

PRESS RELEASE

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Port St. Maarten says Happy World Tourism Day to all working in Tourism and Hospitality

September 26, 2016 – Port St. Maarten Management and Supervisory Board would like to congratulate all the workers working in the tourism and hospitality sector on the occasion of World Tourism Day (WTD) to be observed on Tuesday, September 27.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has chosen to celebrate WTD-2016 on the theme of 'Tourism for All – Promoting Universal Accessibility. People with disabilities, senior citizens and families traveling with small children should have universal accessibility.

For the last quarter-century World Tourism Day, held annually on 27 September, has aimed to foster awareness of the importance of tourism and its social, cultural, political and economic impact.

Port St. Maarten Management: "We at Port St. Maarten have recognized the right of accessibility in tourism, and have made the necessary investments from the onset when the Dr. A.C. Wathey Cruise & Cargo Facility was constructed.

"We are fully aware of the requirements for persons with disabilities, senior citizens and families traveling with small children. They are all cruise passenger customers and should receive the same service as all others. As a tourist destination we have the responsibility of catering to all visitors.

"We continue to work on a daily basis to improve our services and encourage all other businesses to also make the necessary investments in making tourism accessible to all. These same investments must also be made in the public sector especially when it comes to infrastructural improvements. Accessibility for persons with disability, senior citizens and families with small children must also be part of any tourism product infrastructure improvements."

According to the UNWTO, reaching universal accessibility in tourism is a shared responsibility of all parties involved in the tourism value chain, as well as a business opportunity for companies and destinations, as everyone has the right to access leisure and tourism services on an equal basis.

One billion people around the world living with disability, along with young children, seniors and persons with other access requirements, still face obstacles in accessing fundamentals of travel such as clear and reliable information, efficient transportation and public services, and a physical environment that is easy to navigate.

Even with modern technologies, those with visual, hearing, mobility or cognitive impairments are being left behind in many tourism destinations, according to a statement by UN General Secretary Ban Ki-Moon.

A conference will take place on Tuesday in Thailand where official celebrations to mark WTD are planned. The conference will address innovative strategies in the development of accessible tourism infrastructure, products and services which add value to destinations and enhance their competitiveness on the global tourism market. A number of best practices will be featured with the aim of emphasizing the value of investing in accessibility.

The UNWTO says 2016 started on a strong note for international tourism. International tourist arrivals grew by five per cent between January and April 2016. Results were robust across almost all sub-regions and many destinations reported double-digit growth.

Destinations worldwide received 348 million international tourists (overnight visitors) between January and April 2016, some 18 million more than the same period last year (+5.3 per cent). This follows an increase of 4.6 per cent in 2015, and could make 2016 the seventh consecutive year of above-average growth.



PHOTO OUTLINE: Cruise Ships at Port St. Maarten

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