



Joint Press Release by MSC Foundation, MSC Group and Mercy Ships

THE MSC FOUNDATION, THE MSC GROUP AND MERCY SHIPS INTERNATIONAL JOIN FORCES TO BUILD A NEW HOSPITAL SHIP

The new purpose-built hospital ship will expand the impact of Mercy Ships' life-changing surgeries, anaesthetic care and surgical education for future generations of patients and healthcare professionals in sub-Saharan Africa.

Geneva, Switzerland – Lindale, Texas, United States, 22 April 2024

A groundbreaking agreement between MSC Group, MSC Foundation and the charity Mercy Ships International prepares for the construction of a brand-new hospital ship that will deliver free surgery and training annually to thousands of people in Africa.

On 8 April, the chairman of MSC Group and MSC Foundation, Capt. Gianluigi Aponte, Diego Aponte, MSC Group President and Member of the MSC Foundation Board, and Mercy Ships Founder Don Stephens finalised an agreement to kickstart this new project with a generous anchor donation from MSC Foundation, reflecting the visionary leaders' commitment to supporting access to critical healthcare for the generations to come.

"I spent part of my childhood and early years in the shipping industry in the Horn of Africa, it is a region close to my heart. I saw firsthand the challenges faced by many local communities there and this shaped my conviction that improving the availability of healthcare would bring real and lasting impact for them. It has been extremely gratifying to work with Don and provide this crucial support through his unique organisation Mercy Ships, our partnership has reaped extraordinary results already and now we are on the verge of expanding their fleet to increase this support. I truly look forward to seeing this

new ship set sail to help more communities across Africa” said Capt. Aponte, founder of the MSC Group.

Since Mercy Ships was founded in 1978, the organisation has provided more than 117,000 transformational specialised surgical procedures. These surgeries include maxillofacial reconstructions, contracture release for severe burns, correction for orthopaedic problems in children, cleft lip and palate repair, ophthalmology and dental services. Mercy Ships, a non-governmental organisation, is also committed to boosting the capacities of local healthcare systems through sustainably designed surgical education, training, and advocacy programmes. Mercy Ships has provided additional training to more than 54,300 local professionals in their areas of expertise.

Expanding its fleet with a new purpose-built hospital ship, designed to similar specifications as the *Global Mercy* with a focus on designated training spaces, will allow Mercy Ships to increase its capacity to collaborate with host nations in training and advocacy efforts.

The need to accelerate access to surgical care and surgical education in sub-Saharan Africa remains very apparent. In his welcome speech at the recent West African College of Surgeons (WACS) conference in Freetown, Vice President Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh of Sierra Leone stated that the country is still grappling with 91% unmet surgical needs. Highlighting the progress already made, he urged collaborative efforts to tackle surgical deficits.

Don Stephens, founder of Mercy Ships, confirmed Mercy Ships’ vision for serving African nations with safe surgical care and education. ***“The investment of many around the world towards a fleet of hospital ships will be enhanced by the future of our new purpose-built vessel. The mission of Mercy Ships to bring Hope and Healing is only possible by the generosity of our partners, volunteer crew, and the provision of God. Today, I am grateful to MSC for their support.”***

Operating hospital ships involves transporting large quantities of essential supplies across oceans and seas to continuously support surgical and training activities. MSC and Mercy Ships have been partners since 2011, with the MSC Group ensuring logistical support and container delivery of supplies to all ports of service. The infrastructure support and logistical expertise provided by its teams in Africa ranges from MSC's local shipping agency and MSC and TiL terminals handling cargo to MSC and MEDLOG logistics, storage, and inland transportation services. In addition to this, MSC have provided extensive technical advice and experience in preparation for the new vessel, working with Mercy Ships to develop a design that will improve efficiency for the organisation’s needs.

The new ship will feature living spaces to accommodate approximately 600 crew members and guests on board. Its hospital will span two decks and 7,000 square metres, featuring six operating rooms, a fully equipped laboratory, and state-of-the-art training spaces such as a simulation lab. This makes it possible for Mercy Ships to strengthen local surgical systems during its time in port, typically a 10-months field service.

Gert van de Weerdhof, CEO of Mercy Ships said: ***“This new hospital ship will bring state-of-the-art equipment and facilities to support the nations we serve. This new vessel and her future crew will enable us to meet surgical needs, while supporting host nations as they develop healthcare systems with their next generation of medical professionals.”***

Diego Aponte, MSC Group President and a Member of the MSC Foundation Board, said, ***“I have always been passionate about Africa and I was struck by the extraordinary and honourable nature of Don’s initiative when it was first presented, and these made me want to be involved in a significant way. Mercy Ships brings tangible and concrete support to thousands of families across the region, and with MSC Group’s major presence there we have a duty to give back to the local communities. This vessel is yet another milestone in our vision to support the African continent with achieving a truly prosperous and sustainable destiny.”***

Daniela Picco, MSC Foundation Executive Director, said: ***“We are extremely proud of our support for Mercy Ships through grant-making and in-kind donations and of the transformative impacts their free services and training have had on 18,000 medical professionals and community leaders, and 30,300 patients of all ages through 33,200 surgeries since 2011.***

“When the discussion started with Mercy Ships’ founder Don Stephens to build a new ship together, I was delighted to facilitate this game-changing commitment to accompany Mercy Ships into the coming decades.”

ABOUT MSC FOUNDATION

Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, the MSC Foundation is the philanthropic entity of the MSC Group. Established by the Aponte family in 2018, the Foundation supports causes in environmental conservation, community support, education, and emergency relief. Its mission is to use MSC’s global reach and knowledge of the sea to take action that contributes to protecting and nurturing the blue planet

and its people. For more information, visit: www.msccfoundation.org and follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

ABOUT MSC MEDITERRANEAN SHIPPING COMPANY

MSC Mediterranean Shipping Company, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, is a global leader in transportation and logistics, privately owned and founded in 1970 by Gianluigi Aponte. As one of the world's leading container shipping lines, MSC has 675 offices across 155 countries worldwide, with the MSC Group employing almost 200,000 people. With access to an integrated network of road, rail, air, and sea transport resources which stretches across the globe, the company prides itself on delivering global service with local knowledge. MSC's shipping line sails on more than 300 trade routes, calling at 520 ports, and is targeting net zero decarbonisation by 2050. For more information about our journey to net-zero please visit: www.msc.com/sustainability

ABOUT MERCY SHIPS:

Mercy Ships operates hospital ships that deliver free surgeries and other healthcare services to those with little access to safe medical care. An international faith-based organisation, Mercy Ships has focused entirely on partnering with African nations for the past three decades. Working with in-country partners, Mercy Ships also provides additional training to local healthcare professionals and supports the construction of in-country medical infrastructure to leave a lasting impact.

Each year, more than 3,000 volunteer professionals from over 60 countries serve on board the world's two largest non-governmental hospital ships, the *Africa Mercy* and the *Global Mercy*. Professionals such as surgeons, dentists, nurses, health trainers, cooks, and engineers dedicate their time and skills to accelerate access to safe surgical, obstetric and anaesthetic care. Mercy Ships was founded in 1978 and has offices in 16 countries as well as an Africa Service Center in Dakar, Senegal. For more information, visit mercyships.org and follow @MercyShips on social media.

Media Enquiries

MSC Foundation

Kim Mancini – kim.mancini@msccfoundation.org +41 76 249 8434
www.msccfoundation.org

MSC Mediterranean Shipping Company SA

Giles Read – giles.read@msc.com +41 79 797 3351
www.msc.com/sustainability

Mercy Ships International

Anne Buckland – anne.buckland@mercyships.org
<https://mercyships.org>

Mercy Ships US

Laura Rebouche – laura.rebouche@mercyships.org
<https://mercyships.org>

END