



# Clean Blue Maldives

January 2019

## Press Release

### Three Islands in Baa Agree to End Open Burning, in Radical Shift Towards Clean Waste Management in Maldives

**January 2019, Soneva Fushi, Baa atoll:** Maahlos, Dharavandhoo, and Kihaadhoo islands in Baa atoll have pledged to end the open burning of island waste, in a radical shift towards eco-friendly waste management.

The pledge was made by the Presidents of the Maahlos, Dharavandhoo, and Kihaadhoo island councils, during a waste management workshop held at Soneva Fushi resort from 5-8 January.

In order to end open burning of waste, which poses a health and environmental hazard and damages tourism, each island will create an 'eco-centro' waste-to-wealth centre that will sort, recycle and reuse island waste.

The *eco-centro* waste-to-wealth model was pioneered at Soneva Fushi, which is located close to Maahlos. At the resort, food and organic waste, metals, and bottles are chipped, ground down or composted, and turned into things of economic value, such as concrete building blocks and fertilizer. Plastic waste is either recycled or used to create useful new objects.

Soneva has pledged funds from its *Soneva Save our Seas* programme to support creating the *eco-centros* on Maahlos, Dharavandhoo, and Kihaadhoo. The first *eco-centro* is due to open in Maahlos this summer. Open burning in Maahlos is expected to end shortly after the island's *eco-centro* is fully operational.

During the January workshop, the island council presidents helped forge a new partnership between their islands, Soneva Fushi, and Common Seas, an international NGO dedicated to reducing marine plastic pollution. The new partnership, called "*Clean Blue Maldives*", sets a course for Baa atoll, and eventually the Maldives, to become a global leader in halting ocean plastic pollution. Senior officials from the President's Office, who attended the workshop, took note of the partnership and the plans to open the three *eco-centros*.

Plastic waste pollution is a huge problem in the Maldives, with plastic bottles littering beaches, plastic bags smothering coral reefs, and plastic detritus killing marine life.

More than 280,000 plastic water bottles are used daily in Male', while 104 million non-biodegradable plastic bags were imported in the Maldives last year. The President's Office, and other government ministries and state-owned enterprises, recently banned the use of single-use plastic bottles.

Other countries are also taking action against single use plastic. Kenya has recently banned single use plastic bags. Vanuatu has pledged to be the first Pacific country to ban plastic bottles and bags. France will bring in a total ban on plastic cups, plates, and cutlery from 2020.

Soneva, which operates two resorts in the Maldives, recycles or reuses 90% of their waste and has a zero waste target. Soneva replaced branded bottled water ten years ago in favour of producing drinking water on site in reusable glass bottles, which has prevented the production of 1,500,000 single use plastic bottles.

Sonu Shivdasani, CEO and Founder of Soneva, said: "If we work together, we are sure we can create the right environment for the Maldives to be the world's most progressive country on single use plastic. If we project forwards just a few years, we can see that all islands will have thriving waste-to-wealth centres; there will be no plastic bags; no plastic straws; islands will have their own water bottling plants; no guesthouses or resorts will serve water in single use bottles. We will truly be a *Clean Blue Maldives*."

Jo Royle, Managing Director and Founder of Common Seas, said: "Dealing with the current volume of single use plastic waste is expensive for communities to manage, off-putting for tourists, and harmful to fish stocks. The items most commonly found on Maldivian beaches are plastic bottles, disposable nappies, cigarette butts, straws and plastic bags, so we already know where start. We are excited to work with *Clean Blue Maldives* to collectively and urgently solve this problem."

#### **Notes to editors:**

Soneva is a pioneering family of hospitality properties and products, offering holistic Encounters in luxurious and inspiring environments –from world class hotels to outstanding natural locations. Combining luxury with a conscientious approach to sustainability and the environment, and proactively changing the nature of hospitality, it delivers intuitive service and meaningful experiences to the guests. Soneva currently owns and operates Soneva Fushi, Soneva Jani and Soneva in Aqua in the Maldives and Soneva Kiri in Thailand.

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**Common Seas** is a UK-based not-for-profit dedicated to halting the threats of marine plastic pollution. The Clean Blue Alliance, an initiative founded by Common Seas, supports islands to prevent plastic waste leaking into the ocean. Jo Royle, Founder and Director of Common Seas, is internationally recognised as one of Europe's leading female ocean yacht skippers and is one of the few sailors to have circumnavigated South Georgia in the Southern Ocean. Jo co-designed and skippered the Plastiki, a 60-foot catamaran made out of 12,500 reclaimed plastic bottles and other recycled PET plastic and waste products, that was sailed from San Francisco to Sydney in 2010 to draw attention to the plastic waste problem.

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