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# Grupo PUNTACANA Recognized With the 2009 Tourism for Tomorrow Destination Stewardship Award

*Award Recognizes Efforts to Lead the Punta Cana, Dominican Republic Region in Sustainable Tourism and Social Practices*

PUNTA CANA, Dominican Republic, May 18 /PRNewswire/ -- The World Travel & Tourism Council today announced that Grupo PUNTACANA, the parent company of the PUNTACANA Resort & Club, located in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, has been selected as the winner of the esteemed 2009 Tourism for Tomorrow Award in the Destination Stewardship category. The honor was granted due to the company's dedication and success in developing a program of commitment for sustainable tourism, economic and social wellbeing for their product and surrounding region. The prestigious accolade recognizes the protection of natural and cultural heritage, social and economic benefits to local people, and environmentally-friendly business practices. Grupo PUNTACANA is the first Caribbean organization to be recognized in this category.

According to Jean-Claude Baumgarten, President & CEO of WTTC, PUNTACANA Resort & Club successfully demonstrates sustainable tourism practices on a daily basis. "We are delighted to present the 2009 Destination Stewardship Award to the Grupo PUNTACANA as a tourism enterprise that has over the years developed exceptional programs in sustainable development. These programs have not only helped the local community by providing jobs but also educational and health resources unmatched by other destinations. Sustainability has been in the Grupo PUNTACANA's DNA since its inception, setting the bar high for other companies conducting business in the region."

"We are honored to receive the 2009 Tourism for Tomorrow Destination Stewardship Award. Grupo PUNTACANA strives to be an example of successful regional environmental and social responsibility development for the world's tourism industry," said Frank Rainieri, Founder and CEO of Grupo PUNTACANA. He added, "Our commitment to the Punta Cana region has always been defined by a deep and humble respect for its breathtaking natural treasures and warm, friendly people."

3 finalists for the Destination Stewardship Award were selected by an international team of independent judges for having successfully demonstrated sustainable tourism development practices in all categories including the protection of the surrounding natural and cultural heritage, social and economic benefits to local people, and environmentally-friendly operations. The property was also judged on its efforts to communicate widely with local and international media, as well as other stakeholders, in order to set an example and promote best responsible business practices in the travel & tourism industry. Grupo PUNTACANA demonstrated exceptional commitment in all of the areas mentioned, driven by the company's Ecological Foundation.

Founded in 1994, the PUNTACANA Ecological Foundation brings together thought leaders from prestigious universities such as Harvard, Columbia, Cornell, and the University of Miami to develop and implement new ecological programs, such as residential, hotel and resort environmental management practices, coral reef conservation projects, a cutting-edge water treatment facility and an aggressive waste management initiative. Led by the Foundation's Director, Jake Kheel, a Cornell University graduate, the organization also oversees the programming and development of several schools and a hospital serving the local community. The Foundation represents the heart of the deep commitment to environmental protection, sustainable tourism business practices and education for the Punta Cana region and abroad. The Award was accepted by Grupo PUNTACANA CEO Frank Rainieri during a special session of the 9th Global Travel & Tourism Summit on 16 May 2009.

### **About PUNTACANA Resort & Club**

The development of PUNTACANA Resort & Club dates back to 1971 when Dominican businessman and hotelier Frank R. Rainieri and Theodore W. Kheel, the prominent New York attorney and labor mediator, created a partnership to construct a resort and real estate community that respects the natural habitat of Punta Cana while offering a world-class vacation experience. Maintaining a dedication to sustainable tourism, PUNTACANA Resort & Club has since grown to encompass over 26 square miles and now includes Tortuga Bay, Six Senses Spa, the PUNTACANA Ecological Foundation, three residential communities (Corales, Hacienda and Arrecife), a full service marina, seven restaurants, a shopping village, a P.B. Dye-designed golf course, and Punta Cana International Airport, a modern facility that incorporates innovative and eco-friendly design. In 1997, Julio Iglesias and Oscar de la Renta joined the Group as co-investors and have made PUNTACANA Resort & Club their home. Currently, Punta Cana is the most highly visited Caribbean destination and is easily accessible from all over the globe.

### **About PUNTACANA Ecological Foundation**

The PUNTACANA Ecological Foundation (PCEF) is a non-profit foundation established in 1994 by the Grupo PUNTACANA to protect and restore the natural resources of the Punta Cana region and contribute to the sustainable development of the country. The Foundation is endowed with a 1,500-acre ecological park and reserve, filled with an array of local flora and fauna, experimental gardens, and a petting zoo. The PUNTACANA Ecological Foundation works directly with the PUNTACANA Resort & Club and numerous partners and researchers from around the world (such as researchers from Harvard, Columbia and Cornell Universities) to protect and contribute to the rational use of natural resources and respect for nature as a model for the sustainable development of destinations. Major projects include providing education and health care to the local community as well as protecting and conserving the area's coral reefs.

For further resort information and reservations, please call 888-442-2262 or visit [Puntacana.com](http://Puntacana.com)

### **About WTTC**

WTTC is the forum for business leaders in the Travel & Tourism industry. With Chairs and Chief Executives of the world's 100 foremost leading Travel & Tourism companies as its Members, it has a unique mandate and overview on all matters related to Travel & Tourism.

WTTC works to raise awareness of Travel & Tourism as one of the world's largest industries, employing some 220 million people around the world and generating over 9% of global GDP. Please visit

[www.wttc.org](http://www.wttc.org)

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