

## DUBAI TOURISM EXTENDS ITS SUPPORT TO LOCAL TURTLE REHABILITATION PROJECT

*Dubai Sustainable Tourism commends Jumeirah Group's conservation efforts with the release of 50 rehabilitated sea turtles into the Arabian Gulf at Jumeirah Al Naseem*



**Dubai, UAE; 19 November 2018:** Dubai's Department of Tourism & Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism) has joined hands with the Jumeirah Group in support of their conservation efforts across the emirate. In an event that took place on the beach in front of Jumeirah Al Naseem on Thursday 15 November, Jumeirah conservationists, with the support of Dubai Tourism, released 50 rehabilitated turtles back into the sea. Dubai Sustainable Tourism (DST), an ongoing initiative by Dubai Tourism to promote a more environmentally-friendly, greener future, supported the event as part of the ongoing Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Programme.

Under the programme, more than 50 critically endangered loggerhead, green and hawksbill turtles found injured on beaches around the UAE were nurtured back to health in Dubai. This included VIP turtle, 'Hope', who weighed over 120kg. 'Hope' is a young green turtle that arrived with serious injuries to her carapace (shell) and over the last two years the team of dedicated marine biologists at the Burj Al Arab Aquarium have worked to return her to her natural habitat. Rehabilitating more than 1,600 turtles to date, the Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Project (DTRP) looks after turtles handed in by animal enthusiasts after they are found washed up on the beach, often injured with some facing minimal chances of survival.



Speaking at the turtle release day on Thursday, **Ahmad AlFalasi, Chief Executive Officer, Corporate Services and Investment, Dubai Tourism** said: “Working in line with the vision of His Highness Sheikh

Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, to transform Dubai into a sustainable environmental destination, the Dubai Sustainable Tourism initiative is a key driver for ensuring the continual development of the sector, enabling hotels and hospitality establishments to take stock and evaluate their processes. An essential aspect of ensuring the realisation of our sustainable tourism strategy is the strength of Dubai's public-private sector partnerships which have paved the way for successful initiatives, the Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Project is an example of how Jumeirah Group's ongoing efforts are feeding into this vision."



Introduced to improve the sustainability of the tourism sector, DST contributes to the broader clean energy and sustainable development targets that Dubai has set out to achieve – also extending its support to conserving the emirate's wildlife. This includes the ongoing partnership with Emirates

Nature-WWF, the leading non-profit organisation established to conserve the nation's natural heritage.

Working closely with Dubai Tourism to ensure the environmental conservation of wildlife destinations across Dubai, Emirates Nature-WWF strives to help safeguard habitats, providing different species with environments they can rely on and thrive in. The organization collects data about the lives, threats and needs of vulnerable species from the coast to mountains, and creates a central database to assist Dubai Tourism in creating Protected Areas Networks.

**Yousuf Lootah, Executive Director – Tourism Development & Investments, Dubai Tourism said:**

“Dubai Tourism is playing an instrumental role in shaping the way forward for sustainable tourism. We are pleased to support Jumeirah Group's ‘Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Project’ to foster more environmentally friendly practices within Dubai's tourism sector, reflecting Dubai's role in protecting its wildlife and their homes. DST's success depends on its strong partnership with the sector's stakeholders, as we come together to address the cause and effects that compromise the health of ecosystems and focus our energies on conservation efforts aimed at saving and restoring imperiled wildlife populations.”

The Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Project (DTRP) is based at Burj Al Arab Jumeirah and Madinat Jumeirah and is run in collaboration with Dubai's Wildlife Protection Office, with essential veterinary support provided by the Dubai Falcon Clinic and the Central Veterinary Research Laboratory. The project has been running in its current form since 2004 and in 2011 alone, over 350 sick or injured sea turtles were treated by the DTRP after being washed up on the region's beaches.

**Peter Stubbs, Jumeirah Group Director of Health, Safety & Environment** said: “As we continue with our commitment to the Turtle project, we would like to thank members of the Dubai and wider UAE community for their continued support. We would also like to thank our hotel guests, who show such heartfelt interest in the great collaborative work that is done to support the project and the turtles of the gulf region.”

The DTRP is currently the only project of its kind in the Middle East and Red Sea region. Founded by Warren Baverstock, aquarium operations manager at the Burj Al Arab, in collaboration with Dubai's Wildlife Protection Office, the DTRP's aim is to help boost the number of turtles in the wild and research their movements by tagging them with satellite tracking devices.

Speaking at the event, **Warren Baverstock, Director of Aquarium Operations, Burj Al Arab, said:** “Since starting this project back in 2004 I have watched how these events have provided such memorable experiences to our guests and the community of Dubai. As a committed group of marine conservationists my team and I never tire of saving these incredible animals and we feel honored to be able to make a real difference in this region. Today’s release consists of turtles both young and old, with some surviving against very extreme odds which could not have been possible without the dedication and support from all that work on the Dubai Turtle Rehabilitation Project. We are a truly unique conservation project within the Middle East and considered as one of the largest sea turtle projects in the world. Today is an incredibly special event and I hope that all of the turtles we have released go on to lead long lives.”

Extending its support to leading industry stakeholders as they help safeguard wildlife and habitats, Dubai Tourism continues to carry out its sustainability initiative in collaboration with the following partners: Etihad ESCO, Dubai Carbon, Emirates Environmental Group, Emirates Wildlife Society – WWF and Emirates Green Building Council, as well as the Dubai Supreme Council of Energy, DEWA and Dubai Municipality as strategic partners.

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#### **About Dubai’s Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism)**

With the ultimate vision of positioning Dubai as the world’s leading tourism destination and commercial hub, Dubai Tourism’s mission is to increase the awareness of Dubai among global audiences and to attract tourists and inward investment into the emirate. Dubai Tourism is the principal authority for the planning, supervision, development and marketing of Dubai’s tourism sector. It markets and promotes the Emirate’s commerce sector, and is responsible for the licensing and classification of all tourism services, including hotels, tour operators and travel agents. Brands and departments within the Dubai Tourism portfolio include Dubai Business Events, Dubai Calendar, and Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment.

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