

Marine biodiversity

Beachcomber Resorts & Hotels launches a coral restoration and preservation project at Le Morne

In partnership with the NGO Reef Conservation and the European Union (EU), Beachcomber Resorts & Hotels has initiated a coral restoration and preservation programme: Land Based Coral Culture for Restoration, Conservation and Education. The official launch took place on Friday, 21 June 2024 at Paradis Beachcomber Golf Resort & Spa, in the presence of the EU Ambassador, His Excellency Oskar Benedikt, the Chairman of Reef Conservation, François Rogers, and the CEO of Beachcomber Group, Stéphane Poupinel de Valencé. This initiative involves creating a land-based coral nursery and setting up an educational space to raise awareness about marine biodiversity protection.

"Safeguarding coral reefs is crucial for Mauritius. Our destination, known for its beautiful lagoon and rich marine biodiversity, has seen rapid coral degradation in recent years. As a pioneer and leader in the Mauritian hotel industry, Beachcomber has a duty to act to preserve this marine ecosystem, which is vital to our industry. Our hotels, primarily beach resorts, are keenly aware of the impact of climate change and the importance of preserving marine biodiversity. This programme will allow us to take concrete actions to restore and regenerate corals, the pillars of the marine ecosystem. I'd like to thank our partners, Reef Conservation and the EU, for their invaluable support in bringing this initiative to life," stated Stéphane Poupinel de Valencé. He further pointed out that biodiversity preservation is one of the 8 pillars of Beachcomber's 52 Commitments Environmental and Social Charter. "This project also aligns perfectly with our group's EarthCheck certification. In fact, we're on track to obtain the EarthCheck Gold label for all our hotels this year," added the Beachcomber Group CEO.

The coral sanctuary project at Paradis Beachcomber Golf Resort & Spa arose from worrying observations. Mauritius has 243 km² of lagoon, protected by 150 m of reefs, home to 159 coral varieties and 340 fish species. These coral beds are now severely degraded and threatened, largely due to bleaching events in 1998, 2003, 2004, 2009, 2016 and 2018, linked to global warming. Live coral cover around the island has decreased from 50% in 2002 to about 20% in 2018. Recent studies also indicate that several coral species have become rare and are threatened with local extinction.

To address this situation and help reverse the trend, the Land Based Coral Culture for Restoration, Conservation and Education initiative aims to achieve four objectives: establish a coral inventory, create a sanctuary for these marine organisms, develop an educational centre, and create Voluntary Marine Conservation Zones to protect biodiversity.

The five-year project will be carried out in three phases. The first stage will involve creating a comprehensive coral inventory and identifying the most suitable areas for restoration. The second stage will include setting up a coral nursery at Paradis Beachcomber to cultivate rare corals before transplanting them onto natural reefs. Construction of the nursery will begin early next year and will be operational by 2026. The goal is to produce enough corals to restore at least 0.8 hectares of reefs over the next four years. The third component incorporates an educational dimension, with a centre at Paradis Beachcomber to raise awareness among communities and the public about the importance of coral reef systems. The centre will welcome hotel staff, guests, and local residents for awareness workshops on the importance of reefs.

The Chairman of Reef Conservation is delighted with this coral sanctuary project supported by the EU and Beachcomber. " *The project will be highly beneficial for coral repopulation, and will also play an important educational role, with the planned creation of a centre that will welcome schoolchildren, the local community and tourists for awareness-raising workshops on the importance of corals in the marine ecosystem, including their essential role in protecting against erosion* ", said François Rogers.

The EU Ambassador stressed that the protection of the environment and the efforts to combat the adverse effects of climate change are one of the priorities of the partnership between the European Union and Mauritius. " *Taking action to protect the environment and combat the effects of climate change is one of the priorities of our partnership with Mauritius. We are working alongside the Mauritian authorities to develop and implement environmental policies. In Mauritius, the European Union is also providing substantial support for local initiatives implemented by civil society. Mauritian NGOs do remarkable work, driven by committed, passionate individuals with excellent environmental expertise. Our financial support enables them to carry out numerous activities to protect biodiversity and restore terrestrial and marine ecosystems, as well as raise awareness among young people and mobilise local communities. I'm also pleased to see the private sector contributing to these local initiatives,*" emphasised His Excellency Oskar Benedikt.

Contact presse :

Sheila Ramsamy – sramsamy@beachcomber.com - T (230)6019377

Beachcomber House, Botanical Garden Street, Curepipe 74213, Mauritius