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***MSC CRUISES CELEBRATES THE COMING INTO SERVICE OF MSC MERAVIGLIA, THE SHIP THAT MARKS THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND PHASE OF THE COMPANY’S GROWTH***

*Nine million man-hours worked over a period of three years to deliver the biggest ship ever built by a European ship owner and the largest to come into service in 2017*

**Saint-Nazaire, France, May 31, 2017 –** Today at the STX France shipyard in Saint-Nazaire, France, MSC Cruises officially took delivery of [*MSC Meraviglia*](https://www.msccruisesusa.com/en-us/Discover-MSC/Cruise-Ships/MSC-Meraviglia.aspx?utm_source=PressRelease&utm_campaign=MSCMeravigliaFlagCeremony). During the ship’s flag ceremony, which pays tribute to centuries-old maritime tradition, the Company’s newest flagship received her official flag and blessings for good fortune. The Flag Ceremony was attended by Mr Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic and other high-level dignitaries from the French government.

At 171,598 GRT and with guest capacity of 5,714 (4,488 at double occupancy), *MSC Meraviglia* is both the biggest ship to ever be built by a European ship owner — MSC Cruises — and the biggest to come into service in 2017. She is also one of the six new ships due to come into service between 2017 and 2020 under the Company’s industry-unprecedented investment plan. Four of these six vessels will be built by STX France, further reinforcing a long-standing partnership that has already produced all 13 vessels in MSC Cruises’ fleet, allowing the Company to grow by 800% from 2003 to 2013.

MSC Cruises — the Swiss-based world’s largest privately-owned cruise line and brand market leader in Europe, South America and South Africa — estimates that its total investment at STX France from 2003 to 2020 will amount to over 7 billion euros (≈$7.8 billion USD), effectively making the Company the country’s number one foreign private investor (when it comes to export contracts.) Considering that the building of MSC Meraviglia required 1,700 workers per month (over 3,000 per month during peak periods) and nine million man hours, and that the construction work feeds into a network of more than 400 suppliers and subcontractors, the economic effects of this investment are not only widely felt across the country’s geography but also multiplied several times over.

Following her christening ceremony, which will take place in Le Havre on June 3, *MSC Meraviglia* will start her inaugural season sailing the Western Mediterranean.

*“MSC Meraviglia’s coming into service marks a key milestone in the history and future of our Company,”* said Pierfrancesco Vago, Executive Chairman of MSC Cruises. *“She represents the first realization of our long-term vision for further significant growth, which, in its first phase, culminated with MSC Cruises becoming two years ago the number one cruise brand across all of Europe, while on its way to further global growth.”*

*“Above all, we must celebrate the work of everyone: from all the workers of our partner STX France to MSC Cruises’ New Builds Team, each and every supplier and sub-supplier who has contributed to turning our vision into reality as well as everyone at MSC who has worked ashore and on board on this amazing project. A galvanized team of up to 3,000 workers a month and over 400 suppliers, built over the past three years the largest and most technologically advanced cruise ship ever constructed by a European ship owner. This is worth celebrating!”* added Vago.

*“Delivering a ship is always a time of great emotion for the shipyard: it is the culmination of three years of intense work for our employees and those of our partners, who have spared no effort to deliver on the exact date and in the quality conditions desired by our client MSC Cruises, this first ship of the Meraviglia class,”* said Laurent Castaing, CEO of STX France.  *“Benefiting from our advances in R&D from the "Ship of the Future" program supported by ADEME, this prototype is a great achievement that we can all be proud of and which allows us to look confidently at the next three ships.”*

During today’s flag ceremony, the shipyard’s pennant and the French flag were lowered, accompanied by the French national anthem, before Laurent Castaing, CEO of STX France, formally handed the ship over to MSC Cruises’ owner Gianluigi Aponte. Mr. Aponte then gave command of MSC Meraviglia to Master Raffaele Pontecorvo before the ship’s flag and MSC Cruises’ pennant were raised.

The honor of cutting the ribbon fell to the ceremony’s godmother, Ms. Zoe Africa Vago, daughter of MSC Cruises’ Executive Chairman and Alexa Aponte-Vago, MSC Group’s CFO. After the traditional breaking of the bottle of champagne, three blasts from the ship’s siren signalled the end of the ceremony.

*MSC Meraviglia*, the 13th cruise ship to join MSC Cruises’ fleet since its inception in 2003, is 1,034 feet long, 141 feet wide and 214 feet high, with 171,598 GRTs. She is able to travel up to 22.7 knots and has been designed to operate in all seasons and to be able to call in most of the world’s international cruise ports, offering the widest and most exciting range of marine as well as onboard features of any MSC Cruises ship to-date.

After the closing of the flag ceremony, *MSC Meraviglia* is due to set sail towards the Port of Le Havre for her christening ceremony on June 3. She will then begin her first sailing along the Atlantic coast, calling at Vigo (Spain), Lisbon (Portugal), all the way to the Mediterranean, calling in Barcelona (Spain), Marseille (France) and eventually Genoa (Italy). She will commence the first regular 7-night itinerary on June 11, sailing from Genoa on to Naples (Italy), Messina (Italy), Valletta (Malta), Barcelona, Marseille and back to Genoa on June 18.

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**About MSC Cruises**

MSC Cruises is the number one cruise line in Europe, South America and South Africa, and sails year-round in the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. Seasonal itineraries cover northern Europe, the Atlantic Ocean, Cuba and the French Antilles, South America, southern Africa, and Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sir Bani Yas.

In 2014, MSC Cruises launched an investment plan to support the second phase of its growth through the order of two ships of the Meraviglia Class and two others of the Seaside Class (plus an option for a third one) and in February 2016, confirmed the existing options to build a further two now Meraviglia-Plus Class ships with an even greater capacity. In April 2016 this rose to €9 billion (nearly $10 billion) with the announcement of signing of the slot reservation agreement to build a further four ships, each with next-generation LNG propulsion technology. MSC Cruises is the first global cruise line brand to develop an investment plan of this length and magnitude, that between 2017 and 2020 will have already delivered six new cruise ships.

The MSC Cruise experience embodies the elegant side of the Mediterranean to create unique and unforgettable emotions for guests, through discovery of the world’s cultures, beauties and tastes. Its fleet comprises 13 modern ships: MSC Meraviglia, MSC Preziosa; MSC Divina; MSC Splendida; MSC Fantasia; MSC Magnifica; MSC Poesia; MSC Orchestra; MSC Musica; MSC Sinfonia; MSC Armonia; MSC Opera and MSC Lirica.

MSC Cruises feels a deep responsibility for the environments in which it operates, and was the first company ever to earn the Bureau Veritas "7 Golden Pearls" for superior management and environmental stewardship. In 2009, MSC Cruises began an enduring partnership with UNICEF to support various programmes assisting children worldwide. So far, more than €6.5 million (about $7 million) has been collected in voluntary guest donations. More information at http://www.mscpressarea.com.

**About Master Pontecorvo**

Captain Pontecorvo started his career with MSC Cargo in 1982 when he embarked on board MSC Corinna as deck cadet. In 1990, he embarked for the first time on a passenger ship as 2nd Officer and from 1995 to 2000 he held the rank of Staff Captain. In 2000 he was promoted to Captain of MSC Monterey and MSC Cargo ships, where he remained until 2004 after a total of 6 embarks. In 2004 he choose to permanently command passenger ships and in 2010 he was given the command of MSC Splendida. Captain Pontecorvo is in his 12th season of commands on MSC passengers vessels and has commanded all classes of the MSC Cruises' fleet.

**ABOUT STX FRANCE**

With more than 150 years of industrial history, STX France, which is 33.33% owned by the French government, offers its expertise in managing of large projects, from the design to the delivery and maintenance of highly complex vessels. In parallel with its shipbuilding business, the company also focusses on new Offshore, Renewable Marine Energy and Oil & Gas markets to help recreate value and return to growth dynamics, beyond its passenger ships building activities.

More information on: [www.stxfrance.com](http://www.stxfrance.com)