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Michael Smithuis – new chairman of Swiss Deluxe Hotels

Richard Leuenberger replaces Mark Jacob as treasurer on the board of directors

Summer season with appreciably more domestic guests and, to a certain extent, stable European markets

Zurich, 2 November 2020 – The extraordinary general meeting held on 2 November 2020 elected Michael Smithuis as the new chairman of Swiss Deluxe Hotels, the association of 39 of Switzerland's most prestigious 5-star hotels. Michael Smithuis has been regional vice president and general manager of the Fairmont Le Montreux Palace Hotel in Montreux since 2003 and has had a seat on the board of Swiss Deluxe Hotels since 2005. In a separate move, Richard Leuenberger, managing director of Badrutt's Palace in St. Moritz, was voted onto the board for the first time. The EGM was video streamed from The Dolder Grand Zürich.

Michael Smithuis took over the office of chairman from Jan E. Brucker, who resigned at the end of 2019 after ten years in post and has since assumed responsibility for the day-to-day management of Swiss Deluxe Hotels with his company, Brucker Hospitality Consulting. A long-standing and valued board member, Michael Smithuis has been vice president of Swiss Deluxe Hotels since 2010; he has been influential in shaping the fortunes and strategic development of the association of Switzerland's most exclusive 5-star hotels. With his international experience, which has taken him from destinations including Oman, Indonesia, Singapore, Amsterdam and Germany to Montreux in Switzerland, the Dutchman knows the needs and peculiarities of the luxury hotel segment like no other.

"I am delighted and honoured to be given the opportunity to pass on my experience and passion for the luxury hotel segment as chairman of Swiss Deluxe Hotels," says Michael Smithuis. "The hospitality sector and tourism are currently facing huge challenges that no one could have foreseen, and yet I believe in the importance of leveraging new and innovative concepts to communicate our values of excellent service to guests from all over the world."

Richard Leuenberger takes over from Mark Jacob as treasurer and member of the quality commission on the board of directors; recent years have seen Mark put his knowledge and experience at the service of Swiss Deluxe Hotels.

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It goes without saying Swiss Deluxe Hotels' members are facing major challenges. The number of overnight stays fell by around 41% in the first half of 2020 owing to travel restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic; that said, January (+4.7%) and February (+10.7%) showed strong growth before the slump hit. Following extensive easing of the Covid-19 measures and the lifting of entry restrictions by all the Schengen states at the beginning of June, the 39 members of Swiss Deluxe Hotels recorded a gratifying increase in guest footfall in June and July 2020: overnight stays by domestic guests in Swiss Deluxe Hotels in those two months rose by around 52 percent to over 100,000 compared with the same period last year. The association's share of the Swiss 5-star market was 70 percent instead of the usual 40 percent. Nevertheless, the number of bookings overall was down by a hefty 35 percent. This tells us that the major holiday fillip supplied by Switzerland's residents was unable to compensate for the painful absence this year of foreign guests. That said, some European neighbours – most notably in Germany – remained loyal to Switzerland as a holiday destination or



used it as an alternative to more distant destinations. And more guests than usual from European countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands and Liechtenstein visited Switzerland and Swiss Deluxe Hotels members: these guests no doubt saw Switzerland and Swiss Deluxe Hotels as an attractive, safe alternative to more distant summer holiday destinations.

Hope for the winter season

Swiss Deluxe Hotels members are paying close attention to the forthcoming winter season. For now at least, the 39 establishments are expecting the ski resorts to open as usual – albeit with certain restrictions. The European markets enjoy a significant share of the global winter tourism market, which gives reason for cautious optimism amongst hotels in mountain regions.

To coincide with the start of the winter season, the next issue of the association's "H" magazine will appear at the beginning of December to highlight the diversity, beauty and excellence of Swiss Deluxe Hotels' members in all their facets. This issue's focus – St. Moritz in the Engadine region – bears the promising title *Life has never been higher...!*

Activity surrounding the booking platform, which was launched this year in cooperation with start-up PrivateDeal, is also being watched with interest: guests are able to use it to submit their own prices for rooms. This innovative approach addresses the growing interest in dynamic pricing and permits discounts of up to 70 percent on standard prices.

Swiss Deluxe Hotels

Founded in 1934, the Swiss Deluxe Hotels association (SDH) in 2020 comprised 39 of the most prestigious 5-star hotels in Switzerland, including The Dolder Grand and the Baur au Lac in Zurich, the Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa in Interlaken, the Gstaad Palace, the Beau-Rivage Palace in Lausanne, Badrutt's Palace Hotel and the Kulm Hotel in St. Moritz, the Castello del Sole in Ascona and the Grand Hotel Les Trois Rois in Basel. They all embody the prestige of the Swiss luxury hospitality sector, to which they have contributed so successfully for almost two centuries. With a total of 4,300 rooms and suites and some 8,600 beds, the SDH's membership accounts for more than 40 percent of Switzerland's 5-star capacity. The SDH is thus the most important association in this segment and has for decades assumed a leading role in Switzerland's luxury hospitality. The name Swiss Deluxe Hotels stands for exclusive quality and the highest standards. The personal service is unique: over 8,000 employees ensure the well-being of a clientele accustomed to service luxury. Collectively, the SDH's members record some 1,262,000 overnight stays annually, while annual sales in 2019 totalled around CHF 1.58 billion.

The figures are partly based on extrapolations of the entire group of 39 Swiss Deluxe Hotels in 2019.

Further information:

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