



Media information, Martinique/Basel, 2 February 2007

sun21 becomes first motorized vessel to cross the Atlantic without fuel

Basel, Switzerland, February 2, 2007 – Today sun21, the solar powered catamaran developed and sponsored by the Swiss Transatlantic21 Association, arrived in the harbour of Le Marin, Martinique. The arrival at 3 pm local time is an historic feat and makes “sun21” the first motorized vessel to cross the Atlantic without using a drop of fuel. The achievement serves as a powerful example of responsible energy use in practice. It also is impressive evidence of the suitability of solar technology for high-sea voyages. sun21 will travel on with its final destination being New York this May.

The arrival in Martinique coincides with the alarming publication of the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) fourth assessment report "Climate Change 2007," which asserts climate change is “very likely” man-made. The ship is thus, in the words of crew member Martin Vosseler, "sending a clear signal about the arrival of the age of solar power”.

On October 16, 2006, sun21 was christened at the Rhine harbour of Basel (Switzerland) by current Swiss President Micheline Calmy-Rey. The solar-powered catamaran left continental Europe on December 3, 2006 from Chipiona, Spain. Following Christopher Columbus’ historic route, it subsequently covered around 3,500 nautical miles (6,400 kilometers) to the island of Martinique. The crossing to the Caribbean took 63 days, including stop-overs in Casablanca (Morocco) and on the Canary Islands. sun21 covered the roughly 5,000 kilometres from Las Palmas to Martinique in a mere 30 days.

Ideal weather conditions allowed sun21 to travel up to 107 nautical miles a day, as much as sailing boats of a similar size would do. On days of complete calm the solar boat travelled up to 83 nautical miles (or 150 kilometers). Even with covered skies, the solar panels on the vessel’s rooftop provided enough energy to almost keep the boat's batteries fully charged. The technology also provided other advantages: "Propulsion is quiet and easy on the environment. There's hardly any vibration, the solar panels provide us with shade and, unlike a sailing boat, we make good headway even when there's no wind," writes crewmember Beat von Scarpatetti in his blog on www.transatlantic21.org.

Half of the 7,000+ nautical miles from Seville to New York have now been covered. The next ports of call will be the Caribbean islands of Dominica, Marie-Galante, Guadeloupe and St. Martin, and then Miami, USA.

Visual material on the arrival and further information about the project is available at www.transatlantic21.org.

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