

PRESS RELEASE

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MPs from IPKO Consultation visit Port St. Maarten. Provided with a wealth of information

January 07, 2016 – Members of Parliament (MPs) attending this week's Inter-parliamentary Kingdom Consultation (IPKO) had the opportunity on Thursday afternoon to visit the Dr. A.C. Wathey Cruise & Cargo Facility.

After visiting the Seven Seas Water Desalination Plant, the delegation of MPs from the Netherlands, Aruba, Curacao and Sint Maarten gathered at the Cruise Terminal Building which overlooks the cruise piers and Great Bay where Port St. Maarten Chief Executive Officer Mark Mingo gave a brief overview of port operations.

In port was the Celebrity Silhouette and Allure of the Seas as well as two giga-yachts. This provided an opportunity to see cruise operations underway where thousands of passengers and crew were moving around either heading back to the ship or patronizing one of the gift stores at the port or making use of the internet Wi-Fi services.

Mingo explained about the distribution network that is in place in order to get passengers from one point to the next which includes walking to Philipsburg, taxi service, tour busses, and water-taxi.

The delegation which also included MPs Hon. Sarah Wescot-Williams, MP Hon. Cornelius de Weever, MP Hon. Leona Marlin-Romeo, and MP Hon. Maurice Lake, were informed about the importance of the Causeway Bridge to facilitate the movement of traffic to the Western side of the island in order to ease congestion; but most importantly, if the Simpson Bay Bridge was to have a technical problem while open, motorists would still be able to use the Causeway to get to the airport area or to Philipsburg and other districts rather than having to drive via the French side.

Mingo explained about the cruise operations and cargo operations; that the company is owned by the Government of Sint Maarten; the importance of the mega-yacht sector and the private jet market; contributions to the BES islands (mainly St. Eustatius, and Saba) where shipping of goods are concerned; the spin-offs for the port by providing fuel services to vessels; the concession fee that is paid by the port to the shareholder; the development of the Simpson Bay Lagoon; and the strategic agreements with Carnival and Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines.

The CEO added that Port St. Maarten contributes one third of the Gross Domestic Product of the country which in turn provides thousands of jobs and generates foreign exchange for the government and businesses. He pointed out that various infrastructure enhancements have been made over the years in order to improve the tourism product which is essential for the growth of the destination and its economy.

The Chief Executive Officer also spoke about the agreement with Ernst & Young Advisory Services, to perform an Enterprise Risk Assessment (ERA), which will prepare the harbor group of companies for 2016 and beyond as well as the various financial and operational audits that have been done over the years as part of good corporate governance.

ERA is the process of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling the activities of an organization in order to minimize the effects of risk on an organization's capital and earnings.

Enterprise risk management expands the process to include not just risks associated with accidental losses, but also

financial, strategic, operational, and other risks.

Mingo informed the MPs that Port St. Maarten accommodated 1,901,617 cruise passengers in 2015, and is the #1 cruise port in the Caribbean, the second year in a row according to Cruise Fever.net readers who were asked to vote on the best cruise ports in the Caribbean in the 2015 Cruise Fever Fan Awards.

The other nine cruise destinations vying for the number one position were St. Thomas, Cozumel (Mexico), Grand Cayman (Cayman Islands), Grand Turk (Turks & Caicos Islands), San Juan (Puerto Rico), St. Kitts, Oranjestad (Aruba), Ocho Rios (Jamaica), and Roatan (Honduras).

Cruise Fever has been featured in many media outlets including the Drudge Report, CNN, Huffington Post, ABC News, Yahoo, MSN, and ABC Radio. The website receives over 200,000 unique visits a month, with some months reaching over half a million unique readers. Cruise Fever was founded in the Spring of 2011 and is based in Cincinnati, Ohio.

At the end of the overview, the delegation headed over to the Walter Plantz Square at Down Street where they received a tour. During snacks and drinks, the MPs were explained about the importance of these types of tourism product enhancement projects which are necessary to generate economic activity for the local population and at the same time offering visitors whether they are cruise or stay-over a new venue to visit which portrays the local culture and heritage.



PHOTO CUTLINE: CEO of Port St. Maarten Mark Mingo giving an overview of cruise and cargo operations while also addressing questions asked by various MPs.

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