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Latin America Gem & Jewelry Summit on March 18 to analyze potential of region's diamond jewelry market and the role of the Panamanian

PANAMA: MARCH 11, 2014 – The potential growth of the diamond and jewelry markets in South and Central America, Mexico and Caribbean, and the role in that process that will be played by the Panama Diamond Exchange and the new Panama Gem & Jewelry Center, will come under the spotlight at the Latin America Diamond & Jewelry Summit, which will take place in Panama City on March 18.

The summit will be a highlight of the two-day launch of the Panama & Jewelry Center, on March 17 and 18. It will be held at the Megapolis Convention Center in downtown Panama City, and will feature a blue ribbon panel of speakers, including government representatives, leaders of the international diamond and jewelry sectors, Latin American market specialists, gemologists, logistic and security specialists, as well as the planners and developers of the new regional trading hub. Chairing the event will be Eli Izhakoff, Honorary Life President of the World Federation of Diamond Bourses (WFDB), the World Diamond Council (WDC) and CIBJO, the World Jewelry Confederation.

“The promise of the diamond and jewelry markets of Latin America is unquestioned,” said Mr. Izhakoff. “But what we plan to do at the summit is to put its potential into proper perspective, and to examine the positive effect that the establishment of a regional trading hub in Panama will have. To do that we are gathering group of experts from inside and outside the industry, each of whom will be able to consider the issues from their own unique perspective.”

A welcoming address will be delivered by the Hon. Ricardo Quijano, Panama's Minister of Commerce and Industry, and he will be followed by a presentation by Alberto Vallarino Clement, Chairman of Grupo VerdeAzul, one of the two companies developing the Panama Gem & Jewelry Center, who also is a former Finance Minister of Panama.

A series of presentation will then be delivered by diamond and jewelry industry leaders from around the world, including Ernest Blom, President, World Federation of the Diamond Bourses (WFDB); Gaetano Cavalieri, President, CIBJO, the World Jewellery Confederation; Avi Paz, President, World Diamond Council; Maxim Shkadov, President, International Diamond Manufacturers Association; Luis Jelensky, Mercurio Jewelers; Jeffrey H. Fischer, Hon. President, of IDMA and DMIA and a member of the Board of Governors of the Gemological Institute of America (GIA); Reuven Kaufman, President, Diamond Dealers Club of New York; Ronnie Vanderlinden, President, Diamond Manufacturers and Importers Association of the United States (DMIA); Alex Popov, President, Moscow Diamond Bourse; Mehul Shah, President, Indian Diamond & Colorstone

Association (IDCA); and Cecilia Gardner, President and CEO of the Jewelers Vigilance Committee in the United States. Erez Akerman, President of the Panama Diamond Exchange will also address the session.

The afternoon session of the summit will feature a series of presentations by a variety of specialists, including Ismael Cala of CNN, who will look at Latin America's luxury markets; Diego Vallarino, Vice President of Real Estate Development at Grupo VerdeAzul, who will detail the Panama Gem & Jewelry Center; Ignacio Mallol, the lead architect of the new center; a representative of Brinks, who will discuss the security and logistic services in the Panama Diamond Exchange Free Zone; and Roland Lorie, CEO of the International Gemmological Institute, the world's largest independent grading service, who will look at diamond certification.

The \$200 million Panama Gem & Jewelry Center will be the first dedicated facility for the diamond, jewelry and colored stone trades in Latin America. The guest of honor at its launch will be President Ricardo Martinelli, Panama's head of state.

The dedicated website for the Panama Gem & Jewelry Center launch provides information about the event and the project itself, and enables participants to register online and book flights and hotels at especially discounted rates. The website is located at www.pdecenterlaunch.com, and can be viewed in Spanish and English. The cutoff date for registration is March 13.