



**FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE SKI**  
**INTERNATIONAL SKI FEDERATION**  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **FIS MEDIA INFO**

### **FIS Nordic World Ski Championships open in Sapporo – An Asian premiere**

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Sapporo, 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2007/ -- The FIS Nordic World Ski Championships debut in Asia from 22<sup>nd</sup> February to 4<sup>th</sup> March. FIS President Gian Franco Kasper will open the Championships at the official Opening Ceremony beginning at 18:00 (10:00 CET) on Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

More than 480 athletes representing 49 nations have been entered to compete in Sapporo, Japan, accompanied by at least the same number of officials. Whilst 125 ladies from 33 nations and 197 men from 47 nations are registered to compete in Cross-Country, approximately 68 athletes from 17 nations will participate in the Nordic Combined events and 93 athletes from 21 nations in Ski Jumping. At least 1150 international media will be on-site to report on the event.

“By staging the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships in Sapporo, Japan, we are hoping to promote the development of the FIS Nordic disciplines throughout Asia, especially in China and Korea. The Japanese already have long traditions in Ski Jumping but we would like to make them equally excited about Cross-Country,” said Gian Franco Kasper.

The Opening Ceremony will include a welcome speech delivered by Mr. Fumio Ueda, Mayor of Sapporo and President of the Organizing Committee, together with Ms. Yasuko Ikenobo, Deputy Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, and Ms. Harumi Takahashi, Governor of Hokkaido. His Imperial Highness Prince Akishino will also deliver words of welcome and a myriad of performances will pay tribute to the local traditions.

A total of 54 medals will be awarded in the 18 events (12 Cross-Country, 3 Nordic Combined and 3 Ski Jumping). The competitions will begin with the Cross-Country Skiing sprint races in the classical technique on Thursday. The races will be held at the Sapporo Dome and have already been sold out to an impressive capacity of 30'000; the finals will be staged after the official Opening Ceremony as of 19:30 local time (11:30 CET). This will be the first time that Cross-Country championship competitions are held indoors, as well as the first time Cross-Country title events are held at night. The Sapporo Dome hosts the Sapporo football and highly successful baseball clubs. For the championships, the Dome will be showcasing the first ever "turf conversion hovering system" to facilitate the snow making process.

The 2007 Championships will be the first time that the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships will be held as an independent event in Asia. In 1972, when the Olympic Winter Games were held in Sapporo, they doubled as the FIS World Ski Championships; this was the case until and including the 1980 Olympic Winter Games in Lake Placid (USA).

The competitions will continue on Friday with the Cross-Country team sprints and Nordic Combined sprint event, for which the skiing race will also be staged at the Sapporo Dome.

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