

Press Information

TUI Care Foundation and Reef-World empower local Youth Ambassadors to protect coral reefs in the Dominican Republic

- *A new TUI Junior Academy to support environmental training and inspire a generation of Youth Ambassadors for coral reef conservation*
- *The three-year initiative will also improve the sustainability practices of local reef-based businesses through tailor-made training reaching over 300 people*
- *Over 65,000 visitors to the island will be reached through an awareness campaign providing information on coral protection and incentivising sustainable practices*

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Berlin, 29 January 2020. *The TUI Care Foundation and The Reef-World Foundation are launching an initiative to help protect coral reefs in the Dominican Republic. The partnership will encourage environmental stewardship by bringing together key members of the community to focus on the protection of these sensitive and fundamental ecosystems. Over 300 people from a variety of local reef-based businesses will receive specialised training on how to work more sustainably. More than 65,000 tourists will receive information on coral reef protection and over 2,000 members of the community will also learn about reef protection through the environmental activities of Youth Ambassadors.*

With 20% of the Dominican Republic living in extreme poverty and 80% of the island's 10 million inhabitants living on the coast, coral reefs are an important source of food and income. The ocean supports half of all livelihoods, mainly through fisheries and tourism, but these sensitive marine ecosystems are seriously under threat. As well as the damaging impact of climate change, activities like intensive scuba diving, snorkelling and sailing can directly damage the coral, which in turn impacts its delicate ecosystem.

The initiative is part of the international TUI Junior Academy programme and will deliver tailored marine environmental education courses to Youth Ambassadors, inspiring them to champion coral reef conservation projects and lead activities within their local communities. As part of a multi-faceted approach to protecting coral reefs, it will also introduce environmentally friendly guidelines to promote sustainable diving and snorkelling. This will help to reduce any local deterioration of the coral reef and build its resilience to wide-scale global challenges. In partnership with Reef Check Dominican Republic and the Ministry of Environment of the Dominican Republic, the project aims to significantly reduce any direct detrimental impact to coral reefs by building awareness of, and facilitating, environmentally-friendly best practices for diving and snorkelling activities.

Thomas Ellerbeck, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the TUI Care Foundation, said: "The Dominican Republic is surrounded by extraordinary coral reefs which constitute a key component of the island's unique natural heritage and biodiversity. Local economic activities, such as fishing, and marine life in general, rely on strong,

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healthy reefs. We are very excited to be launching this new project with Reef-World that brings the local community together and puts education at the very centre of future environmentally sustainable solutions.”

Educational leaders, local resource managers and representatives of reef-based tourism in the Dominican Republic will be empowered to deliver tailored marine educational programmes to young people, which will improve their awareness of environmental issues and help them understand how they can protect the environment. Working with local teachers and the Ministry of Education, the initiative will also strengthen the marine environmental education content within the national curriculum. As a result, this project aims to help to strengthen livelihoods, reduce poverty and protect the environment in the Dominican Republic.

JJ Harvey, Director at The Reef-World Foundation, said: “As well as being a precious natural ecosystem, the Dominican Republic’s coral reefs provide food and livelihoods for many people in the country and so represent a valuable financial asset worth protecting. By building the capacity of the marine tourism industry to follow best environmental practice, our Youth Ambassador Coral Reef Conservation Programme will engage over 1,000 teenagers across 15 schools with the ripple effect reaching approximately 1,800 community members and over 2,000 family members. We’re proud to be working with the TUI Care Foundation to empower citizens of the Dominican Republic to protect their natural assets for many years to come.”

The Reef-World Foundation also runs the Green Fins initiative in the Dominican Republic, which is implemented through a network approach led by Reef Check Dominican Republic in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the Auxiliary Navy, the Coastal Biodiversity and Tourism project and local community and conservation group CEBSE.

About the TUI Care Foundation

Building on the potential of tourism as a force for good, the TUI Care Foundation supports and initiates partnerships and projects, which create new opportunities for the young generation and contribute to thriving communities all over the world. Connecting holidaymakers to good causes, the TUI Care Foundation fosters education and training initiatives to open up new opportunities and perspectives for young people, the protection of the natural environment in holiday destinations and sustainable livelihoods in thriving destinations where local communities can benefit even more from tourism. TUI Care Foundation works global and acts local - it builds on strong partnerships with local and international organisations to create meaningful and long-lasting impact. The charitable foundation values transparency and the efficient use of funds. Therefore 100% of the donations go to destination programmes with all administration costs of the foundation covered by TUI. TUI Care Foundation was founded by TUI, the world’s leading tourism business, and is based in the Netherlands.

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About The Reef-World Foundation

The Reef-World Foundation is a registered UK charity which delivers practical solutions for marine conservation around the world. The charity promotes the responsible use of natural resources - particularly coral reefs and related ecosystems - for the benefit of local communities, visitors and future generations. It is dedicated to supporting, inspiring and empowering governments, businesses, communities and individuals around the world to conserve and develop coastal resources sustainably.

Reef-World leads the global implementation of the UN Environment Programme's Green Fins initiative, which focuses on the global promotion of environmentally friendly scuba diving and snorkelling practices across the industry. As well as providing low cost, practical solutions to local and industry-wide environmental challenges associated with the marine tourism industry, the charity also provides education and capacity building assistance to empower environmental champions (within the diving industry, local communities, authorities and governments) to implement proven coastal resource management approaches.

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About Green Fins

Green Fins is an established conservation management approach – spearheaded by The Reef-World Foundation in partnership with the UN Environment Programme – which leads to a measurable reduction in the negative environmental impacts associated with the marine tourism industry. The initiative aims to protect and conserve coral reefs through environmentally friendly guidelines that promote a sustainable diving and snorkelling tourism industry. It provides the only internationally recognised environmental standards for the diving and snorkelling industry and has a robust assessment system to measure compliance.

Green Fins encourages and empowers members of the diving industry to act to reduce the pressures on coral reefs by offering dive and snorkel companies practical, low-cost alternatives to harmful practices - such as anchoring, fish feeding and chemical pollution – as well as providing strategic training, support and resources. Reducing the local direct and indirect pressures tourism puts on coral reefs helps to make coral healthier and more resilient to other stresses such as the effects of climate change. Look for the Green Fins logo when booking your next dive trip.

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