

EMBARGOED UNTIL 14 DECEMBER / 00:30 CST



## Don Stephens, Founder of Mercy Ships, Receives Lifetime Achievement Award from African Dignitaries at The Visionary Leaders Annual Summit

Mercy Ships Canada is pleased to congratulate Don Stephens, founder of our international faith-based organization, for his Lifetime Achievement Award at the Visionary Leaders' Summit. Don is a leader who answered the call to create an international mission of providing free surgeries and other medical procedures to those who cannot afford, or do not have access to medical services.

His vision of asking volunteers to donate their time to help support the important work of Mercy Ships is truly exceptional and inspirational. Here in Canada we have many volunteers each year serving on our two hospital ships, The Global Mercy and The Africa Mercy. This includes surgeons, specialists, trainers, nurses, mariners, ships crews, administrators, and many other professions needed support our floating hospitals.

**WASHINGTON DC, USA December 15, 2022** – A Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Don Stephens, founder of Mercy Ships this past weekend at the opening event of the GE7 Africa Visionary Leaders Annual Summit, held in Washington DC. This award was presented by H.E. Rania Al-Mashat, Minister of International Cooperation of Government of Egypt. Earlier this year the government of Egypt had provided free passage through the Suez Canal for the newest Mercy Ship, the *Global Mercy*® on the vessel's maiden voyage.

"Africa is doing better because people from all parts of the world have joined forces to bring change and Mercy Ships is part of this transition," stated Amy Sarr Fall, organizer of the event. "This event aims to galvanize change makers and bring hope. The awards highlight great initiatives and pay tribute to the main actors behind their success."

Dr. Pierre M'Pelé, Mercy Ships ambassador for Africa, conveyed a special heartfelt message sung by a dozen African singers who represented the voice of the African people: "We thank Mercy Ships, we thank Don Stephens for the dignity and hope given back to thousands of our brothers and sisters."

On receipt of the award, Don Stephens said, "On behalf of Mercy Ships and all of the crew who have served on our ships in the past 40 years, we thank you. We now have two world-class hospital ships serving the people of Africa while also training medical professionals. Our mission is to provide hope and healing to the world's forgotten poor.

Stephens concluded, "Our overarching goal is transformational development. We are in a room tonight filled with a group of transformational leaders. A room of people passionate about various causes. We all have huge responsibilities. Let us all be transformational. I have a favorite African proverb, and I

always enjoy concluding with it: If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. Let's go far together."

### **30 years of Partnership in Africa**

Since 1990 to this day, from Lomé in Togo to Dakar in Senegal, the international humanitarian organization Mercy Ships deployed its hospital ships and conducted 33 missions in 14 African countries to provide first-class surgical operations, build medical capacity and foster sustainable development in countries with limited access to surgical care. Its programs provide comprehensive support to countries striving to make health care accessible to all.

Over more than three decades, Mercy Ships has focused its efforts on Africa, working closely with African countries to help them strengthen their health systems, improving skills and training, and infrastructure. Volunteer professionals have performed more than 108,000 transformative surgeries, more than 520,000 dental procedures on nearly 200,000 patients, trained more than 50,000 health professionals, and nearly 7,000 trainers, and supported more than 1,100 agricultural and infrastructure renovation projects.

In partnership with African Heads of State, Mercy Ships also facilitated the Dakar Declaration on Access to Quality Surgical, Obstetric and Anesthetic Care in Africa by 2030 with the hope to see the Africa Union endorse this milestone declaration towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal related to health and wellbeing.

### **Focus on Emerging Africa**

The objective of this gathering, labeled 'The Africa Chapter' and taking place as a side event to the US Leader's Summit, according to GE7's director Amy Sarr Fall, is to improve the narrative on Africa and demonstrate through well advanced initiatives, public-private partnerships, and infrastructure projects, that the continent is on an emerging path.

More than 100 African leaders including financial, green energy, and communication gathered at the summit's invitation-only high-level event held in the nation's capital to discuss key challenges to sustainable development.

### **ABOUT MERCY SHIPS**

Global health for the last two decades has focused on individual diseases, while surgical care in low-resource countries has not received the attention it needs. Lack of surgical care results in almost 17 million deaths annually.

Mercy Ships is an international faith-based organization that operates hospital ships to deliver free, world-class healthcare services, medical capacity building, and health system strengthening to those with little access to safe surgical care. Since 1978, Mercy Ships has worked in more than 55 countries, with the last three decades focused entirely on partnering with African nations. Each year, volunteer

professionals from over 60 countries serve on board the world's two largest non-governmental hospital ships, the *Africa Mercy*® and the *Global Mercy*™. Professionals such as surgeons, dentists, nurses, health trainers, cooks, and engineers dedicate their time and skills to the cause. Mercy Ships has offices in 16 countries and an Africa Bureau. For more information, visit [www.mercyships.ca](http://www.mercyships.ca) and follow us @MercyShips on social media.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Kornelia Eisfeld  
Manager Marketing and Donor Relations  
Mercy Ships Canada  
[Kornelia.eisfeld@mercyships.ca](mailto:Kornelia.eisfeld@mercyships.ca)