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## **PDE appoints Dirk Blommaert as Business Development Director, will promote Panama as principal diamond and jewelry trading hub in Latin America**

PANAMA: July 28, 2014 – The Panama Diamond Exchange has appointed diamond and jewelry industry veteran Dirk Blommaert as its Business Development Director. In this role, he will have direct responsibility for advancing the position of the Panama Gem & Jewelry Center worldwide, and particular in the Latin America markets as the region’s principal trading center for diamonds, colored gemstones and jewelry.

A more than 20-year veteran of the gemstone and jewelry business, Mr. Blommaert earlier served as International Events Manager of the Belgian diamond sector’s leading representative body, the HRD (today known as the AWDC), and in that capacity introduced the successful Antwerp Diamond Pavilions at jewelry trade shows around the world. After setting up his own company, he served for 10 years as the business development consultant for Baselworld, Europe’s leading jewelry trade show organizer, has also consulted on various challenging projects such as IGT (International Gem Tower) in New York and more recently has focused on developing business to business events for Antwerp diamond companies under the umbrella of ACTYF, in developing diamond markets such as Brazil, Russia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey.

“We are fortunate to have an individual with Dirk’s knowledge and experience joining an excellent team headed by Panama Diamond Exchange President Erez Akerman”, said Eli Izhakoff, PDE’s Founding Chairman. “He is charged with interacting with jewelry manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers in Latin America to position PDE and the new Panama Gem & Jewelry Center as the principal gemstone and jewelry hub for the entire region. This will be done simultaneously with our international industry campaign to promote PDE and the Panama Gem & Jewelry Center as the gateway to Latin America.”

Mr. Blommaert will hit the ground running, with road trips trip scheduled to Brazil from August 4 to 10, to Argentina from 11 to 14. Further road trips are scheduled for Colombia in September, Mexico in October and Bolivia in November, and others are in the planning stages.

The \$200 million Panama Gem & Jewelry Center is the largest and most ambitious development project ever undertaken on behalf of the jewelry and gemstone trades in Latin America. Serving as a trading hub for both regional and international companies, the center will serve a market that today is worth \$8 billion, and comprises 11,500 retail jewelry outlets located in 20 countries and 23 islands.

The entire complex will be located in the Vaguil Free Zone, which was established by an act of the Panamanian parliament for the benefit of the international gem and jewelry trade, and exempts transactions conducted within its area from payments of customs duties and taxes, and corporations registered in the Free Zone from paying company tax.

For more information, or to schedule an appointment with Mr. Blommaert during his road trips, please contact the Panama Diamond Exchange website at [info@pde.com.pa](mailto:info@pde.com.pa).