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PRESS RELEASE

THIRD ARMENIAN TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS CONFERENCE Promoting Greater Awareness and Consensus on Industry Issues

Yerevan, Armenia – The third annual Armenian Tourism Competitiveness Conference will be held on June 18, 2009 at the Marriott Armenia Hotel, and hosted by the USAID-funded Competitive Armenian Private Sector (CAPS) Project in partnership with the RA Ministry of Economy, the Armenian Tourism Development Agency (ATDA), the National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia (NCFA) and industry associations. The event aims to: further promote cluster development and provide networking opportunities; update industry stakeholders on the current state of tourism industry; and encourage discussion on major industry issues through specific breakout sessions.

The tourism industry in Armenia, and all over the world in general, have faced serious difficulties as a result of the global economic crisis. Taking this into consideration, the conference will highlight the efforts made by other countries to mitigate the downward or stagnant trend in arrivals and will provide guidance on cost effective marketing strategies.

More than 250 tourism industry representatives attended the previous two Armenian Tourism Competitiveness Conferences in 2007 and 2008, which proved highly successful in delivering practical information and bringing diverse stakeholders in tourism development together. The discussions touched upon Armenia's obstacles and challenges on tourism development: the absence of destination branding for Armenia; relatively high flight and accommodation costs compared to other destinations in the region; the lack of necessary infrastructure; and inconsistency of workforce quality, etc.

While seeking to clarify the roles and responsibilities between the public sector tourism bodies, this year's conference also aims to further promote CAPS and its major partner's attempts in advancing the application of modern IT solutions in tourism through linking the IT and tourism clusters. The topics to be discussed include; targeted promotion of Armenia's tourism opportunities, increasing skills and capacities of the Armenian tourism workforce, and building successful marketing strategies for tourism companies.

The conference is open for tourism industry representatives: tour operators, hotels, transport and accommodation providers, guides, educational establishments, NGOs and associations, government agencies, tourist attractions, shops, Diaspora organizations, consulting firms, the media and anyone who is interested in the development of Armenia's tourism. Registration can be made online at www.caps.am/tourismconf or by calling CAPS on 010 500612/3/4.

The official opening of the event will take place on June 18, 2009 at 9:30a.m. in the Tigran Mets Ballroom of the Marriott Armenia Hotel.

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The USAID-funded Competitive Armenian Private Sector (CAPS) Project provides technical assistance to the Armenian private sector to help them better compete nationally, regionally and internationally. CAPS is currently working with the growing Armenian information technology, tourism, pharmaceuticals and the engineering services clusters to identify globally competitive products and services, and to build robust companies around those products and services. CAPS technical assistance takes many forms and includes: firm level consulting, business association capacity building, policy research, public education, work force training and development of public / private initiatives.

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