily accessible through state- of-the-art floor boxes in the Exhibition Hall; a production control balcony with sound and lighting controls in the Ballroom, as well as an integrated audio system with the capability for remote recording of programs and programmable lighting controls in the Ballroom and meeting rooms.

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**Ease of Doing Business in Puerto Rico**

Another reason why Puerto Rico is such a highly desirable meetings and conventions destination is the ease of doing business, especially for U.S. conventioners. Unlike many other Caribbean destinations, **as a U.S. Commonwealth, passports are not required of U.S. citizens traveling to Puerto Rico.** In addition, Puerto Rico shares the same currency, boasts outstanding telecommunications service with top service providers such as Verizon, Sprint, ATT and Cingular, and works with the same postal system, making it easy to conduct business and stay in touch with the home office.

“Puerto Rico offers the ease and familiarity of conducting business as one would in any major U.S. city, yet with the added aspect of a distinctive culture and exotic flavor that many groups desire in a meeting destination,” stated Viscasillas. “Our sophisticated business climate and the allure of our tropical paradise are what set us apart from other meeting destinations, making Puerto Rico the Preferred Meetings Destination of the Americas.”

The Puerto Rico Convention Center, near Old San Juan and the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport, is the centerpiece of a US\$415 million destination that is the largest waterfront development project in the history of the U.S. and its territories. Conceived as a bustling urban center, the 113-acre Puerto Rico Convention Center District, upon completion, will combine shops, restaurants, movie theaters, offices, residential units, hotel and plazas. There, delegates will convene to experience the vibrant energy and culture distinctive to San Juan, Puerto Rico.

For more information, call 1-800-875-4765 or visit [www.prconvention.com](http://www.prconvention.com).

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**Editor's Note:**

The Puerto Rico Convention Bureau (PRCB) is a non-profit organization established in 1962 to drive meetings, conventions, trade shows and incentive groups to Puerto Rico. With offices in San Juan, Chicago, New York, Miami, and Washington DC, the Bureau strengthens Puerto Rico's competitive position in the Americas and abroad by increasing awareness of the Island's outstanding meeting facilities and services, and produces approximately \$125 million to the local economy. The PRCB is the official marketing and sales agent for the new Puerto Rico Convention Center (PRCC) opened November 2005. For more information on the new Convention Center visit [www.prconvention.com](http://www.prconvention.com). The Puerto Rico Convention Bureau, representing the capital city of San Juan, is a proud member of Best Cities Global Alliance, the first convention bureau alliance that represents the highest standards of service in the meetings and convention industry. For more information, visit [www.bestcities.net](http://www.bestcities.net). The Puerto Rico Convention Bureau has also been awarded accreditation from the Destination Marketing Association International as an elite destination marketing organization. DMAI is the world's largest association of CVBs, representing more than 600 destination management organizations in more than 25 countries. The Bureau can be reached electronically through the Internet at [info@prcb.org](mailto:info@prcb.org) or at its website [www.meetpuertorico.com](http://www.meetpuertorico.com).

