**MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Sandals Foundation and BRANCH Coral Foundation Join Forces to Restore Curaçao’s Coral Reefs**

**Curaçao – January 26, 2025–** The Sandals Foundation and local conservation group BRANCH Coral Foundation have joined forces to help strengthen the island’s coastal resilience through the implementation of the Coral Nursery Establishment Project.

Launched on January 25, the 2-year project seeks to establish and maintain a coral nursery, in close collaboration with the local government, together with the Sandals Royal Curaçao Resort, erecting five trees that will eventually house some 1,200 fragments of the endangered staghorn coral.

Across the Caribbean, coral reefs have seen increasing degradation due to a combination of local and global stressors, including climate change, overfishing, and pollution.

Jeffrey Speelman, General Manager at Sandals Royal Curaçao says, “The preservation of the beauty of our island relies on the protection of our coastal resources. The Coral Nursery Establishment Project seeks to strengthen our first line of defense in preserving the marine biodiversity on which we rely for our lives and livelihoods. It is aimed at building our island’s resilience to storms, and finally, this project, we hope will nurture a strong sense of stewardship amongst communities.”

BRANCH, which stands for Building Reefs And Nurseries for Coral Habitats manages four nursery locations on the island of Curaçao. In addition to growing more than 2,000 endangered coral fragments each year, they provide education to both the local and international community.

Director at BRANCH Coral Foundation, Max van Aalst says the partnership with the philanthropic arm of Sandals Resort was ideal.

“Our mission is to collaborate with multiple organizations on the island that wish to contribute to environmental preservation. We believe that Sandals Foundation would be an excellent partner in working towards these shared goals.”

Providing insight into how the nursery will operate, van Aalst explained, “Prior to installing the nursery, the ideal location is analyzed and approved by the local government. The nursery will have 400 coral fragments at any one time, with 80 attached to each of the five trees. Three hundred (300) will be outplanted every 6 months, eventually covering 100square meters of corals during our 2 year partnership.”

In addition to the growing 1,200 endangered coral fragments, the project will see to monthly maintenance conducted by BRANCH and the local dive shop, in collaboration with Sandals Royal Curaçao Watersports team members to ensure the corals' growth and health.

The team will also provide training opportunities for up to16 instructors from the partnering dive shop at Sandals Resorts to complete the PADI BRANCH Coral Restoration Course, enabling them to become certified instructors themselves.

“Sandals firmly believes in using the power of the tourism network to effect change. The PADI BRANCH Coral Restoration Course will make it possible for guests to play an active role in coral restoration efforts by booking this Specialty Dive Course to enjoy the incredible experience of outplanting corals and helping to preserve our marine space.” says Speelman.

Coral restoration is a key part of the Sandals Foundation’s marine conservation efforts across the Caribbean. In Jamaica, the philanthropic organization manages two marine sanctuaries where coral nurseries are operated. In Saint Lucia, together with CLEAR Caribbean, the team has trained local fishers and has sought to increase coral health at the Soufriere Marine Management Area, in Grenada BIOROCK structures and coral trees were installed in 2022 as part of the community-led coral restoration project with partner, Grenada Coral Reef Foundation, and in The Bahamas, the Sandals Foundation has partnered with the Reef Rescue Network, the largest coral restoration initiative in the country to support coral research and conservation.

--END--

**Image 1:** General Manager of Sandals Royal Curaçao, Jeffrey Speelman, speaks on behalf of Sandals Foundation sharing details of the 2 year coral partnership.

**Image 2:** Supporters and well-wishers at the 2nd edition of the BRANCH Coral Foundation Fundraiser held at Landhuis Fransia.