

## Digicel to build 173-room Marriott hotel in Haiti

MARRIOTT International announced this week it would open a US\$45-million, 173-room Port-au-Prince Marriott Hotel under management agreement with ownership group Unigestion Holding SA, a subsidiary of Digicel Group Ltd.

In addition to creating 175 new jobs, the hotel will invest in hospitality training to benefit Haiti's tourism sector, a news release from Digicel said.

“Digicel Group is responsible for designing and building the hotel and chose Marriott International's flagship Marriott Hotels & Resorts brand as its operating partner under a long-term management agreement. Construction on the property is expected to begin in 2012, with opening expected in mid-2014,” the mobile provider said.

With roughly 500 hotel rooms operating in the city, the Port-au-Prince Marriott will create much needed lodging and meeting space for business travellers seeking to invest in the country, nongovernment organisations (NGOs), humanitarian organisations, reconstruction teams, financial institutions and visitors to the capital.

Port-au-Prince is located in the southern part of the country on the Gulf of Gonave and is home to approximately 20 per cent of the country's population.

“The Clinton Foundation has worked closely with Marriott and Digicel to develop this project,” the news release said. “The Foundation connected Marriott and Digicel knowing their mutual interests in the hotel sector, visited proposed construction sites with the parties and facilitated introductions to the Haitian Government and the Haitian Tourism Association.”

“This new hotel project will stand as a symbol of Haiti's recovery, providing much needed jobs to the Haitian people and encouraging foreigners to visit, invest and work in Port-au-Prince,” said former president Clinton. “My Foundation has worked with both Marriott and Digicel, and encouraged them to form this partnership. Their investment proves that Haiti is open for business and on the path to economic recovery.”

Digicel Chairman and founder Denis O'Brien, said: “Working with Marriott International to bring the flagship Marriott Hotels & Resorts brand to Haiti communicates confidence in the country's outlook and is a huge step towards attracting more long-term investment into the country. With lodging options severely limited in Port-au-Prince, this is indeed bright news.”

Digicel said it is the single largest private investor in Haiti and the country's largest telecoms provider. O'Brien is also founder and patron of Digicel Foundation, a charitable organisation actively involved in rebuilding Haiti which, to date, has constructed a total of 70 schools. The Digicel Foundation has collaborated with the Clinton Global Initiative, which was founded by President Clinton. As chairman of the Clinton Global Initiative's Haiti Action Network, O'Brien has been instrumental in supporting 80 support organisations in Haiti and reconstructing the iconic Iron Market in Port-au-Prince.

“Haiti is in great need of quality hotels today, and for the foreseeable future,” said Arne Sorenson, Marriott International's president and chief operating officer. “This hotel is one more signal that Haiti is open for business. That's what we're telling the world today as part of our announcement. Of course, this is a long-term goal with tremendous needs still need to be met, but we believe we can make a difference in Haiti by injecting capital, creating jobs and developing the human talent that can help lift this country over time back to its rightful place as one of the top destinations in the Caribbean.

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“The selection of the Marriott Hotels & Resorts brand to be constructed in Port-au-Prince is very deliberate. We aspire for a hotel of our flagship brand to be located in every capital in countries where we operate. Over time, as Haiti continues to heal, rebuild and develop, our hotel will not only help the many organizations serving Haiti now, but would also stimulate business and attract leisure visitors in the future.”

