



## First Costa Group Volunteer on Board the Africa Mercy

July 6, 2017

*Engineer joins the crew to help and support Mercy Ships in West Africa*

Genoa – July 6, 2017 - Mercy Ships and Costa Group have reached a key milestone in their recently announced cooperation by kicking-off a joint volunteer program supporting the hospital ship *Africa Mercy*. For a total of four months, the first Costa Group volunteer Tomislav Zubovic will serve as an engineer on board to support the ship's staff and pass on his seafaring experiences gained with companies like AIDA.

Michael Thamm, Group CEO Costa Group & Carnival Asia, is thrilled about the quick results that follow the signing of a memorandum of understanding in March 2017: *"The collaboration with Mercy Ships enables us to support the people who need it most. As this reflects our key values, our crews are very much looking forward to becoming active and giving back to society. I am proud of their overwhelming resonance."*

The *Africa Mercy* is the largest non-governmental hospital ship in the world and provides free surgeries and dental care to patients with urgent medical needs. It hosts over 400 volunteers from more than 40 nations. Costa Group has committed to continuously man one Engineering position on board.

*"Tomislav Zubovic and future volunteers will not only lend a helping hand but will also share their knowledge with the other volunteers on board. This way, we can ensure to provide sustainable benefits beyond this program"*, explains Michael Thamm.

28-year old Zubovic holds a degree in Marine Engineering and has already worked on different ships within the Group, such as AIDA Sol and AIDA Luna. *"I am very excited about this challenge"*, says Zubovic. *"We are truly making a difference here and I am looking forward to help operate this ship that gives hope to so many people."*

The volunteer program is only one of several activities Costa Group and Mercy Ships agreed on in their partnership. The group will furthermore sensitize guests travelling on board the Costa Group fleet for Mercy Ships and its activities. Additionally, officers and engineers with Mercy Ships have the opportunity to gain sea-service experience and nautical expertise on board Costa Group ships. To grant immediate help, Costa Group has also made a donation of 100.000 €.

The *Africa Mercy* is operated by the charity organization Mercy Ships and is about to set course to Douala, Cameroon in August. Douala is the country's biggest city and home to Central Africa's largest port. Quality of healthcare in Cameroon is still relatively low and average life expectancy is only 56 years.<sup>[1]</sup> The country however enjoys relatively high political and social stability which facilitated the development of agriculture, roads, railways, and various industries.

### *Mercy Ships*

*Mercy Ships uses hospital ships to deliver free, world-class healthcare services, capacity building and sustainable development to those with little access in the developing world. Founded in 1978 by Don and Deyon Stephens, Mercy Ships has worked in more than 70 countries providing services valued at more than \$1.3 billion, treating more than 2.56 million direct beneficiaries. The Africa Mercy is crewed by 400 volunteers from up to 40 nations, an average of 1000 each year. Professionals including surgeons, dentists, nurses, healthcare trainers, teachers, cooks, seamen, engineers, and agriculturalists donate their time and skills to the effort. With offices in 16 nations, Mercy Ships seeks to transform individuals and serve nations one at a time. For more information click on [www.mercyships.org](http://www.mercyships.org).*

#### Costa Group

*The Costa Group is the leading cruise company in Europe, headquartered in Genoa (Italy). The 27 ships of the brands Costa Cruises, AIDA Cruises and Costa Asia together have a total capacity of 76,000 beds. The fleet will be further strengthened by 6 new vessels by 2021. The company has a global workforce of 27,000 employees working onboard and in its 20 offices in 14 countries. In 2014 the company introduced the Costa Crociere Foundation, an independently-run, non-profit organization generating a positive impact on the society and the marine environment, currently through 22 ongoing projects.*

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[1] <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CMR>