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2019 SeaKeepers Asia Awards Dinner : Honorees and Programmes in the Region

Singapore –April 12th, 2019

The International SeaKeepers Society, Asia Awards Dinner 2019 was hosted by Dinner Chairs Julian and Sandra Chang, to recognize Dr Achier Chung and the Gili Shark Conservation Project for their extraordinary efforts and commitment towards marine conservation. The event organised by the Asian arm of The International SeaKeepers Society was held at the One°15 Marina Club, Sentosa in Singapore.

Themed “Shifting into Higher Gear”, the evening was well attended by over 220 invited guests coming together in the name of conservation. A mix of nationalities made up of Ambassadors and representatives from the British High Commission, Hungary, Russia, Philippines, Switzerland; as well as leaders from commercial companies; scientists and individuals interested in marine conservation were in attendance.

Guest Speakers, Dr Poh Seng Chee & Dr James Tan – from the School of Marine & Environmental Science, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, presented their initial research and analysis findings done for the UMT Ocean Monitoring Project, a collaboration with SeaKeepers Asia. This citizen science data collection project involves water sampling around the waters of Peninsular Malaysia and is undertaken by private vessels which form part of the SeaKeepers Discovery Yachts programme.

The recipient of the first ever International SeaKeepers Society, SeaKeeper of Malaysia Award, was presented to Dr Achier Chung. Well known as a non-government appointed marine biologist, Dr Chung runs the only privately managed conservation area in Sabah - Sugud Islands Marine Conservation Area (SIMCA) which is gazetted as a Category II Conservation Area under The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Protected Area Management Category. There, Dr Chung manages and runs marine research work as well as the conservation area enforcement operations. These collaborative efforts have reduced cases of encroachment by fishermen into protected areas and no-take zones. Additionally, the long-term monitoring of marine conservation activities has shown an increase in the number and diversity of fish species, a wide range of coral cover, and more marine turtles landing and nesting.

The SeaKeepers Asia Achievement Award was presented to The Gili Shark Conservation Project – a grassroots conservation project on the Gili Islands in Indonesia. This award seeks to recognize an organization in Asia, that demonstrates a responsibility towards the health of Asia’s marine environment because of who they are and what they do to take a lead role.

The Gili Shark Conservation Project was recognized for their direct conservation management to improve the protection of sharks found around the Gili Islands, and to create a legacy of conservation around the islands. The unique program of the Gili Shark Conservation Project allows people from all over the world to experience and learn about sharks first hand while making a real difference with their data collection efforts. The dedication and integration into the local community is evident in their initiative Plastic Free Paradise.

Another key part of SeaKeepers Society's success as highlighted during the evening, is the support received from their Programme Partners. Friends of SeaKeepers Appreciation Awards were presented to the Tropical Marine Science Institute of Singapore, National University of Singapore; Our Singapore Reefs; Laguna Redang Island Resort and Oliver and Gael Burlot in acknowledgement and with thanks.

Tony Gilbert, Program Director, The International SeaKeepers Society, in his speech informed that the theme "Shifting into Higher Gear" is one which accurately describes the dynamic in 2019 as SeaKeepers moves into its 21st year with the many new initiatives at hand.

Gail Tay, Director of Operations & Programmes, Asia, in her address, spoke about their 2019 programming activities in Asia moving from Singapore and Malaysia into Thailand and Indonesia.

The high points of which includes a formalization of their collaboration with the Universiti Malaysia Terengganu with a Memorandum of Understanding that will be signed in July and an addition to the existing Coral rescue and rehabilitation programmes in Singapore and Redang.

Coral restoration efforts are becoming increasingly important, as more knowledge is constantly revealed about the coral reefs and the increasing threat of coral bleaching brought along by global warming. The International SeaKeepers Society, Asia announced that they will provide project support towards the new coral restoration initiative of the Gili Shark Conservation Project.

SeaKeepers would like to thank the following major sponsors for their event and programming support:

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About The International SeaKeepers Society

The International SeaKeepers Society is a non-profit organization focusing on the health of the world's oceans and climate. SeaKeepers works with the boating and yachting community to take advantage of their unique potential in order to further marine research and to raise awareness about the issues our oceans face. The International SeaKeepers Society acts as a global catalyst working with governments, scientists, industry, and other marine organizations to further its mission and to support sensible, achievable marine protection and restoration.

The SeaKeepers DISCOVERY Yachts Program is our foremost initiative and has been at the heart of programming in accomplishing our mission and goals. These private vessels have provided an incredible platform for scientific research, instrument deployment and educational outreach to take place. The SeaKeepers team work closely with yacht owners and crew to coordinate research and outreach activities that reflect the yacht owner's ocean-related interests.

Our motto is Research, Educate, Protect and Restore achieved through our programming streams which include: Scientists led expeditions; instrument deployments, educational outreach and community engagement.

The International SeaKeepers Society established SeaKeepers Asia in 2016. This expansion with a new chapter in Asia is under the leadership of Julian Chang.

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