



Costa Group and Mercy Ships present their Memorandum of Understanding to provide practical help where it is needed the most
The leading cruise Group in Europe makes initial donation of 100.000 Euro

Hamburg/Madrid – March 7, 2017

Mercy Ships and Costa Group celebrated today the official start of the memorandum of understanding which has been recently signed. The agreement is aimed to develop synergies in different fields with the objective to support the accomplishments of Mercy Ships. According to this agreement Costa Group will develop specific activities in the following areas:

- *Promoting Mercy Ships tasks on board the 26 ships of the Costa Group fleet (Costa Cruises, Costa Asia, AIDA Cruises) to sensitize its guests*
- *Create a volunteer program for Costa and AIDA staff and crew on board the Mercy Ships*
- *Offer the opportunity to officers and engineers with Mercy Ships to gain sea-service/experience on board Costa Group ships and provide them with nautical expertise*

A first sign marked the shake-hands ceremony in Madrid/Hamburg today: In fact, on top of the cooperation that will focus on long-term projects, Costa Group made an immediate donation of 100.000,00 € to advance the mission of Mercy Ships, bringing hope and healing to those in need by helping to fill the gaps in healthcare systems of developing countries.

The charity organization Mercy Ships operates the hospital ship *Africa Mercy* which is currently operating in Cotonou – Benin, West Africa. Volunteers from over 40 nations are currently serving onboard the *Africa Mercy*, which was launched in 2007 and built specifically for the Mercy Ships mission. It is the largest non-governmental hospital ship in the world. This donation will go to support more than 1,700 life changing surgeries provided by the volunteer surgeons on the *Africa Mercy* while docked in Benin.

Michael Thamm, CEO of Costa Group explains: “Collaborating with organizations devoted to the same goals has always been key to us. We are happy to partner with Mercy Ships who provide invaluable medical services to where they are needed the most and where we can make an impact in a meaningful way.” The partnership will enable selected crew members of the *Africa Mercy* to work onboard the Costa Group fleet to renew the nautical licenses required to operate ships. In return, crew members of Costa Group can apply for a voluntary stay on the *Africa Mercy*. “For Costa Group it is important to create a working environment that enables our employees to actively take part in volunteering activities,” describes Thamm. “We are looking forward to sharing our knowledge with the crew and in return have the chance to learn and grow.”



Felix Eichhorn, President AIDA Cruises said, "AIDA cares is not just the name of the sustainability program of AIDA Cruises, but also an expression of our corporate culture and social commitment. As an international company with employees from over 40 nations all over the world, it goes without saying, that we support organizations like Mercy Ship to provide medical care for people from the poorest regions of the world."

Don Stephens, Mercy Ships Founder/President said, "We are so grateful for the partnership we have with the Costa Group. This will be a unique partnership which engages their employees/crew and passengers in supporting Mercy Ships and our programs and together we will leave a lasting legacy in the nations we serve."

Udo Kronester, Director Mercy Ships Germany stated, "We are excited that the Costa Group with AIDA Cruises and Carnival Maritime has decided to support the work of Mercy Ships in a number of different ways. We are very thankful for this significant financial contribution as we are looking forward to develop additional ways of cooperation. Our hope is that this will lead to a long lasting and mutually beneficial relationship."

Mercy Ships

Mercy Ships is an international NGO that works to improve access to essential healthcare in developing nations. Operating the world's largest civilian hospital ship the Africa Mercy, with a crew of over 400 volunteers from 40 different nations, Mercy Ships provides free surgeries and dental care to patients with urgent medical needs, whilst working with the government of each nation to improve the availability of and access to local healthcare services through training and infrastructure development programs. www.mercyships.org

Costa Group

The Costa Group is the leading cruise company in Europe. The 26 ships of the brands Costa Cruises, AIDA Cruises and Costa Asia together have a total capacity of 72,000 beds. The fleet will be further strengthened by seven new vessels by 2021. The company has a global workforce of 27,000 employees working onboard and in its 20 offices in 14 countries.

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