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FIS MEDIA INFO

FIS Alpine World Ski Championships open in Val d'Isère (FRA)

The 2009 FIS Alpine World Ski Championships will commence in Val d'Isère (FRA) today, 2nd February. FIS President Gian Franco Kasper will officially open the event during the Opening Ceremony which begins at 18:45 CET.

"We are very pleased to see the FIS Alpine World Ski Championships return to France after a break of 47 years. The local organizing committee has done an excellent job in its preparations and we look forward to a wonderful festival of sports," says FIS President Gian Franco Kasper. "There are ample amounts of snow and now we just have to hope for the best with the weather."

The four key pillars of the 2009 championships include the face-a-face concept with the two racing slopes - the ladies' Rhône Alpes course on the Solaise mountain and the Face de Belvedere for the men - directly opposite each other; great consideration for the environment; a winter festival; and for the first time, free access and transportation to all visitors to the competitions. The Val d'Isère 2009 organizing committee, supported by regional and provincial governments, has used a unique concept of an online invitation that allows the spectators to also travel to Val d'Isère by public transportation from within the region for a symbolic charge of 1 Euro. More than 230'000 special invitations have been issued for the fortnight. A peak in the spectator numbers is expected on 7th February (men's downhill), with some 25'000 spectators, followed by 15th February with more than 20'000 expected visitors for the men's slalom event.

All in all, 504 athletes – 204 ladies and 300 men – representing a record number of 73 nations have been entered to participate in the fourth FIS Alpine World Ski Championships held in France. Several hundred million television viewers are expected to view the Championships while a total of 1500 media representatives have been accredited to report on the event.

33 FIS World Championships medals will be awarded as the competition schedule includes five ladies' and five men's events as well as the co-ed nations' team event. The nations' team event will be staged for the third time, whilst the qualification races for the men's slalom and giant slalom events are in the program for the second time after the 2007 Alpine World Ski Championships in Are (SWE), due to the extremely high number of entries. The competitions will begin with the ladies super-G on Tuesday, 3rd February, followed by the super-G for the men on Wednesday, 4th February, 2009. Both of the reigning super-G champions, Anja Pärson (SWE) and Patrick Staudacher (ITA) will be at the start to defend their titles.

For the first time, the TV production from the event will be carried out using fully high definition with five-channel audio technology. The total of 37 camera production will also include a very special suspended camera over the slalom course on Face de Belvedere, the

men's racing slope. A 600-meter traction cable will allow the camera to descend at the same speed as the slalom and downhill competitors on the lower part of the race course, reaching speeds of up to 90 km/h. This camera will offer television spectators a new perspective of the race, enabling them to better appreciate the competitors' speed and the steepness of the slope. In addition, a hyper slow motion camera (minimum of 500 pictures / second) will be used for both the ladies and men's races to display an exceptional level of detail of athlete movement and positions.

"We are convinced that the FIS Alpine World Ski Championships in Val d'Isère will be a fantastic and memorable event. The Organizing Committee has prepared everything in a professional manner and the host broadcaster, TVRS - a subsidiary of France 2 and France 3, is ready to produce according to the highest standards in our trade. The EBU will then bring this crown jewel of the ski sports to more than 30 broadcasters worldwide. This will surely be spectacular!" commented Ingolfur Hannesson, Head of Winter & Indoor Sports at the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the television and marketing rights holder for the event.

EBU's marketing partner for the Val d'Isère championships, Infront Sports & Media together with its Austrian subsidiary APF, have announced that all sponsorship packages for the event have been sold. The international group of sponsors is led by presenting sponsor Audi, along with main sponsors Bauhaus, Deichmann, Generali, Halti, Intersport, Longines, Milka and Rauch.

February 2nd is an important date for the International Ski Federation (FIS). 100 years ago, on 2nd February, 1909, at the international skiing competitions at Morez (FRA), Durban Hansen, Norwegian trainer, issued an invitation on behalf of his National Association for a Ski Congress to be held in Christiania (NOR) with the aim of setting up an International Federation for skiing. 85 years ago, in 1924, the International Ski Federation was officially founded on February 2nd during the first Olympic Winter Games in Chamonix (FRA).

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About FIS

Founded in 1924 during the first Olympic Games in Chamonix, France, the International Ski Federation (FIS) aims to promote the sport of skiing and snowboarding and directs the development of all ski and snowboarding activities world-wide. It administers the Olympic disciplines of Alpine Skiing, Cross-Country Skiing, Ski Jumping, Nordic Combined, Freestyle Skiing and Snowboarding, including setting the international competition rules. With the help of its 110 member nations, FIS stages more than 6'000 ski and snowboard competitions annually. FIS also makes recommendations for recreational skiing and snowboarding in the interest of all and promotes play in the snow as a healthy leisure activity for children and the youth. For more information, please visit www.fis-ski.com.

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