

Geneva, 27 July 2023

RE: ICRI Membership Application

Dear ICRI Secretariat,

I am writing on behalf of the MSC Foundation to pursue the possibility of our becoming an ICRI member, and provide some brief information herein in support of our application.

The MSC Group is a family-owned group with a 300-year seafaring tradition. It founded the MSC Foundation in 2018 to implement the Group's marine conservation, humanitarian and sustainable development commitments worldwide.

The MSC Foundation runs a large portfolio of programmes and initiatives which have impacted over 1,500,000 direct beneficiaries over the past 5 years. The Foundation's efforts are in pursuit of our mission to utilise the MSC Group's global reach and unique knowledge of the sea to take immediate action that contributes to protecting and nurturing the blue planet and all its people. Our vision is to restore the critical balance between people and nature within a generation, motivated by a deep sense of responsibility for the planet and its resources, conscious that we all have a duty to leave a better world for future generations.

Our efforts have involved us in active partnerships with research scientists and conservationists dedicated to coral reef conservation worldwide (please see Annexes to this letter). Indeed, the Foundation has worked with marine scientists and coral experts since its formation in 2018 to research, develop, refine, test and disseminate best practises to reverse the decline in coral reefs. In addition, we have partnered with the IUCN to update the coral Red List, as well as with other institutions to further the conservation of coral reefs worldwide.

Ther MSC Foundation is directly aligned with the ICRI's core objectives and promotes and incorporates integrated management approaches across its programme portfolio, which encompasses Environmental Conservation, Education, Community Support and Emergency Relief. The Foundation also engages directly with world-leading researchers to ensure that the highest quality science underpins its actions, which are all monitored using gold-standard approaches. Every partnership established and initiative implemented is continually reviewed and adapted as necessary to ensure high levels of efficiency and maximum impact.

It is for these combined reasons, that we are applying to join ICRI, and in so doing pledge to share our knowledge, learnings and, wherever possible, resources for the wider benefit of coral reef research and conservation. In return, we would very much value the opportunity to gain access to the wide and diverse expertise of the global ICRI community.

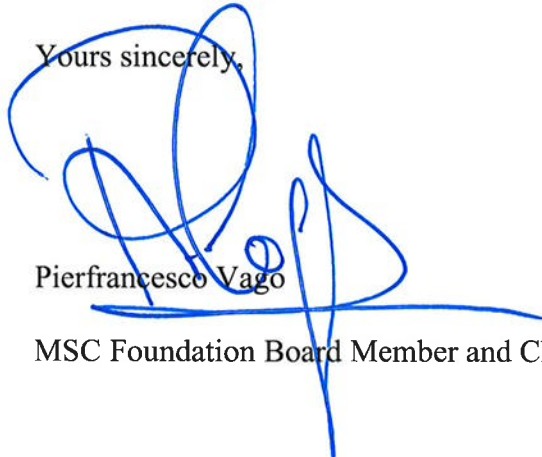
Please, therefore, consider this letter as our formal application to join the ICRI family. The Annexes provide additional information on some of our core coral-related projects as further

evidence of our deep and longstanding commitment to helping ensure that coral reefs have a future.

We believe our research and conservation activities are extensive and benefit from our global reach. We hope they will be of interest and use to the wider ICRI community. We also recognise the immense value of joining ICRI and sharing knowledge, expertise and opportunities with its members. We have carefully read through the membership rules and consider that we fulfil all the stated obligations. We therefore respectfully request that the Secretariat and wider membership give our application to join ICRI their kind consideration.

We would be pleased to answer any questions the ICRI community may have and look forward to hearing from the Secretariat on the status of our application.

Yours sincerely,



Pierfrancesco Vago

MSC Foundation Board Member and Chair of the Executive Committee

## **Annexes**

Notes for ICRI on the MSC Foundation's Coral-Related Activities (July 2023)  
Information on the MSC Group (July 2023)

### **Annex 1.0: Coral-Related Activities**

The MSC Foundation's flagship programme in the Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve in the Bahamas, which was recently designated a Mission Blue Hope Spot, uses a combination of research and direct conservation action to identify and implement best practises in resilient coral reef restoration. The Foundation is in the process of building a marine conservation centre on Ocean Cay which will serve as an asset to the Bahamas and the global coral community, prioritising conservation efforts while also delivering environmental education to hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. The core purpose of the centre is to coordinate activities focused on restoring and building the resilience of the coral reefs in the waters around Ocean Cay. Ocean Cay was a severely degraded industrial mining site until 2015, when MSC took a 100-year lease on the Cay with the aim of regenerating its ecosystems and biodiversity, including in 64-square miles of ocean surrounding the Cay. Ocean Cay's marine environment has been impacted by local and global pressures, and its coral reef habitat has been significantly degraded despite housing an abundance of marine life. A rapid environmental assessment in 2019 identified the need for restoration, and the MSC Foundation has continued to assess the environmental conditions over the past 5 years, while identifying missing foundational coral species, establishing coral nurseries and trialling

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restoration outplanting techniques within the areas identified as being most in need of coral restoration.

Our laboratory-based research activities are currently undertaken at our international partners' home Universities in the USA, and are focused on informing our efforts to restore genetically diverse and resilient coral reefs. This research includes assessment of the thermal vulnerability of coral-zooxanthellae genotypes and the larval competency of key coral species, as well as methods to improve coral outplanting success by reducing the vulnerability of early-stage corals. The initial results are extremely promising and will directly inform our restoration practises. Our research is thus very much impact-led with the aim of providing conservation solutions. The results will be reported to the scientific community as well as to the hundreds of thousands of visitors to Ocean Cay. Furthermore, the MSC Foundation has designated areas across the MSC cruise ship fleet where it has the capacity to house educational material in support of its conservation efforts. The Foundation's reach is therefore highly significant, ranging in the hundreds of thousands every year (minimally 2 million guests reached during cruise experiences all around the world).

Our research and conservation efforts dedicated to coral reefs extend well beyond Ocean Cay.

The MSC Foundation has recently established a partnership with the IUCN Coral Specialist Group to contribute to the pressing task of updating the coral Red List. We are acutely aware of the immense importance of this effort, which will enhance global knowledge of the overall wellbeing and susceptibility of coral reefs. This updated information will play a vital role in guiding conservation initiatives, while simultaneously raising awareness about the urgent need to protect these invaluable ecosystems.

The MSC Foundation has also recently formed a partnership with the Qatar Foundation for the conservation and restoration of endangered habitats off the Qatar coast, including mangroves, seagrass and coral reefs.

Our portfolio of programmes in addition includes detailed investigations of new approaches to sampling marine biodiversity using eDNA, operating in partnership with NatureMetrics from MSC cruise ships transiting through data-poor waters.

## **Annex 2.0: Additional Information on the MSC Group and MSC Foundation**

The Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) is a family-owned group with a 300-year seafaring tradition. Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, and privately owned, the MSC Group is a global business engaged in the transport and logistics sectors. The Group encompasses a Cargo Division with the world's largest container carrier MSC Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC), Terminal Investment Limited (TiL) and MEDLOG, a Cruise Division that includes MSC Cruises and Explora Journeys, and the Mediterranean ferry operators Grandi Navi Veloci (GNV) and SNAV. The MSC Group was founded in 1970 by Captain Gianluigi Aponte in Brussels, Belgium, and employs more than 150,000 people worldwide today.

Since 2018, the non-profit MSC Foundation has implemented the MSC Group's marine conservation, humanitarian and sustainable development commitments worldwide, utilising

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MSC's global reach and unique knowledge of the sea to protect and nurture our blue planet, its peoples and our shared cultural heritage.

Concentrating on four main focus areas – the Environment, Community Support, Education and Emergency Relief – the Foundation promotes the protection and sustainable management of ecosystems, empowers vulnerable communities around the world to realise their full potential, supports equitable and inclusive quality education to foster enduring individual and collective development, and helps disaster-struck populations toward recovery.