



February 7, 2006

Ministry of Tourism's plans

The government announced there are plans to invest more than US\$1 billion in tourism infrastructure and other tourism-related projects in 2006. Speaking from the Presidential Palace press room, Tourism Minister Felix Jimenez announced his work plan that had earlier received the support of the government council. He said that the work plan includes 16 actions and essential goals, that include the operation of a national airline with local and foreign investments, that would start flying as early as this summer. He said that the company would use Lufthansa aircraft.

He announced the construction of a hotel in Pedernales, with French investment, and another two hotels in Barahona. He said this would spur new commercial flights into the southwest of the country. He also announced the construction of a Mount Palace hotel, by the Hotelera Palace Resort of Mexico, with 1,000 rooms and a convention center in the Punta Cana area, representing an investment of more than US\$170 million. He mentioned work on the construction of the Carretera Cruce del Isleno-Macao. In May, according to the minister, work is to start on the construction of the La Romana-Punta Cana highway. For Juan Dolio he announced the construction of a water treatment plant, the aqueduct and work to improve the beach. The government has plans to invest US\$15 million in improvements to the Juan Dolio and Boca Chica coastline. He said Samana will benefit from the remodeling of its parks, streets, aqueduct and the ports of Las Galeras and Las Terrenas. For Puerto Plata he announced the start of construction of a new sewage system, construction of sidewalks, and improvement of the conditions in the barrios of the southern part of the city, with an investment of US\$35 million. He said that his department is studying solutions to the problem of garbage disposal and plans to eliminate the Maggiolo dump. As reported in Hoy newspaper, he said that there is a businessman interested in purchasing the garbage dump property to build apartments and a park. He spoke of improvements to the Cabarete, Gaspar Hernandez and Rio San Juan highway in time for summer. Work is also due to begin on the Higuey and Bavaro aqueduct, with financing from the San Jose Accord. He said this agreement has already been signed by the authorities.

He went on to mention that the authorities are preparing a Tourism Code aimed at modifying and updating the Ministry of Tourism's present legal framework, and the land use and grading of hotels. He said the government has plans to continue its advertising campaign focusing on the United States, Canada, Russia and other Eastern European countries, in addition to Scandinavia, Brazil and Argentina.

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