

PRESS RELEASE

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FCCA briefs SECA about Cruise Trends and Developments. Destination Renewal and Reinventing Needed

May 10, 2016 – On Monday afternoon at the Cruise Terminal Building at Port St. Maarten, President of the Florida Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA) Michele Paige, and Cruise Line Executives briefed business officials who were invited by Port St. Maarten under the umbrella of the soon to be established St. Maarten Economic Cruise Association (SECA). SECA should be formally established later this month.

Port St. Maarten Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mark Mingo said that it was very important to have such an entity that collectively represents the interests of the economy and would work along with Port St. Maarten and other stakeholders in re-inventing cruise St. Maarten, and in addressing the challenges currently being confronted by the country's cruise sector.

“As I have stated in the past, Port St. Maarten cannot do it alone! There are many stakeholders, and everybody has a role to play. We have taken the lead and will continue to do what is necessary. We are now at the cross-roads and we need to deal with the challenges post haste. This is a wake-up call! We need to have the St. Maarten Tourism Authority yesterday.

“It was Port St. Maarten back in 2014 when we hosted the 21st Annual FCCA Conference and Trade Show under the theme, ‘Reinventing Cruise St. Maarten,’ where we needed to get our act together and address the challenges. We are now almost two-years down the coast, and things are different now as we are at a cross-road.

“I was very pleased with the SECA meeting between the aforementioned and the FCCA. It was an eye-opener for those present. We know what the situation is, and now we need a plan of action in moving forward. We need to deal with certain challenges within a month or two, and not nearly two-years down the road.

“FCCA President Paige said now is the perfect moment to re-invent and fix the challenges and I fully concur with her. The platform for growth is there, but we have to identify the opportunities and invest in them in order to grow once again as St. Maarten remains a fantastic destination as was said by the Cruise Line Executives during the meeting,” Mingo said on Tuesday.

The business community representatives who were present were very pleased for the dialogue session with the FCCA where information, concerns and challenges were shared. Everybody was in conformity that St. Maarten's uniqueness needed to be harnessed.

FCCA President Paige gave a synopsis of what she had briefed the parliamentary committee about earlier in the afternoon on Monday. This concerned growth of the cruise industry; globalization; the relationship between cruise lines and destinations; new cruise passengers; cruise passenger experience etc.

FCCA President Paige pointed out that the ‘wow’ factor needed to be brought back into play for St. Maarten as the

destination now ranked in passenger experience where tours are concerned, 20 out of 25. She added that it was very important for private sector participation, and the aforementioned had the power to turn things around while the role of government is to facilitate the private sector besides its responsibilities for infrastructure etc.

Business representatives were told that a lot of destinations had emulated the St. Maarten success besides developing their own niches. Even cruise lines have been reinventing themselves by offering new products and services onboard.

In order to move forward, it was pointed out that open dialogue forums were needed in order to work to achieve the goals of stakeholders in the cruise industry.

Some of the challenges were: traffic congestion; infrastructure quality; cruise ship/passenger congestion; guest's satisfaction; new authentic attractions/tours; harassment at the beaches and other areas; aggressive vendors as perceived by guests; cultural experiences; telling the St. Maarten Story consistently; educating/informing about the destination; motivating repeat passengers to get off the ship and enjoy the destination; port calls/berthing preference of cruise lines; fuel optimization and itinerary planning; coming up with ideas to drive cruise passengers to purchase organized tours; high volume and niche tours needed; involvement of new and innovative entrepreneurs/people and opportunities with talent and passion; understanding your passengers (demographics) as destinations have to provide the experiences for guests; and understanding business models of tours were some of the matters discussed.

Also present for the meeting were Port St. Maarten's Supervisory Board of Directors Humphrey Mezas, Renald Williams and Jason Rogers.

The FCCA represents 19 member cruise lines operating more than 100 vessels in Floridian, Caribbean and Latin American waters. It was created in 1972, and the mandate of the FCCA is to provide a forum for discussion on tourism development, ports, safety, security and other cruise industry issues.

By fostering an understanding of the cruise industry and its operating practices, the FCCA seeks to build cooperative relationships with its partner destinations and to develop productive bilateral partnerships with every sector.

The FCCA works with governments, ports and all private/public sector representatives to maximize cruise passenger, cruise line and cruise line employee spending, as well as enhancing the destination experience and the amount of cruise passengers returning as stay-over visitors.



PHOTO OUTLINE: Business representatives (left) and FCCA and Cruise Line Executives (right) discussed over a 90-minute period about cruise industry trends and developments as well as challenges confronting cruise destination St. Maarten.

For further questions, please contact: comments@portofstmaarten.com