

Equinox Hospitality Middle East And Altayar Are Signing Master Development Agreement With Choice Hotel International.



The signing ceremony overseen by HRH Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the Chairman of the Board of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage

Choice Hotels International, Inc., one of the largest hotel companies in the world, announced today the signing of a master development agreement with Equinox Ventures Ltd, a joint venture between Equinox Group Ltd. and Al Tayyar Travel Group, to introduce and develop three of Choice's most prominent brands: Clarion, Comfort and Quality across the UAE and Saudi Arabia....

Supported by solid fundamentals and increased focus from the public sector, the Middle Eastern hospitality sector is expected to grow exponentially in the coming years. According to Phocuswright, the Middle East travel industry is forecast to rise to \$98 billion by 2017, from \$71.8 billion in 2014. Historically, hotel development in the region has been led by upscale brands, but with an emerging middle class looking to travel both within the region and internationally, and an increase in inbound business, leisure travel and tourism, there is growing demand for mid-market and budget accommodations.

Shuja Zaidi, President of Equinox Group Ltd. said, "We believe that the next wave of growth and expansion in our region belongs to the mid-market segment. To prepare for it, it was only natural that we partner-up with one of the largest and most globally recognized experts in the space." With key regional markets such as Dubai, Riyadh, Jeddah and Makkah currently undersupplied in mid-market hotel accommodations, and many existing hotel properties operating independently and without brand affiliation. Dubai-based Equinox Group Ltd. offers regional expertise and the team possesses proven credentials in Hotel development, operations, finance project management and investment advisory. Al-Tayyar Travel is one of the leading travel service providers in the MENA region operating over 400 retail travel agency branches in Saudi Arabia, as well as being the largest corporate travel management service provider.

Abdullah Aldawood, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Al Tayyar Travel Group said "This cooperation with a global player will help us close the gap in our efforts to integrate all parts of our travel business. We had started with acquisition and development of hospitality assets, moving on to asset management and now rolling out globally recognized brands in the region with our partners who have the expertise and the regional knowledge.

The master development agreement is anticipated to deliver approximately 25 hotels and 8,000 hotel rooms for Choice's portfolio in the UAE and Saudi Arabia by 2021.

"We are delighted to sign this agreement with Equinox Group and Al Tayyar Travel Group that will help Choice establish a presence in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, and also offer a platform for rapid expansion. Drawing on their regional expertise and infrastructure, we are perfectly placed to provide travelers with the quality mid-market hotel accommodations they need, all backed by Choice's global hotel platform and brand reputation for value and service." said Mark Pearce, senior vice president, international division, for Choice Hotels.

The Middle East travel industry is forecasted to rise to \$98 billion by 2017, from \$71.8 billion in 2014, according to Phocuswright. With an emerging middle class looking to travel both within the region and internationally, and an increase in

inbound business, leisure travel and tourism, there is growing demand for mid-market and budget accommodations as well as a continued desire for upscale brands.

Shuja Zaidi, President of Dubai-based Equinox Group Ltd. said, “Currently, markets such as Dubai, Riyadh, Jeddah and Makkah are undersupplied in mid-market hotel accommodations, providing an opportunity for a strong hotel brand such as Choice to bring its portfolio to the market. We believe that the next wave of growth and expansion in our region belongs to the mid-market segment. To prepare for it, it was only natural that we partner up with one of the largest and most globally recognized brands with a portfolio that spans from mid- to upscale properties and can offer travelers what they need.”

Abdullah Aldawood, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Altayyar Travel Group said, “Our cooperation with a global player like Choice will help us close the gap in our efforts to integrate all parts of our travel business. We had started with the acquisition and development of hospitality assets and asset management and are now ready to roll out globally recognized brands in the region, working closely with our partners to bring their expertise and regional knowledge.”

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This agreement is the fifth EMEA market portfolio expansion Choice has announced in the last six months, having signed agreements related to the co-branding of 19 properties in Germany, Austria and Hungary under the Comfort and Quality brands, and another deal to establish multiple hotels in Belgium. Choice is further growing its presence in Germany with two new Comfort brand hotels in Frankfurt and Düsseldorf, and recently launched its upscale Ascend Hotel Collection in the UK and France.

Turkey is another strategically important market for Choice where it currently has three hotels in Istanbul and one in Kahramanmaraş, and a growing development pipeline.

About Choice Hotels:

Choice Hotels International, Inc. (CHH) is one of the world’s largest lodging companies. With more than 6,400 hotels franchised in more than 35 countries and territories, Choice Hotels International® represents more than 500,000 rooms around the globe. As of December 31, 2015, 720 hotels were in our development pipeline. Our company’s Ascend Hotel Collection®, Cambria® hotels & suites, Comfort Inn®, Comfort Suites®, Sleep Inn®, Quality®, Clarion®, MainStay Suites®, Suburban Extended Stay Hotel®, Econo Lodge®, Rodeway Inn®, and Vacation Rentals by Choice Hotels™ brands provide a spectrum of lodging choices to meet guests’ needs. With more than 25 million members and counting, our Choice Privileges® rewards program enhances every trip a guest takes, with benefits ranging from instant, every day rewards to exceptional experiences, starting right when they join. All hotels and vacation rentals are independently owned and operated. Visit us at www.choicehotels.com for more information.

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About Equinox Group:

Equinox Group Ltd. is a Dubai based company offering hospitality consultancy and advisory services with expert knowledge in the Middle East. Equinox offers services that cover the entire life cycle of hotel and hotel related real estate asset. Services start from highest and best use analysis of the site to project development leading into operations including hotel asset management and owner’s representation. Equinox team comprise of senior leaders from the industry and is known for their extensive multi-disciplinary expertise.

About AlTayyar Travel Group:

Al-Tayyar Travel Group Holding Company (AB) is one of the largest travel and tourism service-providers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A publicly-listed Saudi corporation with over 14 affiliated companies across the globe, Al-Tayyar was established in 1979 as a single reservation office in Riyadh. The Company today is providing services through more than 300 branches within Saudi Arabia as well as 20 international offices.

Forward-Looking Statements

Certain matters discussed in this press release constitute forward-looking statements within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. Generally, our use of words such as “expect,” “estimate,” “believe,” “anticipate,” “should,” “will,” “forecast,” “plan,” “project,” “assume” or similar words of futurity identify such forward-looking statements. These

forward-looking statements are based on Choice Hotels management's current beliefs, assumptions and expectations regarding future events, which in turn are based on information currently available to management. Such statements may relate to projections of the company's revenue, earnings and other financial and operational measures. We caution you not to place undue reliance on any such forward-looking statements. Forward-looking statements do not guarantee future performance and involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other factors.

Several factors could cause actual results, performance or achievements of the company to differ materially from those expressed in or contemplated by the forward-looking statements. Such risks include, but are not limited to, changes to general economic conditions and operating risks common in the lodging and franchising industries. These and other risk factors are discussed in detail in the company's filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission including our annual reports on Form 10-K and our quarterly reports filed on Form 10-Q. We undertake no obligation to publicly update or revise any forward-looking statement, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise.