Creating new livelihood opportunities in the Caribbean through repurposed waste: TUI Care Foundation launches new upcycling initiative in Cancun

- *Destination Zero Waste Cancun will collect plastic and glass waste from Cancun's hotel area and the islands of Holbox and Isla Mujeres*
- *Project will engage 30 tourism businesses in waste management reduction and support local upcycling companies in scaling up their operations*
- *Partnership with Sustentur will support 50 green jobs and develop sustainable tourism experiences for 2,000 visitors*

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Berlin, 13 November 2025. *The thriving tourism industry in Mexico brings many positive benefits for the local community all over the country. However, it's also a major consumer of single-use waste, especially glass and plastic and a sector with food waste problems. Cancun has one of the highest waste generation levels per capita in Mexico. Much of the poorly managed waste from the tourism sector ends up in the sea, on the coast, or in underground rivers. This negatively impacts the environment and the local population's quality of life. In Quintana Roo state, only 11% of all waste is recycled. As small island destinations, Holbox and Isla Mujeres face additional challenges, namely less capacity in waste management and lack of disposal sites.*

To address this, the TUI Care Foundation has initiated a new Destination Zero Waste project in partnership with Sustentur. The three-year project will collect 350,000 kg of plastic and glass all around Cancun, Holbox and Isla Mujeres, with 175,000 kg recycled and 85,000 kg upcycled. The waste that can be reused or recycled will be taken by authorised companies to be adequately processed.

The project aims to empower local upcycling companies and engage tourism businesses in sustainable practices, creating a circular economy model that benefits both the environment and local communities. This initiative demonstrates how tourism can be a force for good, creating economic opportunities while preserving valuable natural resources.

The project has five key components, beginning with developing a baseline on solid waste generation in Cancun's tourism sector, through a comprehensive study to be carried out in cooperation with the Cancún, Puerto Morelos and Isla Mujeres Hotels Association. The study will generate new data to enable better decision-making amongst stakeholders on how to tackle the waste management issue. This will be followed by the creation of the destination's first Tourism and Circular Economy Hub, which will serve as a think tank to scale sustainable waste management in public policies, business practices, and green business strategies, with the participation of at least 30 local businesses. 15 of these tourist businesses will adopt the Less Plastic Guide and Action Plan to identify, measure, prioritise, and reduce single-use plastics. An annual Zero Waste Forum will offer training sessions and conferences for local tourism businesses, in cooperation with local tourism associations. To close the gap between recycling and

waste generation, the project will also identify, incubate and accelerate small and medium-sized upcycling companies.

The initiative will directly benefit 50 people working in local upcycling companies through the provision of training. Beach, mangrove, cenote and seabed cleaning activities will engage around 2,000 tourists and local community members, raising awareness about waste reduction and proper disposal.

This project is part of the global Destination Zero Waste Programme, which inspires new ways to reduce and reuse waste in tourism destinations that create jobs and promote a circular economy. The Programme is implemented in destinations around the world, including Curacao, Jamaica, Zanzibar, Mauritius, Cyprus, Greece, Menorca and Sicily.

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About the TUI Care Foundation

Building on the potential of tourism as a force for good, the TUI Care Foundation supports and initiates projects which create new opportunities and contribute to thriving communities in tourism destinations all over the world. Connecting holidaymakers to good causes, it supports education and training opportunities for young people; drives the protection of natural habitats and the marine environment; and helps local communities to thrive sustainably and benefit from tourism. The TUI Care Foundation builds on strong partnerships with local and international organisations to create meaningful and long-lasting impact. The independent charitable organisation was founded by TUI, one of the world's leading tourism businesses, and is based in the Netherlands. www.tuicarefoundation.com

About Sustentur

Sustentur is a Mexican organisation specialising in the design, development, and implementation of sustainable and social tourism projects. It has developed more than 100 projects for national and international institutions, including UNDP, WWF, GIZ, the Central American Commission for Environment and Development, as well as for various tourism and environmental agencies at the international, national, state, and municipal levels, private companies, NGOs and rural and indigenous communities. Through its work, the organisation has reached fifteen countries and all 32 states of México, supported the consolidation of six sustainable tourism destinations, and trained more than 20,000 tourism and sustainability specialists. www.sustentur.com.mx

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