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Emerging destinations chosen for Wild Card spotlight at IMEX 2009

Chinese destination, **Tianjin** Economic, the Technological Development Area (TEDA), has been announced as one of four winners in the IMEX Wild Card programme, which promotes emerging destinations and new conference centres in the

international meetings industry.

Two Eastern European destinations - the Masurian Conference Centre in Zamek Ryn, Poland, and Novi Sad located in Serbia - also won a free Wild Card place at the Frankfurt exhibition. This reflects the region's continued development and emergence into the meetings industry in recent years.

The Cook Islands, famed for their remote, unspoiled beauty, complete this year's list of Wild Card winners.

The IMEX Wild Card programme offers aspiring entrants into the international meetings market the chance to exhibit free of charge alongside established destinations and other participants. To qualify for the scheme, entrants must not have exhibited at a major international fair before, although they must have sufficient infrastructure and skill to support their ambitions to enter the meetings or incentive travel market.

In addition to a free exhibition place in the tailor-made IMEX Wild Card Pavilion, winners receive free accommodation as well as complimentary tickets to the show's Gala Dinner. The IMEX marketing team also provides each winner with year-round marketing support and guidance.

For 2009 the Wild Card programme was extended to allow not only destinations but also new convention and conference centres (those currently in development or which have been open for three years or less) from new and emerging destinations to apply. The first winner from this latter category is the Masurian Conference Centre in Zamek Ryn, Poland:

Masurian Conference Centre Zamek Ryn, Poland

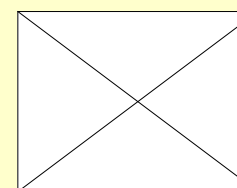
Located in the Ryn Castle Hotel in the Great Masurian Lakes region, the Conference Centre offers up-to-date facilities for both small and large conferences, meetings and banquets. The Castle has 10 fully equipped conference and banquet halls and the Zadaszony Courtyard also acts as a multifunctional hall to host conferences, presentations, fairs, shows, exhibitions, banquets and balls.

Novi Sad - Vojvodina, Serbia

Located on the Danube River in the autonomous Serbian province of Vojvodina, Novi Sad is Serbia's second largest city after Belgrade. It aims to offer urban sophistication and bohemian relaxation among ornate architecture. Not only is Novi Sad considered the centre of Serbian culture, but it is also often referred to as the Serbian Athens. This large

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industrial and financial centre is fast emerging as a prime tourism destination for businesses and leisure travellers.

The Cook Islands

Consisting of 15 islands with a total population of approximately 19,000, the Cook Islands are one of the world's last truly unspoiled places. They lie in the centre of the Polynesian Triangle, flanked to the west by The Kingdom of Tonga and the Samoas, and to the east by Tahiti and the islands of French Polynesia. They offer stretches of dazzlingly white coral sand, beachfront, palm-fringed lagoons plus mountainous forested interiors. The Cook Islands also enjoy good weather all year round.

Tianjin Economic - Technological Development Area (TEDA), China

Tianjin Economic - Technological Development Area (TEDA) proclaims itself "Northern China's finest state-sponsored development area". It features major multinational companies such as Motorola, Toyota, Novozymes and Samsung. TEDA has a comprehensive infrastructure and is within easy reach of Beijing in Northern China. In the past 20 years, TEDA has witnessed booming development in six key industries: electronics; bio-chemicals; light industries; manufacturing; automobile and logistics. Tianjin itself is a modern city known for its unique architecture and cuisine but with 600 years of history.

Carina Bauer, IMEX Marketing and Operations Director, comments: "These Wild Card winners really demonstrate the diversity of emerging destinations in the international meetings industry, all promising great potential for the future. The Wild Card programme is in place to aid new destinations in showcasing their potential and ambition to buyers at the IMEX exhibition. This year's entrants can expect to go on to enjoy a strong level of growth and success that this initiative has brought to other destinations in the past."

IMEX 2009 will take place from 26 - 28 May in Hall 8, Messe Frankfurt.

For further information see www.imex-frankfurt.com

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