



29 March 2007

PRESS RELEASE

(Issued by Mercy Ships Spain)

WORLD'S LARGEST CHARITY HOSPITAL SHIP SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETES SEA TRIALS.

The world's largest non-military hospital ship, the *Africa Mercy*, has successfully completed 'sea trials' enabling it to sail on its inaugural trip to Africa.

The former Danish rail ferry, has been converted into a state-of-the-art hospital ship at a cost of around 45 million euros and will provide free healthcare and community development services to the poorest people of Africa.

The 'sea trials' took place in the North Sea under the supervision of Bureau Veritas – an international marine certification organisation that tests systems on ships.

All systems onboard were checked and the trials took approximately 24 hours led by the ship's Captain and his technical crew.

The *Africa Mercy* will return to Blyth for another four weeks where hospital supplies and materials will be loaded. The ship is now free to start final preparations for its first field service in Africa where more than 400 volunteer crew will provide free medical care, capacity building, relief aid and community development programmes to the people of war-torn Liberia.

The *Africa Mercy* is the fourth ship to be operated by the international charity, Mercy Ships, which has provided more than 500 million euros worth of services since its inception in 1978.

Statistics include treating more than 200,000 people in village medical clinics; performing more than 26,000 surgeries and 162,000 dental treatments; and completing more than 800 construction, agriculture and water development projects.

Don Stephens, Founder of Mercy Ships, said: "Every ship has life savers, but this ship is a life saver in itself to thousands who wait for her arrival in Africa. Without this ship so many of the poorest of the poor face lives without hope. This huge white hospital ship docked in an African port is a strong symbol of hope."

The director of Mercy Ships Spain, Ricardo Menzies, said: "The *Africa Mercy* has a greater capacity than the three previous ships combined. There is tremendous need in the world and we hope that this will be the first of a number of ships that will enable us to help an increasing number of people each year".

All the crew on board the *Africa Mercy* will be volunteer professionals from around the world. Doctors, dentists, nurses, community developers, teachers, builders, cooks, seamen, engineers, and many others will donate their time and skills to the effort.

For further information on Mercy Ships, please visit our website at www.nde.es

END OF PRESS RELEASE

For further information, please contact:

In Spain: Ricardo Menzies (+34) 630 732 000 – E-mail: menziesr@nde.es

In the UK: Lois Boyle at Media House on 0141 220 6040 or 07803 204119.

Note to Editors:

1. Hi-res photographs of the *Africa Mercy* are available - please contact the Mercy Ships office in Barcelona or Media House UK on (+44) 141 220 6040.
2. A media day will take place on board the *Africa Mercy* on Tuesday 24th April in Newcastle prior to its inaugural sail. Further details will be announced nearer the time but if you wish to attend, please contact Media House on 0141 220 6040 or lois@mediahouse.co.uk
3. Mercy Ships, a global charity, is the leader in using hospital ships to deliver free world-class healthcare and community development services. Mercy Ships brings hope and healing to the forgotten poor, mobilising people and resources worldwide.
4. The story of Mercy Ships is told in *Ships of Mercy*, published by Hodder & Stoughton UK and Thomas Nelson US and is available at: www.shipsofmercy.org
5. **AFRICA MERCY – FACTS**
 - Formerly '*Droning Ingrid*'
 - 16,572 tonnes
 - 474 berths for crew
 - 78 bed ward
 - 6 operating theatres
 - X-ray room
 - CT scanner
 - Dental clinic
 - Pharmacy
 - School – up to 60 pupils
 - Length: 499 feet
 - Breadth: 78 feet