



MSC FOUNDATION AND BA'A FOUNDATION JOIN FORCES TO ADVANCE CORAL CONSERVATION

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia xxx July: The MSC Foundation and Ba'a Foundation announced today at the maiden call event of *MSC Bellissima* in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, that they will join forces to advance coral conservation to help safeguard marine ecosystems. Sharing a common goal to protect and preserve oceans, the two foundations are coming together to advance the practice and science of coral reef restoration and, most importantly, to disseminate the knowledge they acquire to a global audience. The partnership aims to further the scientific understanding of the best practices for functional restoration of coral reefs and increase the area of reef habitat actively restored. The partnership will initially focus on specific locations in the Caribbean and Red Sea where restoration efforts are especially needed.

In the first phase of this partnership, a series of scientific virtual meetings will commence with the goal of sharing knowledge and expertise to define targeted areas for collaboration where it makes sense to do so across ecoregions. A longer-term goal will be to share knowledge and results with the wider scientific community and decision makers around the world as well as the guests that will visit these destinations, thereby adding significantly to global awareness of the need for everyone to play a role and take action in protecting the oceans.

Coral reefs are among the most diverse ecosystems in the world and home to more than 25 percent of marine species. They serve as a food and economic resource for half a billion people and protect coastal communities from storms and erosion. According to the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, scientists predict that 70-90% of coral reefs are in danger of dying out within the next two decades (2030-2050).

Pierfrancesco Vago, MSC Cruises Executive Chairman commented, *"Our family company has a long tradition of seafaring, and protecting the ocean is a core value for us. This is also at the heart of the work done by the MSC Foundation, and our efforts here started with Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve. Through the partnership with the Ba'a Foundation, where commitment to the ocean is our common denominator, we are now able to become more global in our efforts. The Red Sea is home to some of the most pristine coral reefs in the world, and through the knowledge and research from the experts and graduates at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology as well as the research programme at Ocean Cay, we can really make a difference globally to coral restoration around the world, which is pivotal for ensuring the health of our oceans."*

The Executive Director of Ba'a Foundation, Bader Alrabiah, emphasized the foundation's desire to promote initiatives aimed at preserving the environment and culture through holding domestic and

international partnerships to maximize the role of sustainability and development besides enabling initiatives in these vital sectors, noting that the Red Sea contains the most unique ecosystems and coral reefs in the world.

"Ba'a foundation aspires to realize its vision and mission by engaging initiatives and strategies in non-profit projects and contributing to the overall development of the non-profit sector through long-term sustainability with the highest efficiency," Alrabiah added.

MSC Foundation, the private non-profit foundation was established to lead, focus and advance the MSC Group's conservation, humanitarian and development commitments and to utilise MSC's global reach and unique knowledge of the sea, in order to take immediate action that contributes to protecting and nurturing the blue planet and all its people. **Ba'a Foundation** is dedicated to make an impact in two sectors - the environment and culture. Established in 2020, Ba'a Foundation is already making significant progress to encourage and develop a strong sustainable ecosystem driven by cultural development and brought to life through environmentally conscious practices developing initiatives.

MSC Foundation's flagship project focuses on Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve, located in the Bahamas, 65 miles east of Miami. Once an industrial sand excavation site, Ocean Cay has been transformed by MSC Cruises – its operator – into a private island destination surrounded by crystal blue waters that is home to important marine species and coral habitats now threatened by the degradation of ocean conditions. The MSC Foundation, working in collaboration with a team of scientists and environmental experts, is identifying hardy species and genotypes of coral, colloquially termed "**Super Coral**,"¹ that have survived recent extreme ocean heat events and other impacts in the waters surrounding the island. The Foundation aims to restore coral abundance and diversity around the cay by propagating and out-planting thermally tolerant coral species and genotypes. In time, these regenerated sites will support strong and resilient ecological functionality and provide a lifeline for coral reefs in the region, helping to ensure their future survival.

Ba'a Foundation's Red Sea conservation programme is focused on ensuring a sustainable future for the region's marine life, and one of its main initiatives is to revive damaged coral reefs. This five-year initiative will be developed in three phases – the first phase will be immediate intervention at Jeddah coral reefs. From there, the initiative will scale up with the vision to become the largest coral reef revival programme in the world. Initiatives aim to mitigate the direct human impact and risks of climate change to coral reefs, using scientific-based international best practices while also encouraging stewardship through engaging/training local stakeholders.

Coral reefs in the Red Sea are amongst the most diverse in the world. The central and northern Red Sea corals are considered to be living in optimum conditions and have been scientifically shown to be able to tolerate relatively extreme conditions, including those brought about by a changing climate.

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¹ Super Coral is a colloquial term to refer to types of coral species that better withstand environmental stresses while surrounding species have not.

ABOUT THE MSC FOUNDATION:

The non-profit MSC Foundation implements the MSC Group's marine conservation, humanitarian and sustainable development commitments worldwide, utilising MSC's global reach and unique knowledge of the sea to protect and nurture our blue planet, its peoples and our shared cultural heritage.

Concentrating on four areas – the Environment, Community Support, Education and Emergency Relief – the Foundation promotes the protection and sustainable management of ecosystems, empowers vulnerable communities around the world to realize their full potential, supports equitable and inclusive quality education to foster enduring individual and collective development, and helps disaster-struck populations toward recovery.

The Foundation works to achieve this both independently and with dedicated partners: independently, by leveraging MSC Group engagement in designing and managing projects, connecting communities, raising awareness and mobilising the financial support of thousands of people, and together with trusted partners selected for their strong innovative vision or track record for effective action.

For more information visit <https://mscfoundation.org> or contact: info@mscfoundation.org

ABOUT THE BA'A FOUNDATION:

Ba'a Foundation established in 2020 with an aim to empower the fields of environment and culture. Through inspiring, encouraging, and developing a strong sustainable ecosystem that is driven by cultural development and brought to life through environmentally conscious practices.

Determined to achieve its objectives, Ba'a Foundation, looks forward to develop initiatives and programs designed to resolve challenges in its fields of focus. One of the major programs that has been designed by Ba'a Foundation, along with strategic partners in Beacon Development Company and KAUST, is the coral revive program in Red Sea. Aimed to bring back corals through sustainable and innovative techniques, developed in collaboration with KAUST, a Saudi national university.

For more information visit <https://baafoundation.sa> or contact: info@baafoundation.sa