

Governor's Symposium 2013  
Report of Recommendations



GOVERNOR'S  
SYMPOSIUM  
2013

*Sustainable development: Challenges for St. Maarten as a Small Island Caribbean Nation*

December 19, 2013

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## **Introduction**

His Excellency, Governor Holiday, entrusted the symposium committee to organize the second Governor's Symposium 2013 with the theme "Sustainable Development - Challenges for St. Maarten as a small Island Caribbean Nation".

The organizational tasks were related to the development of the program, the preparation of the budget, the planning and execution of the program, advising on the speakers, as well the monitoring of the effective implementation of the program.

The final task of the committee is the preparation and completion of an evaluation report. It is therefore our distinct honor to present the Report of Recommendations based on the presentations and proposals made by the respective speakers.

As the ambition of his Excellency and in extension the committee, is to ensure follow up and possible execution of recommendations and proposals for government and other stakeholders in society, we hereby confirm our sincere support to the four categories of recommendations and the conclusions shared in this report.

St. Maarten will, through observance of the recommendations, further progress and advance as a small island Caribbean nation, in comparison to other small island development states, with similar and specific sustainability challenges.

As our history and presence highlights our resilience, we are confident that these recommendations can assist and give direction to the required dialogue, initiatives and choices for our country's sustainable development agenda.

On behalf of the Symposium Committee 2013

Jorien Wuite

Chair Governors Symposium 2013

Organizing Committee:

Ms. Jorien Wuite – Chairwoman

LTZ Bastiaan Bolt

Mr. Claret Connor

Ms. Makini Hickinson

Mr. Rueben Thompson

Ms. Astrid Plantz

Mr. Derek Downes

Mr. Cedric Peterson

## Recommendations

### I. Recommendations on Sustainable Development - The Environment

1. Compile and execute a Master Plan for sewage and solid waste management
  - a. Seek and implement practical and comprehensive solutions to sewage and solid waste management challenges.
  - b. Reduce waste by recycling and reusing as much as possible.
2. Compile, implement and enforce additional policies and legislation aimed at sound environmental management and protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage.
  - a. Update outdated polices and ordinances related to environmental management.
  - b. Continue process of drafting, finalizing and implementing comprehensive Zoning plans.
  - c. Compile and enforce Nature Policy Plan.
  - d. Compile and enforce Environmental Policy Plan.
3. Carry-out economic valuation studies of Cultural and Natural Heritage (include economic valuation of ecosystems).
4. Require, through the alteration of legislation, Social and Environmental Impact Assessments to be carried out by qualified independent consultants when any major (facility) development is being considered.
5. Revisit Carrying Capacity Study
  - a. Commission an independent review of the Sint Maarten carrying-capacity study of 2004, by qualified experts.
  - b. Evaluate current situation and implement related recommendations.

## **II. Recommendations on Sustainable Development - Energy Efficiency**

1. Draft an action plan for the creation and revision of legislation which encourages and incentivizes private and public investments in renewable energy sources (e.g. wind, solar and geothermal).
2. Enhance public awareness to the benefits from life style changes regarding going green.

This is achieved by the following:

- Include developments of green economies in our school curriculum.
  - Highlight going green in our destination branding and marketing.
  - Develop policies geared towards providing incentives for going green.
  - Establish incentives for energy conservation habits.
3. Establish a policy for GEBE to achieve the following mix for electricity production within the next 5 years:
    - Fossil Fuel 43–60%
    - Solar panels 25%+
    - Wind turbine 34%
    - Geothermal 14%

## **III. Recommendations on Sustainable Development - Social Protection and employment**

1. Recognizing that people are at the center of the sustainable development agenda, accelerate the National Development Program in order to address relevant urgencies centered on community empowerment, quality of life, poverty related matters and risks of increased inequality.
2. Promote social dialogue, through town hall meetings and public announcement as examples and embrace a culture of change encouraging entrepreneurship, initiative, participation and social responsibility in

strategies to redirect mutual expectations between government, citizens and other stakeholders in recognition of the current economic environment. It is advised to consider self-reliance, resilience, preservation and empowerment as vital social morals and values during economic times in which citizens may have a tendency to place (unrealistic) demands on its governments.

3. Prioritize the analyses and debate of (regional) migration, as well as the informal work and review its current and future impact on society and specifically social protection floors.
4. Develop targeted and tailor-made programs to alleviate youth unemployment and to address other issues affecting the youth.

#### **IV. Recommendations on Sustainable Development – Economic Development**

1. Revitalize our infrastructure and other real estate buildings/properties to improve their appeal and functionality. Explore the construction of paid parking facilities and encourage property owners to come together to construct larger multi-function buildings. Government's assistance for these projects could come through income and profit tax incentives.
2. Reduce traffic congestion on our roads through better public transportation and legislation that discourages the importation of larger sized cars into the island. For larger cars, a higher levy or tax could be applied.
3. Promote businesses that sell and work with building products which create better isolation against heat and water, thus conserving energy.
4. Introduce economic zoning regulations which restrict the types and number of businesses operating in specific areas. For businesses which do not fit within their assigned zoning area, government could provide technical assistance and tax incentives to move these businesses in their proper zoning area.

5. Promote the positives of being a Tradesman in schools, as there are lots of opportunities in the future for small businesses in niche markets such as plumbing, carpentry, specialized woodwork and stone work, restoration work, e.t.c. The greening of the tourist industry will also create new and additional opportunities with more out-door activities needed such as tourist guides, park rangers/guides for Nature walks, water sport attendants, Boat repair technicians, beach attendants etc. They all need to be certified to guaranty quality of service.
  
6. Establish a clearly defined and new sustainable economic development model for the mid to long term, that comprises public-private partnerships on the transition from a brown to a green economy, through which sustainable small business and jobs are created, our natural capital is protected and overall quality of life is enhanced.

## **Conclusion**

The main objective of the second Annual Governor's Symposium held on Friday August 23, 2013, was to promote through presentations and interactive dialogue, a holistic understanding on the subject of sustainable development specifically on St. Maarten.

The Governor of Sint Maarten, His Excellency Eugene B. Holiday in his opening address stated: *“As Governor, governance as a practice to advance the well-being of the people of Sint Maarten, is the domain of my activities. It is therefore my mission to foster and encourage excellence in governance and thus the well-being of the people of Sint Maarten in all its facets.”*

Recognizing that St Maarten is a young country with its obvious developmental challenges, particularly in the area of depleting natural resources, the need for sensitization and continued dialogue regarding sustainable development, is of paramount importance. The country's sustainability is therefore greatly contingent on the involvement of its human, economic, environmental and social capitals.

The organizing committee of the Governor's Symposium 2013 sought to address in its recommendations the most salient points that will require consideration and attention from the Government of St. Maarten and respective stakeholders.

The committee members would herewith like to express its sincere appreciation to His Excellency, Governor Eugene Holiday for the opportunity to serve and bring awareness to Sint Maarten through this symposium.

The committee further expresses the hope that the recommendations provided herein will be beneficial to the greater sustainable development of our beloved Sint Maarten.

**A Way Forward:**

At the opening of the Governor's Symposium 2013, His Excellency declared the symposium open after posting this statement by Harvey S. Firestone *"The growth and development of people are the highest calling of leadership"*. The Symposium Committee 2013, is of strong opinion that a steering committee be established for a defined period to ensure that recommendations presented in this report is further worked out and materialized

**On behalf of the  
Organizing Committee Governor Symposium 2013**

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Ms. Drs. Jorien Wuite, Chairlady

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Mr. Bastiaan Bolt, Secretary

## **Appendices**

### Students panel questions

#### **St. Dominic High**

Participating Students:

1. Heavenest St. Cyr
2. Shanica Romney

Accompanying teacher:

1. Mr. Kent McNamara

Questions from students for Symposium:

1. Are we willing to pursue any other alternative Industry besides Tourism?  
And is it possible with the resources we have now on the island?
2. Is agriculture a feasible industry in Sint Maarten for sustainable development, and if so would we need to rely on foreign aid to facilitate that industry?
3. Are there any plans to revolutionize or manner of infrastructural development in Sint Maarten?
4. How crucial is the Dutch as the first language in the future development of Sint Maarten?

#### **St. Maarten Academy**

What strategies does the government have in place to reduce our dependency on agricultural imports?

How does government plan to ensure that students who leave primary schools are prepared for secondary education?

If we are to move forward as a country, we need adequate and reliable supplies of energy. What plans are in place to ensure this?

What strategies and policies does the government have in place to close the income inequality on the island?

## **Milton Peters College**

How can the island's government ensure that job opportunities will be available for the students that are studying abroad?

What ways can we sustain the economy of St.Maarten without losing too much of our own income in the process?

How can small businesses get the opportunity to become renowned and to also contribute to the island in a positive manner?

How can we make it possible for more of our own St.Maarten people to contribute in sustaining our economy and developing St.Maarten more despite the fact that it is a small island?

Sakir de Castro - Milton Peters College - VWO 6

## **HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

Human beings are at the centre of concern for sustainable development and thus significant attention must be given to projects that will enhance the quality of human life in a small island such as Sint Maarten.

What are your plans on maintaining and developing the quality of human life on Sint Maarten?

## **TOURISM RESOURCES**

Tourism has contributed much to the development of Sint Maarten and, as one of only a few development options, it will continue to be very important for our future growth. However, if not properly planned and managed, tourism could significantly degrade the environment on which it is so dependent. This calls for careful management!

What plans do you have in place and will be implementing in the future to increase the sustainability of our Tourism resources?

## **MANAGEMENT OF WASTES**

The shortage of land areas and resources available for safe disposal, and the increase in imports of polluting and hazardous substances combine to make pollution prevention and the management of wastes a critical issue for a small island like Sint Maarten.

What procedures and measures can and should be taken to properly and safely manage the waste of Sint Maarten in an Sustainable manner? Starting from the beginning of the disposal by the consumer and management of the disposal by government?

## LAND RESOURCES

The small size of our island, coupled with various other barriers, limit the area available for urban settlement, commercial buildings, tourism and other infrastructure, and create intense competition between land use options.

What system or methods will be taken in the planning and utilization of land to sustain our resources?

## ENERGY RESOURCES

Sint Maarten is currently heavily dependent on imported petroleum products, largely for transport and electricity. And as a small Island with limited resources it is unfortunately questionable if we can afford the highly priced environmentally friendly alternatives.

Sint Maarten will, at least for now, in my opinion be dependent on petroleum products.

What proposals do you have to Increase the efficiency of the use of these products?