PRESS RELEASE

**Slovenia impresses in the UAE as a boutique, green, active and healthy country**

**Great interest of business public in Slovenia in the context of the government and business delegation in the United Arab Emirates**

**22 September 2016 – Within the framework of the two-day official government and business visit of the Minister of Economic Development and Technology, Zdravko Počivalšek, to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the working meeting of the Slovenian members of the delegation with the representatives of the interested business public from the UAE takes place today in Dubai, including a workshop between the representatives of the Slovenian tourist companies and the representatives of potential tourist companies from this perspective and emitting market.**

Yesterday and today, the government and business visit of the Minister of Economic Development and Technology, Zdravko Počivalšek, to the UAE takes place, organised by the **Public Agency** **SPIRIT Slovenia** (SPIRIT Slovenia), the **Slovenian Tourist Board** (STB) and the **Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia** (CCIS) in addition to the **Ministry of Economic Development and Technology**. As many as 41 Slovenian companies are in attendance at the two-day visit to the UAE, among them 23 from the area of tourism.

Within the framework of the two-day visit, approximately 60 members of the business delegation and 115 distinguished guests from the UAE, among them numerous economists, representatives of airlines and representatives of the media, attended the ***I feel Slovenia* evening event**yesterday (21 September) at the St. Regis Dubai Hotel. New business links among the representatives of the Slovenian delegation with more than 100 distinguished guests from this market, which is very perspective for Slovenia, were established at the event.

**Maja Pak, MSc, Director of the Slovenian Tourist Board:**

*“The presentation of Slovenia as a green, active and healthy country for excellent adventures in the UAE at the present time impressed the participants at the business conference as well as at the reception of the business partners attended by 200 guests. The great interest of the Arabian media, since the representatives of as many as 15 media houses were present at the event, was also very pleasing. The objective of our presentation in the UAE market is, in addition to increasing the visibility of Slovenia, the setting up of a direct airline between the UAE and Slovenia, therefore the Slovenian government and business delegation also met with the representatives of the two airlines, Emirates Airlines and Etihad Airways, about the possibilities of setting up air connections between Slovenia and the UAE. The representatives of the ministry of the UAE also estimate that the setting up of a direct air connection would be a key contribution to an increase in economic cooperation, trade, service and tourist exchange and investments between the UAE and Slovenia, and hope that it will take place as soon as possible.”*

Today (22 September), the working meeting of the members of the delegation with a variety of presentations on business, investment and tourist opportunities between both countries takes place at the premises of the Chamber of Commerce in Dubai. On this occasion, **His Excellency** **Sultan Bin Saeed Al Mansouri, Minister for the Economy of the United Arab Emirates,** also addressed the audience present. As the keynote speaker, **Minister** **Zdravko Počivalšek** presentedthe key advantages of Slovenia and the opportunities it poses for this market, while **Maja Pak, MSc, Director of the STB,** pointed outthe competitive advantages of Slovenian tourism in the said market – boutique, green, active, healthy and safe Slovenia with attractive tourist products of high added value.

The **working meeting between the representatives of the 23 Slovenian tourist companies** **and the interested demand from the UAE** also takes place today. The following Slovenian companies are attending the meeting: A-DMC NIKAIA d.o.o., Aerodrom Ljubljana d.o.o., Aerodrom Maribor d.o.o., EUROVAL Turizem d.o.o., Happy Tours d.o.o., HIT d.d., Hotel Sava Rogaška d.o.o., Hot-ten d.o.o., IJP d.o.o., Kompas d.d., Liberty International Adriatic, Linije Mode d.o.o., Ljubljana Caste, Ljubljana Tourism, Medical center Rogaška d.o.o., NHZ d.o.o., Palma DMC & Tour Operator, the Slovenian Spas Association, Slotour d.o.o., Terme Olimia d.d., Terme Resort d.o.o. Rimske Terme, Thermana d.d. and Union Hoteli d.d.

The large number of tourist companies in particular in the government and business delegation in the UAE proves that Slovenian tourism has many opportunities in this market that has not yet ceased.

**Zmago Skobir, Managing Director of Aerodrom Ljubljana:**

*“In the framework of today’s visit to the highest management of Emirates Airlines and Fly Dubai, a great willingness to set up a direct air connection between Dubai and Ljubljana was expressed. Undoubtedly, the concluded inter-state agreement on air traffic, which is one of the most liberal ones, and the signing of the Declaration of Intent on the Participation of the Republic Slovenia at the EXPO Dubai 2020 World’s Fair Exposition, are of key importance for the setting up of the aforementioned direct air connection. Due to the already established cooperation with the representatives of the two airlines, Emirates Airlines and Fly Dubai, we have already exchanged the key data in the field of both passenger and freight transport between the two countries."*

**Marko Lenček, Director of Zdravilišče Rogaška Zdravstvo d.o.o.:**

*“The Arabian market and, in particular, countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and some others are potentially attractive for Rogaška Medical Centre for several reasons. Let me give an unhealthy lifestyle as the first reason and its consequently related diseases, above all gastroenterological and endocrine diseases, among which diabetes stands out. At Rogaška Medical Centre, we provide top diagnostics and rehabilitation precisely for this area, which includes the drinking of the unique Donat Mg mineral water. Guests from these countries are present in larger numbers in certain competitive spa resorts in Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. These are very good spa guests, since they stay for a very long time on average, use the medical and wellness services and travel in the summer months when we do not have our high season, while the families that travel have many members. The good logistic connection to the airports of Zagreb and Ljubljana and, last but not least, the airports in Venice and Vienna should also not be overlooked. Presentation in the context of the business delegation gives us a particularly special opportunity and weight in business talks to be conducted with our potential future partners. This is an opportunity to establish as many contacts as possible in a short space of time and present our offer.”*

**Tatjana Juriševič, President of the Management Board of Kompas d.d.:**

*“The Middle East is important as a destination (for travel, breaks and corporate business) as well as the export market for the company KOMPAS d.d. In recent years, we have been intensively working on the marketing of European products due to the potential of outgoing tourism from the GCC countries. Our wish is, of course, to bring as many tourists from the Middle East to Slovenia as possible, but we are aware of our lack of visibility and thus, we also market other destinations in Europe, covered by Kompas' international network of companies. For more demanding guests (luxury tourism), a lack of appropriate infrastructure (luxury accommodation, high-end shops, Halal certified restaurants, etc.) also poses a problem to a certain extent, in addition to visibility. However, we detect a relatively high trend of growth in tourists from the aforementioned markets, where Slovenia is already recognised as a 5-star destination in terms of its genuineness, natural beauty and safety. Namely, with an increasing size of population and increased purchasing power, the GSS countries present a great opportunity, while foreigners living in the Middle East (expats) are also potential passengers. The most typical products that raise interest in these passengers are city breaks combined with sightseeing of the main tourist attractions and, of course, shopping, and tailored travel with a personal guide and driver. Such a product is intended for individual travellers; in this case, these are mainly smaller groups or extended families. In addition, the importance of Slovenia as a destination for preparation for sport for different clubs should not be neglected, while medical and spa tourism (in particular aesthetic surgery and wellness services, etc.) also has great potential. We will take advantage of this visit to increase existing cooperation and to gain new business opportunities and partners.”*

Investment opportunities and possibilities to increase commercial trade and to intensify other business cooperation between the two countries in the context of today’s business meeting are presented by **Gorazd Mihelič, Director of SPIRIT Slovenia** and **Samo Hribar Milič, General Manager of CCIS.**

**Signing of the Declaration of Intent on the Participation of the Republic Slovenia at the EXPO Dubai 2020 World’s Fair Exposition**

Yesterday (21 September), in the framework of the working visit to the UAE, the **Minister of Economic Development and Technology, Zdravko Počivalšek,** signed the **Declaration of Intent on the Participation of the Republic Slovenia at the EXPO Dubai 2020 World’s Fair Exposition** with the **Minister of the Economy** there, **Sultan Al Mansoori,** which should be followed by the signing of the Treaty on the Participation of Slovenia next year. The Expo Dubai 2020 World’s Fair Exposition is an excellent opportunity for the presentation of Slovenia at this global and renowned event, inter alia **as an excellent** **5-star tourist destination.** The representatives of certain Slovenian companies that are accompanying the Minister on the working visit will already hold the first meetings with the organiser of EXPO Dubai on the possibilities of participation in the project.

The UAE is the 41st most important external trade partner of Slovenia. Last year, trade in goods between the two countries exceeded 88 million euro, whereby our companies exported more than 83 million euro of goods to the UAE market and more than 9 million euro of services. Companies from the UAE have implemented 17.5 million euro of investments in Slovenia in the last year.

**Additional information**

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