

21/2015 | **Under Embargo until Monday, May 4, 2015, 5 pm GMT !**

“Deutscher Meerespreis 2015” for Captain Nicholas Sloane South African salvage specialist receives the German Ocean Award for successful recovery of cruise liner Costa Concordia close to the Italian coast

04.05.2015/Kiel. The recovery of cruise liner Costa Concordia from its site of stranding near the Italian island of Giglio was one of the longest, most complicated and most expensive undertakings of its kind in history. A team of more than 500 salvage workers, led by the South African specialist Nicholas Sloane, worked on site for more than 30 months. The successful completion of this operation prevented an environmental catastrophe in the affected part of the Mediterranean. To honor this extraordinary accomplishment, Captain Nicholas Sloane will be awarded the “Deutscher Meerespreis 2015” – the German Ocean Award on May 4, offered by the GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel and the Deutsche Bank AG. The award comes with a prize money of 20,000 Euros.

Captain Nicholas (Nick) Sloane is a professional optimist. However complicated the task, he will believe in a successful outcome. While doing so, he is always prepared to face potential risks, which are abundant in his trade. Nick Sloane is sought after worldwide as a specialist in salvaging. Whenever a ship is on fire, runs onto a rock in storm or ends up disabled and drifting, the 54-year-old South African's phone will ring. So it did in the case of Costa Concordia, which lay stranded close to the Italian island of Giglio. On 13 January 2012, the roughly 300-m-long cruise ship ran aground and sank, coming to rest on a rock, listing at a 65-degree angle. 32 of the more than 4200 passengers and crew lost their lives, among them 12 Germans. During the following 30 months, Sloane organized and managed one of the longest, most complicated and – at a cost of approximately 1.5 billion euros – most expensive salvage operations in history, involving more than 500 workers. The operation ended successfully on 27 July 2014, when the stabilized wreck arrived at the port of Genoa.

This venture, under the cautious leadership of Nick Sloane, succeeded among its other merits in preventing a vast environmental catastrophe in the sensitive marine area around the Italian island, which is also a popular holiday destination.

To honor this accomplishment, Captain Nick Sloane is awarded the “Deutscher Meerespreis 2015”, which comes with a prize money of 20,000 Euros. He will be presented with this German ocean award, offered by the GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel and the Deutsche Bank AG, on May 4 under the auspices of Torsten Albig, Prime Minister of the German federal state of Schleswig-Holstein. The ceremonial act will be celebrated at the premises of GEOMAR and attended by approximately 300 invited guests, amongst them the mayor of Kiel and the ambassadors of South Africa and Italy.

"The Costa Concordia disaster reminds us of how fast the effects of human error may strike and how devastating they can be, especially on the oceans" says GEOMAR director Professor Peter Herzig. "Not only has Nick Sloane led his team to successfully mastering a huge technical challenge, he has also prevented tremendous environmental damage to the Italian coastal area", he continues – an aspect, he concludes, which was of special concern to GEOMAR as a marine research institution.

Burkhard Baum, member of the regional management of Deutsche Bank AG for the region of Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein, joins in recognizing the significance of Sloane's salvage operation. "Sloane's outstanding achievement – next to his expertise – is the capacity to successfully lead such a large team and to successfully conclude an undertaking like this, in spite of all difficulties involved. My highest respect for this achievement!"

According to Torsten Albig, prime minister of the Federal State of Schleswig-Holstein and patron of the "Deutscher Meerespreis", Sloane's achievements cannot be overpraised: "In spite of high-quality training and high safety standards, there will never be such a thing as 100% safety in shipping, as human error is frequently the cause of naval accidents. It is therefore good to know that there are experts like Nick Sloane whose utmost personal commitment will keep the consequences of such disasters within certain limits."

The laudation by Franco Gabrielli, director of the Italian department of emergency management, as read out by the Italian ambassador Pietro Benassi, especially recognized that the collaboration with Nicholas Sloane and his team had taken place in a markedly pleasant and professional atmosphere. The coordination of the large number of public authorities and companies involved had worked exceptionally well. The Italian government was very grateful that apart from the lamentable loss of 32 lives the damage caused by the disaster had been kept within limits.

As a first reaction, Captain Nicholas Sloane said: "I feel greatly honored to accept this award, also as a representative of all members of the salvation business. I give my expressed thanks to all those involved, but also to my family, which bore my long absence with a lot of patience and understanding", Sloane continues.

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