



## PRESS RELEASE

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# Port St. Maarten Commits to Attend Future Vakantie Beurs Expos. High-end Homeporting Cruise Opportunities

**January 17, 2016** – Representatives of Port St. Maarten returned over the weekend after attending the 46th edition of the Dutch Vakantie Beurs Utrecht (Holiday Expo), which took place from January 12-17, 2016 at the Convention Center in the Dutch city of Utrecht.

This was the first time for Port St. Maarten at the Expo, and it offered an insight into the trends and developments related to Dutch travelers. Port St. Maarten management was extremely impressed with the magnitude of the Expo and its potential impact on the Sint Maarten based on the opportunities that exist.

Due to past and current global economic developments, the Dutch vacation market has been improving. In 2015, the Dutch traveler spent approximately 18 billion Euros on holidays. On average they take 2.7 vacations per year.

The Dutch Caribbean has become a growing vacation destination for the Dutch traveler. During the State of the Industry presentation, emphasis was placed on the safety and security of the Dutch traveler, and they were looking at geo-political tensions that exist in countries around the globe prior to booking a vacation – looking for a safe and secure destination.

The Dutch traveler is also interested in traveling further outside Europe and are very much interested in cultural and eco tours. Port St. Maarten has stressed in the past about the development of the aforementioned in order to further expand the diversity of tours that the country has to offer. The traveling and cruise public are more diversified today and Sint Maarten as a mature destination has to cater to the changing environment in order to continue to develop a sustainable tourism product.

All major airlines and airports were at the Expo in Utrecht. The Caribbean Dutch islands of Aruba and Curacao have had a presence at the Expo for years while Sint Maarten has been absent and faces a challenge of creating brand awareness in the Netherlands. Port St. Maarten management has committed itself to attend future Expos due to the importance of the Dutch travel market and the opportunities that exist for the country.

Port St. Maarten in its homeport strategic plan will focus on high-end cruise lines and intertwine that into a high-end homeporting operation for the destination. More than 180,000 visitors attended Vakantie Beurs Utrecht this year along with 1191 organizations promoting their destinations, products and services to the Dutch traveler. Port St. Maarten is encouraging private sector tourism related businesses to get onboard and participate in the next Expo in January 2017.

“Port St. Maarten management would like to thank Sint Maarten students who took part in the booth. They had the opportunity to also meet with Minister of Tourism & Economic Affairs Hon. Ingrid Arrindell where they could share their knowledge and experience to sell the destination in the Netherlands.

“The feedback received during the entire week of the Expo about the destination was very positive, and a large number of past visitors said that Sint Maarten has a lot more to offer than the other islands. A lot of the consumer

visitors showed interests in traveling to Sint Maarten for a vacation and taking a cruise from the island. The Expo has shown that the interests is high, and we need to maintain a structural sustainable presence at the Vakantie Beurs Utrecht and at other such travel shows. Hence, the importance of having the Tourism Authority that can create this structural sustainable presence.”

Vakantie Beurs Utrecht caters to business to business and business to consumers. More Dutch travelers are becoming aware of cruises, and the St. Maarten cruise brand is the largest and most developed cruise port in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

In 2014, approximately 109,000 Dutch travelers took a cruise. The proximity of Belgium and Luxembourg to the Netherlands – known as the Benelux - also allows travelers from those countries to visit the Vakantie Beurs Utrecht, and they both represented a total of 77,000 cruise travelers in 2014. The Benelux countries have seen their number of cruise travelers grow by 11.5 per cent on average over the five-year period 2010-2014.

Port St. Maarten partnered with Caribbean Luxury Club to have a promotional booth at Vakantie Beurs Utrecht. This expo fits into the port’s destination strategy to infiltrate the European Union tourist market.

The Ministry of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Telecommunication and Transport/St. Maarten Tourist Bureau were also represented at the expo and was part of the destination booth that also included Saba and St. Eustatius.



**PHOTO OUTLINE:** Port St. Maarten Chief Executive Officer Mark Mingo (2nd from left), Minister of Tourism & Economic Affairs Ingrid Arrindell (3rd from left) along with port representatives and Sint Maarten students studying in the Netherlands.

For further questions, please contact: [comments@portofstmaarten.com](mailto:comments@portofstmaarten.com)