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**The TCI Government Reaffirms Their Commitment to the Environmental Charter**

4 March 2014, Providenciales, TCI. At a private dinner held last night with environmentalist and conservationist, Fabien Cousteau and the management of the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund at Grace's Cottage on Providenciales, the Governor of the TCI, His Excellency, Peter Beckingham, the Premier of the TCI, the Honorable Dr. Rufus Ewing and the Leader of the Opposition, the Honorable Sharlene Cartwright-Robinson reaffirmed their commitment as outlined in the 2001 Environmental Charter to protecting the marine environment of the "Beautiful by Nature" Turks & Caicos Islands.

Mr. Cousteau was visiting the TCI to assist the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund in their fundraising efforts and in their efforts to educate people about the contribution the marine environment makes to the economic health of the islands. "Coral reefs and marine environments in general are threatened worldwide," said Mr. Cousteau, "but the TCI has some of the healthier reefs that I have seen in the tropical Atlantic and Caribbean. They are an asset that should be protected not only to protect the economy of these islands, but also to protect them for your children's enjoyment and the future well-being of this country."

"Development throughout the TCI will continue, but the asset that makes these islands attractive to developers and tourists is the healthy marine environment," said Don Stark, Chairman of the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund. "We are pleased that the leadership of the TCI recognize this and support sustainable development. We look forward to continuing to work with the TCIG on the many

projects we have initiated and future projects that will promote sustainable development and the protection of the marine environment."

#### ABOUT FABIEN COUSTEAU AND MISSION 31

**Fabien Cousteau** is an oceanographic explorer, conservationist and documentary filmmaker. As the first grandson of Jacques-Yves Cousteau, Fabien spent his early years aboard his famous grandfather's ships, Calypso and Alcione; and learned how to scuba dive on his fourth birthday. Today, Fabien continues to fulfill his family's legacy to protect and preserve the planet's extensive and endangered marine inhabitants and habitats ([www.fabiencousteau.org](http://www.fabiencousteau.org)). Fabien's nonprofit organization, Plant A Fish is designed to empower communities and children to help restore local water ecosystems through the healthy "replanting" of key marine species with the ultimate goal of planting 1 billion "fish" worldwide ([www.plantafish.org](http://www.plantafish.org)). Fabien's Mission 31 expedition, commencing in 2014, will that break new ground in ocean exploration and also coincides with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a monumental legacy left by his grandfather, who is also credited with creating the first underwater habitats for humans and leading a team of ocean explorers on the first attempt to live and work underwater. Mission 31 will go deeper, longer and further while broadcasting each moment on multiple channels exposing the world to the adventure, risk and mystique of what lies beneath ([www.mission-31.com](http://www.mission-31.com)).

#### ABOUT TCRF

Founded in 2010, the Turks & Caicos Reef Fund is an all volunteer-run organization that provides funding for education, research and conservation programs to individuals, organizations and agencies that help to preserve and protect the marine environment of the Turks & Caicos Islands. Our goal is to have at least 85% of all funds raised through voluntary contributions from divers and snorkelers visiting the Turks & Caicos Islands directed to the Fund's programs.

Anyone wishing to donate or assist the TCRF in any way can contact them through their website, [www.TCReef.org](http://www.TCReef.org). Scuba divers visiting the islands are encouraged to make a \$10 donation through the purchase of a dive tag that can be attached to their dive gear to show their support. Snorkelers visiting the islands can show their support through the \$5 purchase of a pink or blue silicone wristband. A complete list of outlets for TCRF merchandise can be found on the organization's website.

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