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WORLD SAMBO CHAMPIONSHIP IN KAZAKHSTAN **A STUNNING SUCCESS**

More than 14,000 spectators attended the Ice Arena in Astana, Kazakhstan (6,000 were inside and more than 8,000 were outside waiting to get in), as sportsmen and women from 36 nations around the globe competed in the XXVIIIth annual World Sambo Championship. Not all of the FIAS (Federation Internationale Amateur De SAMBO) 52 members countries could send their sportsmen to this championship this year.

SAMBO, a form of martial arts, is self defense – without weapons (SAMozaschita-Bez-Oruzhia). The hugely successful four day event (Nov. 11- Nov 14) was marked not only by record crowds which jammed the stadium, but also by the presence of high ranking government officials who attended, including the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev.

Russian President, Vladimir Putin, a lifelong SAMBIST, dispatched his Minister of Sport, Vyacheslav Fetisov to the event where the Minister read a personal greeting from President Putin. Mr. Putin said he was greatly pleased that SAMBO, a sport native to Russia, is now enjoying wide popularity as evidenced by the athletes from all over the world who had assembled for the competition.

Mr. Putin said, “SAMBO not only empowers an individual physically, it also develops his character, will to win and respect for his opponent. These qualities help people achieve success not only in the arena of sports but in life itself.” President Putin concluded his message on the confident note that he expected the sport of SAMBO to soon gain entry into the Olympics. Mr. Putin was first introduced to SAMBO as a young man and mastered the martial art technique during his 16 year career as an officer in the Soviet Union’s KGB. At this crowded Sambo Congress, Mr. Putin was elected Honorary President of the Federation Internationale Amateur de Sambo.

During the Astana World Championship, the Russian SAMBISTS emerged with the most medals winning 15 in all: 8 Gold, 3 Silver and 4 Bronze. Eight American SAMBISTS also took part in the events and came away with 1 a Bronze medal in the 90Kg category.

At the SAMBO World Championship every four years, the 15 member Executive Committee of the International SAMBO Federation meets to vote on the venue for the next 4 years schedule of world competition. In Astana, the Executive Committee voted to hold the 2009 SAMBO World Championship in the United States. It will be the first time in the Federation’s 68 year history that the U.S. will host a SAMBO World Championship.

Jack Kogan, Vice President of the FIAS, president of Pan-American SAMBO Federation, and Secretary General of the American Amateur SAMBO Federation, believes holding the Championship in the United States will go a long way in boosting the sport's visibility. In the United States the sport is gaining great popularity and growing with remarkable speed. In less than a year, the number of SAMBISTS in the U.S. has grown from just 17 to 296 members in eight states. "There are, however, tremendous financial challenges ahead," says Mr. Kogan, "in terms of executing the World Championship competition in the U.S." Mr. Kogan is optimistic that they can pull it off saying, "We have four years to get the money to make it happen. We need to raise at least \$1.5 million in order to match Astana's expenses" The Executive Committee has yet to vote on the American city which will host the Championship though Mr. Kogan believes there's a seventy- five per cent chance it will be New York

World-wide there are some one million SAMBISTS. Computerized registration started only this year with a new computer management system in Astana with a special program designed for the SAMBO sport by World Wide SAMBO LLC. Among them some celebrated sportsmen who have recently been invited into the World Wrestling Federation. They include champions:

Oleg Taktarov, a two time SAMBO Ultimate Fighting Champion who has appeared in some 23 Hollywood movies –
<http://www.olegt.com/>

Oleg Prudius,
<http://www.carrycompany.com/Oleg%20Aleksandrovich%20Prudius.htm>

Feodor Emelyanenko
http://fedor.bel.ru/bio/index_eng.shtml

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