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Media Release

Transforming the Global Tourism Industry in just Five Minutes

Start-up founders aspiring to transform global tourism will soon have a unique five-minute opportunity to convince international investors to help make their vision a reality.

The World Tourism Forum Lucerne (WTFL) *Start-Up Innovation Camp* (September 12) will put ambitious entrepreneurs face-to-face with industry experts ready to invest their time, money and expertise. WTFL Chairman of Judges Roland Zeller, a leading entrepreneur and business angel, has heard well over 10,000 start-up pitches over the past 20 years. "About 20 per cent of the pitches I've seen were truly innovative," Mr Zeller said. "Only a handful of those would succeed, as it hinges on the business model and the team. It's true that 'the best idea is only as good as the team behind it'."

Until June 30, start-ups from anywhere in the world can submit an online application to be part of WTFL's *Start-Up Innovation Camp 2018*. The start-up must be younger than five years and fit one of five categories: transaction, hospitality, destination, transportation or impact. They also must have an existing product and first sales, an international vision, or the ability to create a significant impact in their region.

"There is nothing like this event anywhere else in the world," Mr Zeller said. "It absolutely does have the power, not just to transform the start-up business but also the travel, tourism and hospitality industry. The pitch is only the start of the opportunity. For example, these founders can breakfast with key industry players representing global powerhouses, so it is an unrivalled 'money can't buy' launch pad made for true go-getters."

[Global Himalayan Expedition](#) (GHE) Founder and CEO Paras Loomba won a WTFL pitch session last year; an opportunity that helped to double business inquiry and turnover in the past six months. The Indian start-up has provided clean energy and digital education access through solar power to over 60 remote mountain villages, improving living conditions for more than 25,000 people. GHE also facilitates community infrastructure projects, expeditions and regional homestays to boost the local economy through impact tourism.

"I came to WTFL with the mindset I had founded a social energy company," Mr Loomba said. "But the *Start-Up Innovation Camp* process made me reconsider our business model and I quickly realised we were equal parts a tourism enterprise."

A suggestion from Roland Zeller to open his pitch in total darkness, immersing the audience in GHE's social impact, was the first of countless useful tips that have transformed the entrepreneur and his enterprise. "The camp convinced us to start referring to GHE as a tourism company and that's when things really started to happen," Mr Loomba said.

"We've received many awards including the UNWTO Responsible Tourism award, WTTC – Tourism for Tomorrow 2018, ICIMOD Mountain Prize, a €400,000 grant from booking.com and



we've just been nominated as Asia's Sustainable Tourism Operator for the World Travel Awards 2018. All of this helps our travel industry credibility as a trusted ground operator but, more than any accolade, this has strengthened our WTFL connections. WTFL is a part of everything we've done and we are so grateful for that opportunity."

WTFL President and CEO Martin Barth said it was a coup to have this year's *Start-Up Innovation Camp* integrated in PATA Travel Mart (PTM), Asia-Pacific's worldwide travel trade exhibition, to be held at Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre in Malaysia.

"Langkawi will be our third *Start-Up Innovation Camp* and to have this important opportunity running simultaneously with PTM has obvious synergy," Professor Barth said. "Our alumni of past participants are actively spreading the word to potential investors and entrepreneurs about the 2018 Camp. Applications are flooding in ahead of the June 30 deadline including start-ups in the USA, India, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, France, Spain, UK, Russia, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, UAE, Namibia, Australia, New Zealand, Colombia, Indonesia, Thailand and, of course, Malaysia. We want to make sure game-changing innovators in every corner of the globe know about this amazing opportunity."

The winner of each category will receive

- the Start-Up Innovation Award of (USD)\$15,000
- a "5 Minutes of Fame" pitch opportunity on the main stage of PTM Talks
- free participation at the World Tourism Forum Lucerne 2019 event, plus
- a coaching program over the next two years.

To access the application link visit: innovation2018.wtflucerne.org/application.

About the World Tourism Forum Lucerne

The World Tourism Forum Lucerne is a unique platform for CEOs, Ministers, Academia, Finance, Start-Ups and representatives of tomorrow's generation to actively exchange, share and address the future challenges of the travel, tourism and hospitality industry to shape a more sustainable future. The 6th World Tourism Forum Lucerne will take place from 1 to 3 May 2019. To learn more visit www.wtflucerne.org.

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Editor's note: Images of Paras Loomba's Global Himalayan Expedition, Chairman of Judges Roland Zeller, Professor Martin Barth and the impressions from WTFL Start-Up Innovation Camp 2017 event can be accessed via this link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/5hwoijdlmmg5zh7/AACJiwCxnFsPzviYl8KdCLORa?dl=0>

