

PRESS RELEASE

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Port St. Maarten Management Concludes Successful Meetings with Saba and St. Eustatius Port and Government Officials

POINT BLANCHE (February 9, 2015) – Management of Port St. Maarten concluded meetings on the islands of Saba and St. Eustatius with respect to assistance in port handling, operations and economic development.

Port St. Maarten is a success story for the Caribbean Basin, and has received visits and inquiries from various islands in the region about its efficient operations.

Port management officials met with government representatives of Saba and St. Eustatius on February 4. The objectives of the meetings were to discuss opportunities and collaboration with respect to economic sustainability from the perspective of port operations.

The discussion with the islands mainly focused on how to create a strategic and productive partnership between the three SSS islands. Ferry services between the islands were an important topic of discussion in terms of tourism and the transportation of supplies and goods, with the main objective to enhance the connectivity between Saba/St. Eustatius and St. Maarten in order to continue to propel economic growth.

Both meetings were described as successful by the parties involved, and follow-up meetings are planned in the near future with respect to execution plans.

Port St. Maarten is one of the only matured cruise destinations in the north eastern Caribbean, and the proximity of the neighboring islands which are linked to different European countries such as the United Kingdom and France, makes it unique.

Transporting cruise passengers by ferry to one of the neighboring islands is part of the Reinventing Cruise St. Maarten which was promoted during the largest and most successful Florida Caribbean Cruise Association Conference and Trade Show that the destination hosted back in October 2014.

One new tour that could be developed is a ferry ride to St. Barths for breakfast and then off to either Saba or St. Eustatius for lunch.

Port St. Maarten was represented by Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mark Mingo, Governmental Relations Hector Peters, and Bertrand Peters, Roger Lawrence members of the Port St. Maarten management team.

Saba was represented by Commissioners Chris Johnson and Bruce Zagers. The delegation from St. Eustatius comprised of Commissioner Carlyle Tarr, members of the Island Council, Franklin Brown, Adelka Spanner, Milicent Lijfrock-Marsdin, Reuben Merkman (chairman), Elvin Henriquez, and Harbour Master Austin van Heyningen.

“Based on meetings that have been held in the past with various Dutch Ministers who visited Port St. Maarten, a concern for them was to improve the connectivity with the public entities of St. Eustatius and Saba. This has been the current focus of the discussions.

“Connectivity between the islands can only be successful with a meaningful economic exchange. I see many areas that the three islands can work together on and several St. Maarten Members of Parliament also favour this approach embarked upon.

“As Port St. Maarten, we will get it done. We are committed just like St. Eustatius and Saba are committed. This approach is also part of our Strategic Business Plan 2019. The next stage is working out the action plans,” CEO Mark Mingo said on Monday.

Six months ago – September 2014 - Port St. Maarten management met with Commissioner Carlyle Tarr of St. Eustatius and his consultant A.J. Bart Van Asch, to discuss the workings of the Port logistics software system, Global Logistic System (GLS).

A full explanation of the Port system was given coupled with a live demonstration of gate and invoicing activities.

Commissioner Tarr and Van Asch at that time was able to get an in-depth understanding of the system handling in terms of Gate control, Discharge/Loading Cargo vessels, the interactive website where Carrier agents and Port ops can communicate, and most importantly relating to their visit was the invoicing capabilities.

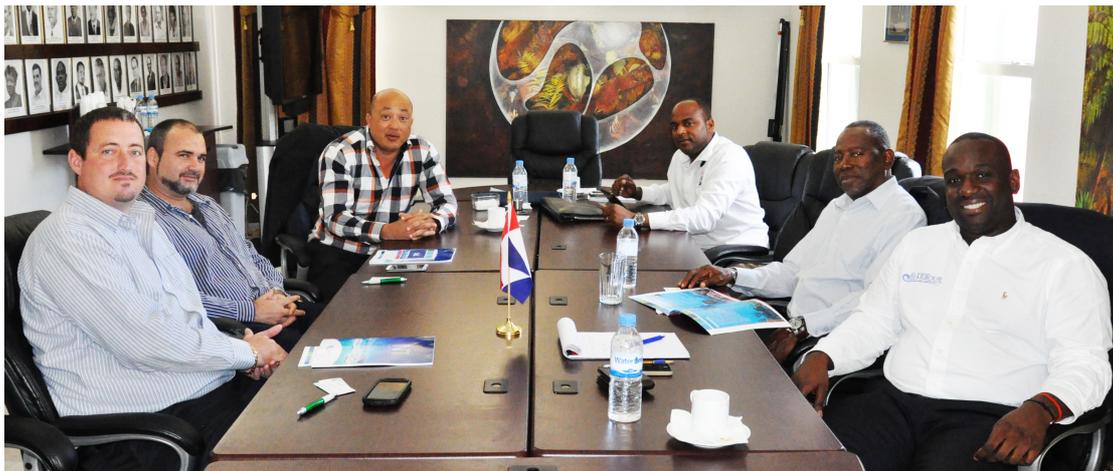


PHOTO OUTLINE: L to R: Saba Commissioners Bruce Zagers, Chris Johnson, CEO Mark Mingo, Bertrand Peters, Hector Peters and Roger Lawrence. Photo by Vito Charles, Saba Government Information Service & Protocol.

Minister Connor during the ceremony stated that reaching the two millionth cruise passenger represented growth, “What you do every single day is very important for the country and the development of its people.” The Minister added that he felt proud of this great achievement and congratulated port board, management, staff, stakeholders and all those working in the tourism sector for a job well done on behalf of the Council of Ministers and the people of St. Maarten.

Minister Connor concluded that St. Maarten is a trendsetter and would have to look for innovative and enhanced tours in order to remain at the top; adding that everybody who have contributed to this momentous moment would have to continue to give it 110 per cent to continue facilitating the growth of the country’s economy.

Minister Connor also said he looked forward in a few years’ time to marking the 2.5 million mark in cruise passengers.

Port St. Maarten has made considerable investments into infrastructure related to cruise development during the past three years with the most recent being the Down Street Cruise Heritage Development Project. This



development still under construction is just one of several change community projects that will further enhance the country's tourism product.

The approximately US\$2 million project which is located next to the Walter Plantz Tender Jetty, entails the construction of a square with six cabanas to be used for a bar/restaurant, the selling of arts and crafts and other tourist related goods; toilet/bathroom facilities; lockers; the square will be disabled accessible; parking for five taxi's; parking on the beachside and around the area which is being discussed based on several proposals; small splash pool for kids; and one of the main features will be a water fountain illuminating 30 different lights at night. The new square will also have 24-hour security.

The marketing efforts by Port management have paid off in reaching this milestone in 2014 which also represented 50-years of St. Maarten being a cruise destination. Investing in hosting the 21st Annual Florida Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA) Cruise Conference and Trade Show was also well worthwhile since the conference became the most successful and largest ever held in the 21-year history of the event.

Cruise tourism contributions to St. Maarten as a destination is very prominent and represents one third of the country's gross domestic product. In 2013 the destination received over 1.7 million cruise passengers.

According to the Business Research & Economic Advisors (BREA) 2012 study, *Economic Contribution of Cruise Tourism to the Destination Economies*, the average expenditure per passenger in St. Maarten was \$185.40, which benefitted numerous industries through purchases of goods that included food and beverage at restaurants and bars, clothing, shore excursions, ground transportation, local crafts and souvenirs, watches and jewelry, perfumes and cosmetics, electronics, entertainment/clubs/casinos, retail purchases of liquor, and telephone and internet.

The same study showed that the average expenditure per crew in St. Maarten was \$135.50 on similar products and services. Plus it revealed the direct and indirect employment generated by the cruise industry, totaling 8,123 jobs and \$159.8 million in employee wages.

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