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Marriott International Opens Doors for Business, Tourism and Career Opportunities in Rwanda

In an innovative partnership, Marriott works with the Akilah Institute for Women, Women for Women International and Bloomberg Philanthropies to equip Rwandan women with business skills with the opening of the Kigali Marriott Hotel

BETHESDA, Md., Oct. 4, 2016 /PRNewswire/ -- Marriott International (NASDAQ: MAR) today officially opened the doors of its first Marriott Hotel in Rwanda, bringing the signature brand's welcoming service and world-class amenities to sub-Saharan Africa for the first time in its nearly 90-year history.



"Rwanda is going through an economic transformation and we are proud to be a part of it," said Marriott International President and CEO Arne Sorenson, who attended the Kigali Marriott's opening ceremony with political dignitaries and executives including Alex Kyriakidis, Marriott's President and Managing Director, Middle East and Africa region. "Coupled with that transformation is a mutual promise for opportunity — both for Marriott as a hospitality company and for the associates and partners who will help us succeed in this market."

Highlighting the importance of hospitality's role in Rwanda, the World Travel & Tourism Council says Rwanda's travel and tourism industry generated 7.1 percent of the country's GDP in 2015 and predicts it to rise at 4.1 percent annually through 2025. Known as the Land of a Thousand Hills, Rwanda is becoming a popular destination for meetings and tourism.

The 254-room Marriott in Kigali, Rwanda's capital city, is creating approximately 500 jobs and will be among the country's biggest and most luxurious properties, further enhancing Kigali's reputation as a hub for conferences and conventions. The hotel will offer world-class meeting spaces with modern amenities to cater to the demands of this rapidly growing market.

"I have the privilege of being able to open hotels in one of the most fascinating and fastest-growing parts of the world," said Kyriakidis. "But there is something about this project that is particularly fulfilling. Every time we open a hotel, we know there is an enormous positive impact on a community. But here, in Rwanda, that impact is magnified by the sustainable approach we have taken to both staffing and supplying the hotel."

Marriott has been working with community-based organizations to help staff the hotel and supply it with locally produced goods, underscoring Rwanda's goal of building up its core industries including tourism and agriculture. The hotel, for instance, has partnered with the Akilah Institute for Women to recruit and train Rwandan women for supervisory positions at its Kigali location. The Akilah Institute is an academy that enables young women from Rwanda and other East African countries to achieve economic independence with market-relevant education and training. Marriott International has invited nearly 40 Akilah graduates to work and train in Marriott hotels in Africa and the Middle East. After receiving on-the-job skills and leadership training, the first wave of graduates have returned to Rwanda to join the management team at the Kigali Marriott where they will help welcome guests from the around the world.

"Marriott's placement of our graduates at the managerial level and beyond exemplifies our mission to enable women not just to find jobs, but to develop their careers with a globally respected brand and community," says Elizabeth Dearborn Hughes, Co-Founder & CEO, Akilah Institute.

Marriott International has also been working with Women for Women International and the Relationship Coffee Institute, both of which are supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies, one of the largest investors in the region. The local Women for Women Opportunity Center is equipping Rwandan women with the skills needed to apply for entry-level hotel positions or to supply the hotel with goods such as baskets, cheese and honey. The hotel has hired more than 25 women from the training center.

The Relationship Coffee Institute provides women with a new marketplace for locally sourced premium coffee, including the hotel. The Kigali Marriott's Question Café serves the locally sourced coffee, grown by local smallholder farmers and served by graduates of this economic development training program.

"The opening of this Marriott hotel is providing long anticipated market activity for Rwandan women. Their café in the hotel provides the global business community with a perfect example of how business, philanthropy and government can work together to improve people's lives," said Patricia E. Harris, CEO of Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Beyond coffee, the Kigali Marriott is weaving in an array of local goods throughout the property, including in the retail store and on menus. The hotel sources locally grown products such as beef, poultry and produce, and incorporates more sustainable materials to ultimately help reduce the hotel's overall footprint.

The opening of the hotel comes a little over a week after Marriott International completed its acquisition of Starwood Hotels & Resorts. The transaction created the world's largest hotel company, with Marriott International operating or franchising more than 5,700 properties and 1.1 million rooms, in over 110 countries. With the completion of the acquisition, Marriott's distribution more than doubled in the Middle East and Africa combined.

About Marriott International, Inc.

Marriott International, Inc. (NASDAQ: MAR) is the world's largest hotel company based in Bethesda, Maryland, USA, with more than 5,700 properties in over 110 countries. Marriott operates and franchises hotels, and licenses vacation ownership resorts. The company's 30 leading brands include: *Bulgari Hotels and Resorts*®, *The Ritz-Carlton*® and *The Ritz-Carlton Reserve*®, *St. Regis*®, *W*®, *EDITION*®, *JW Marriott*®, *The Luxury Collection*®, *Marriott Hotels*®, *Westin*®, *Le Méridien*®, *Renaissance*® Hotels, *Sheraton*®, *Delta Hotels by Marriott*SM, *Marriott Executive Apartments*®, *Marriott Vacation Club*®, *Autograph Collection*® Hotels, *Tribute Portfolio*TM, *Design Hotels*TM, *Gaylord Hotels*®, *Courtyard*®, *Four Points*® by *Sheraton*, *SpringHill Suites*®, *Fairfield Inn & Suites*®, *Residence Inn*®, *TownePlace Suites*®, *AC Hotels by Marriott*®, *Aloft*®, *Element*®, *Moxy Hotels*®, and *Protea Hotels by Marriott*®. The company also operates award-winning loyalty programs: *Marriott Rewards*®, which includes *The Ritz-Carlton Rewards*®, and *Starwood Preferred Guest*®. For more information, please visit our website at www.marriott.com, and for the latest company news, visit www.marriottnewscenter.com and @MarriottIntl.

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