

# STARWOOD

HOTELS & RESORTS WORLDWIDE, INC.

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Le Méridien Al Aqah Beach Resort

East Coast Marines Life Rejuvenated by Le Meridien Al Aqah's Reef Block Structure Project



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## East Coast Marine Life Rejuvenated By Le Méridien Al Aqah's Reef Block Structure Project

Press Release



09 February 2010  
*Al Aqah Reef flourishes through partnership with Al Boom Diving*

The clear waters off Le Méridien Al Aqah Beach Resort have become home to numerous fish species, after the introduction of 35 man-made reef structures, which were deployed as part of an international project to rehabilitate the world's ocean reef ecosystems and to protect the natural reef systems.

The extensive project began in June 2009 with 14 reefs and today was inspected by divers from Al Boom Diving and volunteers from the resort. To date, more than AED 100,000 has been invested in the project, going towards importing the reef block structure moulds, fabrication, transport, deployment, and related activities. Al Boom divers, assisted by staff from the resort, have also donated their time.

"This project reflects our dedication to the research into aquatic life on the East Coast and is a key platform to our environmental program," said Patrick Antaki, General Manager, Le Méridien

Al Aqah.

"The effects are already visible and we are laying the foundation to sustain marine life for future generations. The artificial reef is already a viable fish reef. All of the needed plankton and plant life is growing on the reef and in time we hope to see signs of corals," added Antaki.

The reef block structures are artificial reef modules placed in the ocean to form reef habitat. They take about five years to mature. Under Al Boom's project, they have been placed several hundred meters away from the private beach at Le Méridien Al Aqah to create a house reef. Al Boom provided two dive speedboats to go diving on the Al Aqah Reef today, offering visitors free snorkelling.

"Diving is a great recreational activity, but it must go further in order to foster understanding of the importance of protecting the delicate marine environment. Al Boom Diving is involved with several scientific initiatives and the success of the reef block structure project could not have been achieved without the support of Le Méridien Al Aqah," said Simon Tambling, Managing Partner, Al Boom Diving.

The 35 structures have been donated by various organizations including Fujairah Municipality, Eco, a recycle plastic company in Jebel Ali; and FNCT and SJI Cement companies. Other project sponsors include Rip Curl, Lootah Group, and Project Aware.

Al Boom Diving presented the reef block structure project at the Dubai International Boat Show in April 2009. The complex project involves moving the reef block structures, which each weigh 500kg to 2.5 tonnes, by crane to the water where they are placed on lift bags and floated into the ocean by boats. Online updates are available at the Al Boom Diving Reefball Project Group on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#group.php?gid=100376464024&ref=ts>

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### About Le Méridien

Le Méridien brand, currently represented by approximately 120 properties in 52 countries, was acquired by Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide in November 2005. With close to 70 percent of its properties located in Europe, Asia-Pacific, Africa and the Middle East, Le Méridien provides a strong international complement to Starwood's primarily North American holdings. Plans call for dynamic expansion of Le Méridien-branded hotels within the next five years, concentrating in the U.S., Latin America, and Asia-Pacific, including destinations such as India, Thailand and China. For more information, please visit [www.lemeridien.com](http://www.lemeridien.com)

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