**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Dubai’s popularity with international leisure, business visitors continues to rise: 4th most visited global city**

* **Dubai rises from 5th to 4th in MasterCard rankings - predicting 14.3 million international visitors to Dubai in 2015**
* **City rockets up International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA) and Union of International Association (UIA) meeting rankings for 2014**
* **Expanding airlift, hotel capacity and destination offer to continue driving growth**

**Dubai, United Arab Emirates:** Dubai’s ongoing efforts to position itself as a premier leisure and business hub have resulted in growing visitor numbers to the city, as well as higher rankings on various global traveller and meeting indexes.

This week, global payments giant MasterCard announced that Dubai has risen to fourth position out of 132 top destinations for international travellers in the MasterCard Global Destination Cities Index, behind London, Paris and Bangkok. A one-place rise since 2014 figures, Dubai has risen from the eighth position in 2012 and MasterCard predicts that the emirate will welcome almost 14.3 million international visitors in 2015, a ratio of 5.7 international overnight visitors per city resident. Official figures released by Dubai’s Department of Tourism & Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism) in May of this year showed that the emirate welcomed 13.2 international overnight visitors in 2014.

Mastercard’s announcement came days after Dubai retained its top ranking in the Middle East region for international association meetings, and climbed 19 places globally to 44th position in the 2014 International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA) World Rankings - up from 63rd place in 2013.

The ICCA rankings are considered the most dependable and consistent benchmark on how individual destinations which host international association meetings are performing. International organisations and associations regularly use ICCA rankings to gauge the event hosting capacity of a city they may wish to host events in.

In terms of international meetings, Dubai had more news to celebrate, as the Union of International Association (UIA) announced in a recently published report that Dubai made huge leaps forward in the number of international meetings hosted. Hosting 146 international meetings in 2014, compared to 80 in 2013, Dubai jumped from 21st position to 14th globally.\*

**Commenting on Dubai’s growing appeal to international leisure and business visitors, His Excellency Helal Almarri, Director General of Dubai Tourism, said:** “Dubai as a destination is ever evolving in order to create memorable experiences for its guests through world-class infrastructure, excellent service and remarkable attractions which are compelling and entice visitors to return. Although the MasterCard rankings are predictive, they do approximate with our own estimations of future growth and are a clear demonstration of Dubai’s continual rise as a global destination of choice.

With regards to business tourism, the increase in the number of meetings and conferences being hosted in Dubai is significantly contributing to the rise in visitor numbers while also positioning the emirate as a global hub for creation, education and innovation.

We are very pleased that the efforts being exerted by the city’s tourism stakeholders to deliver the Tourism Vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, and create remarkable experiences for both leisure and business visitors are seeing results, and will continue to seek to reach into new markets while maintaining and increasing our share of existent markets.”

**Expanded airport capacity to continue driving growth**

As international meetings in the city continue to rise, so do the number of international travellers who are choosing to visit Dubai. The city welcomed 13.2 million international overnight travellers in 2014, an 8.4 percent increase over 2013. The purpose of visits, although dominated by leisure at 59 percent, saw over 21 percent visiting for business, and another 17 percent visiting friends and/or relatives.

As a hub between East and West, and a gateway to emerging markets across the world, Dubai International Airport (DXB) has become the world’s number one airport in terms of international passengers, with over 70.47 million passengers using DXB in 2014.

Construction is also expected to begin later this year on the expansion of Dubai’s second airport, Al Maktoum International at Dubai World Central (DWC). The existing six million passengers per year capacity terminal is set to be to be increased to 26 million passengers per year by Q1 in 2017, as part of a US$32 billion expansion project announced in September 2014 to create the world’s biggest airport, with an ultimate capacity in excess of 200 million passengers per year.

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**\* Definition of International Meetings**

There are two categories of International Meetings measured in the UIA Report:

1. Meetings organised or sponsored by international non-governmental organisations and intergovernmental organisations, with at least 50 participants or where the number of participants are unknown.
2. Meetings not organised or sponsored by international organisations but nonetheless of significant international character, notably those organised by national organisations and national branches of international organisations, with at least 30 per cent of the participants from countries other than the host country and at least five nationalities represented; which last for at least two days or with an unknown duration; with either a concurrent exhibition or at least 250 participants.

**About Dubai Business Events – the Official Convention Bureau**

Dubai Business Events (DBE) – the Official Convention Bureau, aims to further develop and increase Dubai's share of the international business events market in order to grow economic development, jobs and knowledge creation in the emirate. DBE’s main goal, as a division of Dubai Tourism, is to establish the Emirate as a premier business event destination by helping organizers of international meetings, incentives, congresses and exhibitions plan and manage every aspect of their event. DBE's service standards are audited by Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance as part of DBE’s membership of BestCities Global Alliance that aim to deliver the world's best service experience for the meeting industry.

**About Dubai Tourism (Dubai’s Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing - DTCM)**

With the ultimate vision of positioning Dubai as the world’s leading tourism destination and commercial hub, Dubai Tourism’s mission is to increase the awareness of Dubai to global audiences and to attract tourists and inward investment into the Emirate. Dubai Tourism is the principal authority for the planning, supervision, development and marketing of Dubai’s tourism sector; markets and promotes the Emirate’s commerce sector; and is responsible for the licencing and classification of all tourism services, including hotels, tour operators and travel agents. Brands and departments within the DTCM portfolio include Dubai Business Events, Dubai Events, Dubai Calendar, and Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment (formerly known as Dubai Events and Promotions Establishment). In addition to its headquarters in Dubai, Dubai Tourism operates 20 offices worldwide.

**For more information about DBE:**

**askdbe@dubaitourism.ae**

[**http://www.dubaibusinessevents.ae**](http://www.dubaibusinessevents.ae)

**FOR INTERVIEWS OR OTHER MEDIA INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:**

Johan Janssen

Account Manager – DABO&CO

Johan.j@daboandco.com

+971 4 237 8058

+971 05 107 7359