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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**FIS MEDIA INFO****New Year's Message from FIS President Gian Franco Kasper**

Happy New Year to the entire FIS Family!

2015 has come to a close and with it, so has hopefully the unseasonably warm weather that has challenged many of our Organisers in much of the Northern Hemisphere during the early period of the season.

With the change of the calendar to 2016, also came the much-anticipated first significant snow of the season in Central Europe. The high temperatures and lack of snow not only impacted FIS events at all levels, but the entire snow industry. We can now only hope to make-up for the dry start to the season with outstanding conditions during the rest of the winter.

The start of the 2015/16 competition season, has proven to be both successful and challenging. Thus far, we have managed to save the bulk of our World Cup events from the challenging conditions at the planned location or a replacement, thanks to outstanding engagement from the Organisers who have worked extremely hard to stage the events through a combination of being prepared for such eventualities, as well as being resourceful and improvised. Several disciplines, such as Nordic Combined and to a lesser extent Alpine Skiing, have however been hit hard by the lack of snow at traditional locations.

Safety has also been a major theme in the early races this season. In Alpine, we had an unfortunate accident where a drone camera just missed colliding with Marcel Hirscher during a slalom race, reminding us all that while we move ahead with innovation to showcase our sport, we must always put safety first. We also saw the new airbag system in action for the first time with the crash of Matthias Mayer (AUT). The airbag has been extensively tested by top athletes over the past two seasons and it functioned according to the defined protocols. Nevertheless any potential improvements will be analysed by the airbag developers who are also a leading manufacturer of such protection in motorcycle sport, in order to ensure the best possible protection for the athletes.

We can also look forward to expanding our horizons in 2016 and beyond. In only a few weeks we will hold the first FIS Alpine World Cup downhill and super G events in PyeongChang, Korea to prepare for the 2018 Olympic Winter Games. While the building process to get the course ready has been challenging, I believe the Koreans will put on both excellent World Cup races and an unforgettable Olympic Winter Games in 2018. Since its' election last August as host of the following Olympic Winter Games, China has already been

actively making initial preparations. Beijing 2022 will give our sport the chance to diversify and open the door to one of the most important emerging markets in the world.

As I write this, the year is already off to a great start with the Nordic disciplines taking centre stage with an outstanding 4-Hill Tournament in Ski Jumping which has seen all four competitions as a complete sell-out and the Cross Country Tour de Ski dominating the winter sports scene. Congratulations to the Tour de Ski on its 10-year anniversary, and next year the 4-Hills will reach its 65-year milestone.

One of the negative aspects of 2015 were cases of corruption and doping scandals in major International Sports Federations and these revelations have severely affected the entire sports movement. You can be assured that the integrity of the organisation and deep-rooted philosophy of our governance responsibilities to serve sport at large is of the utmost importance at FIS.

But now we can look ahead to even more great landmarks for FIS in 2016. The Audi FIS Alpine World Cup will celebrate its 50th-year anniversary in the 2016/17 season and we will also hold the 50th FIS Congress as well in June in Cancun (MEX).

Naturally, there are countless other highlights that could be mentioned, but for now, I will let everyone get outside and enjoy the snow!

Gian Franco Kasper