

Congress Centre-Sofia, National Palace of Culture is 2005 AIPC Apex Award Winner

The Board of Directors of the International Association of Congress Centres (AIPC) is pleased to announce that the winner of the 2005 AIPC Apex Award for "World's Best Congress Centre" is the Congress Centre-Sofia, National Palace of Culture of Bulgaria. The presentation was made at this year's AIPC General Assembly in Québec City, Canada, from a field of 20 nominees who had qualified for competition in this highly sought-after award.

"We are delighted to be congratulating Congress Centre-Sofia on their win of this year's AIPC Apex Award after such a hard-fought competition amongst so many highly qualified participants", said AIPC President Barbara Maple. "This win is a real tribute to their great

relations with clients, who are the ultimate decision-makers in the AIPC Apex Award program and the basis on which the winner is selected. Their achievement is a demonstration of the extent to which great service and satisfied clients can advance a centre in today's highly competitive meetings market."

The AIPC Apex Award is made annually on the basis of a comprehensive performance and customer satisfaction analysis carried out by an independent team at the University of Applied Sciences in Heilbronn, Germany. The "blind" evaluation used in the selection process ensures an objective analysis of the data arising from a series of surveys covering such topics as congress facilities, project management, customer relations, catering and

technology. Surveys are completed by event organizers and meeting planners and provided in confidence directly to the evaluation team, who rate centres accordingly.

The AIPC Board also recognized the two runners-up to this year's award; last year's winner Cairns Convention & Exhibition centre in Australia and Congress Innsbruck of Austria who were the award winner in 2001.

"While we salute Congress Centre-Sofia for their achievement, the fact is that all participants are winners, since each competitor gets an individual evaluation report on their particular centre's results which enables them to see how they are rated by clients in various aspects of their operations. This allows them to

identify areas that may need improvement, which in turn addresses AIPC's overall mission of enhancing excellence in centre management".

The Award was initiated in the year 2000 as a way of recognizing the achievements of AIPC members in congress centre management. Previous AIPC Apex Award winners have been the Melbourne Exhibition & Convention Centre in Australia, Congress Innsbruck in Austria, the Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre in Canada, the Palacio de Congressos y de la Musica de Bilbao in Spain and Cairns Convention Centre in Australia. ■



▲ The Finalists with Barbara Maple

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Melbourne edges closer to Sydney as Australia's top tourist destination

A comparison of Australia's top ten tourist regions has shown that Melbourne receives almost as much domestic and international tourist spending as Sydney.

A report by Tourism Research Australia, Travel Expenditure by Domestic and International Visitors in Australia's Regions, 2004, found that Sydney attracted \$9.6 billion of the combined domestic and international spending for 2004 while Melbourne achieved \$7.35 billion.

In percentage terms, Melbourne has 12% of the combined domestic and international spending while Sydney has 15%.

"Melbourne holds more major events and more business events and conferences than Sydney and we have a more consistent and aggressive marketing approach," said John Pandazopoulos, Victoria's Minister for Tourism.

"I believe our marketing is better than Sydney. We are innovative and quirky, in our marketing

efforts and we spend more than \$100 million a year to promote our tourism and major events," he said.

Melbourne Convention + Visitor Bureau CEO Garry Kingshott said that Melbourne was consistently attracting more large international conferences following the announcement of the government's commitment to a new convention centre which will be completed by late 2008.

"Next year Melbourne hosts the Commonwealth Games which



▲ Gary of MCVB

will not only provide an economic stimulus to the city but also provide media coverage of the city's business and tourist attractions to a wide international audience," Mr Kingshott said. ■

For further information:
www.mcvb.com.au