



St. Maarten
Democratic Party
2014 Platform



FOR DP, IT'S ABOUT THE PEOPLE:
AN EFFECTIVE AND CARING GOVERNMENT
TO SERVE ALL OF THE PEOPLE!

***BE PART OF THE VISION AND HELP US CREATE A SOLID
FOUNDATION. LET'S BREAK THE CHAINS THAT LIMIT OUR
GROWTH AS A COUNTRY AND AS INDIVIDUALS.***



WORD FROM OUR PARTY LEADER

The first Parliament of our country is nearing its end. In a few months, the 4-year term, which started on October 10, 2010, will be over. The election fever is slowly heating up, as more parties emerge and existing ones polish their gear.

The role of the Democratic Party (DP) in the past 3 plus years has been a remarkable one. Firstly, it was the DP that delivered the first Prime Minister of country St. Maarten, a feat that even today many people ponder.

As the first appointed Prime Minister in 2010, I promised you I would:

**BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR OUR NEW COUNTRY.
BRIDGE THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DIVIDES.
WORK FOR ALL THE PEOPLE.
STRENGTHEN THE DELICATE SOCIAL FABRIC WITH STRONG AND
LASTING FIBERS.
MAKE IT WORK.**

I have begun the process of building this young country of ours to new heights. I have had the opportunity to lead 3 governments, to run the Ministry of General Affairs, and to represent St. Maarten at many international forums. But the most important role has been to encourage, stimulate and promote the building of our young country.

We have had some turbulent times and many lessons have been learned. But through it all, the DP has provided the stability and governance and been the rock on which our country was able to progress.

In fact, we are convinced that the stability and resilience that our country has demonstrated these past three and a half years is a credit to the steadfastness of this Democratic Party. And I have been privileged to stand at its helm these past twenty years. And so, at this juncture and milestone, we must reflect on how far we have come in spite of it all.

Many of the last 20 years have been dominated by the efforts to accomplish the political desire as expressed by the people of St. Maarten in the constitutional referendum of 2000.



WORD FROM OUR PARTY LEADER continued

I took this mandate of the people, making it my focus and serving it with all the passion and energy I had to give. After many long days and months, we all bore witness to the proud moment of October 10, 2010. Although there were voices of resistance along the way, we held on and we succeeded. Together, we accomplished a feat many described as impossible.

The leadership and stability of the DP during those years allowed for many major accomplishments. We developed our airport and harbor port. We improved education through foundation-based education in all our schools, and provided new vocational training opportunities. We beautified many places across the country, including Philipsburg and St. Peters. We improved roads, and built roundabouts, community centers, the Festival Village, the Simpson Bay Fish Market, The W. Plantz jetty in Philipsburg, the Melford Hazel Auditorium, and a new fire/ambulance department. We improved our energy infrastructure with new engines for GEBE and installed fiber optic cable. We also undertook the very important Social Economic Initiative and helped to improve life for our elderly with repairs to their homes.

These are all tangible and visual projects that were integral to the growth and development of our country. And the list goes on. However, progress is also about institutions. The DP's record in this area is equally impressive.

Under the DP leadership, the constitutional foundation was laid, and the institutions that provide the necessary checks and balances like the Council of Advice, the Council for the Maintenance of Justice and the Ombudsman were created. These institutions, as well as the Court of Justice serve to protect the people against misuse and abuse. They are an important part of any democracy.

The country that is St. Maarten today is governed by a new government structure. This is an accountable and disciplined government that requires knowledge and experience to manage and maximize the new authorities and competencies we have acquired. We need Ministers who understand and respect the office they occupy, and Parliamentarians who will put country first and above all else. St. Maarten needs to continue what it has begun with the DP.

Now we need to consolidate our gains and work on new ones.

We are now: *COUNTRY ST. MAARTEN.*



GOVERNMENT

The DP is the most experienced party in government on St. Maarten. We remain committed to building the government organization to provide the best service to our citizens.

The DP is proud of building capacity in government through numerous training programs. We are also proud of the transparency and openness of government through its endeavors regarding the laws of the land. Bringing the law to the people, we have enabled the empowerment of citizens as they call their representatives to give account and explanation through various forums available, such as the Ombudsman and Constitutional Court.

The apathy and mistrust towards politicians can only be countered through a transparent government apparatus. Giving account must become the norm. Openness in government must be practiced on all levels.

Less bureaucracy and more accountability is the prescription for a better performing government. The DP favors performance evaluation, linked to compensation for the civil servants, as well as clear lines and openness of policies. We believe technology is key in providing better service and faster response time.

This must be visible in the areas of work permits, building permits, business licenses, taxes, and the like. The DP will continue its e-government program, aimed at eliminating paperwork. We have made great strides here, but we still envision a goal of reducing our paper consumption by at least fifty percent.



EDUCATION

Vision

The Democratic Party's vision for education is predicated on the belief that the development of our human resources is vital to the economic development of our island. The focus of the Democratic Party is to create the national culture and social environment to promote life-long learning opportunities for the people of St. Maarten through education.

It is the Party's belief that all of our citizens have the ability to continually learn, both for professional development as well as personal enrichment. This belief has led to the successive Democratic Party governments over the years fully supporting the development of a flexible and adaptable education system. A system designed not only for catering to the needs of the local labor market, but also to meeting the requirements and providing the tools to convert our citizens into creative, innovative and thinking individuals for the new global market. All citizens should participate optimally in all efforts to better themselves and the society in which they live. The education offered in our institutions should prepare all enrolled to participate fully in and benefit from all opportunities available on the island for entrepreneurship and for employment.

Thinking schools

The Democratic Party advocates "Thinking Schools" as education institutions for our children. Thinking Schools are learning organizations in every sense: constantly challenging assumptions, and seeking better ways of doing things through participation, creativity and innovation. Thinking Schools will be the cradle for young students as well as adults and this spirit of learning should accompany our students even after they leave school.

St. Maarten must become a learned and knowledgeable society. With the many technological solutions to bridge distances, this goal is a realistic one. The DP administration has set the tone for this line of thought, starting within the government of St. Maarten, as it relentlessly offered its personnel opportunities to train, study and intern, both locally and abroad.



EDUCATION continued

Education in Nation Building

From the perspective of the Democratic Party, nation building is about involvement and inclusion. It is about respect and values, and about the future of our nation and generations to come. We will not shy away from necessary adjustments to our educational system or the implementation thereof, to ensure that our children get the best education possible. No educational system should limit our children. On the contrary, it should aim to give all our children equal opportunity.

Against this backdrop the Democratic Party, during its last governing period, was able to deliver a state of the art polytechnic institute, named the National Institute for Professional Advancement. (NIPA). This institute caters to a growing student population of 250 students and currently offers certificate programs in several areas. The vision for the NIPA is that it will evolve into an institution, which will eventually also offer Associate Degree programs in specific technical areas. Students with the ability to further their studies in these areas will be granted the opportunity to do so at the USM and abroad. The Democratic Party also envisions that this institute will afford second chance and adult education to motivated students.

Education reform

The DP administration is very cognizant of the fact that the continuous improvement in the quality of education on our island requires periodic educational reform. That is the reason DP introduced several forms of education innovations, such as: smaller class rooms, quality control, early diagnosis, early childhood care, community schools, performance evaluation of teachers, the introduction of compulsory education, truancy officers, and emphasis on physical education and the arts.

It is becoming more and more evident that many of our students struggle with social and emotional problems, which negatively impact their school performance. In order to assist these students and their parents, the Student Support Services was established within the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports. Also the recently constructed school in Belvedere has been designated as an Education Care Center, intended to cater to students with behavioral issues, which negatively impact their performance at their respective schools.



Tertiary education

The University of St. Maarten, which was established in 1989, continues to evolve and seeks to match the educational needs of our population. The DP believes tertiary education on St. Maarten must continuously strive to elevate the professional skills and training of our society, by offering not only college degree programs, but also certificates and opportunities for professional advancement. If we are to consider the diversification of our economy by providing services such as call centers, e-zones, financial services and the like, even on a small scale, trained human resources will be essential.



ENVIRONMENT

The DP will support public and private efforts towards preservation and awareness of our environment, whereby our people are able to live in harmony with nature while limiting disturbance of the ecological balance. We recognize the need for a terrestrial park, island-wide zoning, alternative energy options, a solid waste management plan, and island-wide sewage systems. These important initiatives will continue to be priorities on our agenda.

Improved controls and penalties for violations that cause damage to the environment should be reviewed and, where necessary, adapted. In the event that development is necessary at the cost of our natural environment, requirements will be put in place to ensure that the natural environment is restored in the immediate surroundings.

The quality of the Simpson bay Lagoon, the Salt Pond and all other waters, inland or otherwise must be closely monitored to ensure that these bodies of water are healthy and safe. Funding and expertise must be sought to conduct massive cleanups and once completed proper control should be put in place to avoid further pollution.

Overall awareness of healthy living must be increased. The people living and working on St. Maarten, as well as those visiting, should all be made aware that if we continue at this pace, without the necessary attention for preservation of our environment, we will severely hurt our quality of life.

Balanced growth is key for further development of St. Maarten. It goes hand in hand with so many aspects of our existence such as economic and infrastructure development. The environmental impact and infrastructure implications of any investment must be weighed against its economic benefit. Where the industry already exists, the maintenance of the balance between man and nature will have to be a collaborative effort between that industry and government.

DP will encourage environmentally friendly energy sources and solutions and alternative energy explorations. Legislation will be created to grant tax incentives to businesses and households that invest in alternative clean energy, thus reducing the use of fossil fuel for the production of electricity.

Two infrastructural priorities for the DP remain the waste and sewage disposal. Both these items were at the top of our agenda.



RENEWABLE ENERGY

The Democratic Party endorses the National Energy Policy of St. Maarten of March 2014. However, the goals of this policy are only attainable if all stakeholders are on board, including: government, GEBE, and our society at large. The legislative framework must also be in place.

Our policy goals are clear and attainable with this support. They are:

Short term: 35% renewable by 2016

Long term: 80% renewable by 2020 and 100% HF oil free by 2025

To achieve this, educational awareness is paramount and should form part of the policy's implementation plan. This plan also offers some potential for new business opportunities, which is part of the reason why the DP supports this policy and will commit to its execution.



NATION BUILDING

The “Red Thread” throughout this manifesto is nation building. It’s the line that connects education, community and families.

In 2010, the DP promised, if elected to office, that a vision for St. Maarten’s future would be developed in collaboration with the people. This promise was realized with the commissioning of the National Development Plan for St. Maarten in 2012. This plan will be completed in 2015, but already the results of the engaging “democratic dialogue” are evident, as district after district is encouraged to formulate their part of the vision.

The DP remains committed to building our young nation with the input of all its citizens.

St. Maarten is a country rich in the diversity of its citizens. The future of such a diverse country relies on the cooperation and commitment of every resident of our nation. The DP does not believe the future can be founded through the politics of division and discord, but that a successful nation will be one of shared community.

St. Maarten’s small size is another reality, requiring that our people closely share places to live, places to work and places to play. With our leadership and proven record of job creation, development of recreational facilities and housing revitalization, a connected and harmonious national community can be achieved.

The DP is so convinced that our country’s strength lies in a united country, that it has included in its articles of incorporation the objective to promote social cohesion as a core value. This can be achieved by promoting the culture of St. Maarten as a common objective and by stimulating inclusion.



YOUTH AND FAMILY

For the past years, the Democratic Party has put the emphasis on our communities. It is the belief of the DP that bottom-up empowerment is crucial to the development of our country.

An integrated neighborhood development policy, as initiated, will continue to be an important part of a DP government's social agenda. This approach requires strong and vibrant community councils, which government will continue to support and encourage.

Sustainable development also calls for joint approach. The DP therefore believes in partnership with NGO's and corporate SXM.

The DP gave full support in government facilitating the establishment and subsidization of the St. Maarten Development Fund Foundation in order to ensure continuity in the services of the NGO's and in extension the vulnerable groups that are served through these entities.

Focus on family and parenting is the corner stone of community development. The emphasis, however, lies on support for the family, as the caregivers and leaders of tomorrow are the youth of today. Efforts in the interest of our youth must be combined and synchronized, so that no one falls through the cracks.

Our Party believes that parents must take up their parental responsibility and that as society we should give support when and where needed. The DP has endorsed national and international laws and ordinances in the area of care, education, participation, protection and rehabilitation for the youth and other vulnerable groups. This party will continue to put the necessary policies and services in place to ensure that these areas are fully developed for the wellbeing of our citizens.

The DP is committed to the implementation of the Victim Support unit, the Central Reporting Center of Child Abuse and the Youth Rehabilitation facility. These are all initiatives that were started under the leadership of the DP government, and we remain committed to them.



HOUSING

The Housing Vision 2012- 2020 outlines our housing needs and the potential for increasing the amount of available social housing.

Through a cooperative approach with government, the St. Maarten Housing Foundation will be able to increase its offer of different categories of homes. Categories that are high on the list for the Democratic Party are: first time homeowners, social housing and housing for the elderly, and guided living for disabled, young adults and rehabilitated citizens.

Acquisition of land is a condition *sin qua non* for further expansion of the housing supply. That, along with public private partnerships to upgrade existing land lease projects, will enable us to begin serving the many housing needs across St. Maarten.

The DP is in favor of small settlements of affordable homes, again with the focus on young families and retired persons. We believe we must facilitate home ownership for our young people, and affordable housing for our seniors for as long as they can live on their own.

District improvements must continue unabated. Making our districts more livable requires attention for the cleanliness of the districts, proper infrastructure, drainage, and sewerage. Encouraging small business development in the districts is also a means to put more focus on the districts and the persons who reside there.



FISCAL POLICY: TAXATION

The DP believes that political parties should present their vision to the electorate. However, we are also very conscious that programs and plans are subjected to the finances of the country.

On the topic of taxes therefore, we believe that simplification of our tax system is still very much needed. A simpler, more harmonious tax system supported by an improved tax organization can, in the opinion of the party, improve compliance and yield more income for government, thus eliminating the annual search for new and untested taxes and fees.

The party prefers indirect taxation. The TOT however in its current form is harmful to business and costly for the consumer. If we abolish the TOT and impose a type of VAT (value added tax), we can eliminate the profit tax, lower the wage tax, and exclude certain products and services from tax levies. We must ensure, however, that low-income earners, who do not pay wage tax, do not end up subjected to a higher cost of living due to taxation of food and other consumer goods.

This way, we can create a stronger tax infrastructure. One that more equitably spreads the burden, fairly assesses the taxpayers, and eliminates the need for draconian collection methods. We believe this is a more effective and fair tax structure that will strengthen this country's financial position for the very long term.



HEALTH

Social Security and Pensions

The government of St. Maarten, as advocated by the Democratic Party, has maintained the system of social security that encompasses sickness insurance and pensions. Although this is a government responsibility, it is managed by the Social Security Administration (SZV). While this agency has come a long way, we must now direct our focus to cost effectiveness, prevention programs and health education.

Pension reform, while never a quick fix, is definitely a topic for further study. During the current government term, we have begun with pension system studies in order to determine the feasibility of providing affordable pensions in the future.

The basic pension, as promised by the DP in 2010, has been increased annually. As part of the tax reform, we believe that an alignment with the pension amount should be pursued, granting pensioners a “tax-free” pension.

Much has gone into addressing the large number of uninsured persons. Originally, a National Health Insurance (NHI) was seen as the solution to this phenomenon. During the past years much work has been done to develop an NHI. A transition of this magnitude however, cannot be taken lightly. The DP therefore prefers an introduction of the NHI in phases, in order to make it a much more manageable process.



HEALTH continued

St. Maarten Medical Center (SMMC)

A multi annual plan for the SMMC should form the basis for any expansion or construction at this country's sole medical facility. It should also include the expansion of specialist care, purchase of equipment, and the co-management of health care cost. The vision of the DP is that by 2020, most services for which residents must now travel abroad, must be available on the island. This will further allow the medical facility to offer these services to the residents of the neighboring islands.

Mental Health

The state of the mental health of our population needs our urgent attention. The Mental Health Foundation with government support has provided the first assistance to patients. However, we can no longer treat mental health in an uncoordinated manner. Stakeholders are putting the final touches to a Mental Health Policy Plan for St. Maarten. In this too, education and sensitization are factors that cannot be overlooked.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Our growing population demands that the government relentlessly seeks out, supports and encourages investments that provide jobs. With more educational opportunities being offered at home, job creation is paramount.

The DP believes that we must venture outside of our comfort zone. New business areas must be actively pursued. Areas that come to mind are new tourism niches. On an island like St. Maarten with its natural amenities, sport and medical tourism are 2 branches that can be stimulated. It is the belief of the DP, that the technological wave has not been ridden to its maximum. We see potential for e-zoning, e-commerce and e-medicine.

The DP believes in stimulating small/medium business and supports granting tax incentives that contribute to job creation. The economic vision of the DP is one of enabling economic growth and private initiative that benefit not only entrepreneurs, but also the workforce at large.

The other aspect of that economic vision is to build a knowledge society and a skilled work force, which can only be achieved if educational possibilities for advancement are widely available.

Government focus must be on giving all able individuals the opportunity to work or be entrepreneurs, under the mantra of:
"Getting people back to work."

The European-funded SME program, coordinated by the DP Leader, Sarah Wescot-Williams in her capacity as Territorial Authorizing Officer for European funds, will be a welcomed impetus to refocus on the SME sector, the backbone of any society.

The party does not believe in over-regulation, but rather supports an enabling business environment. Furthermore, the DP supports free market competition and entrepreneurship. Stimulating other economic activities such as offshore services, call centers etc. remains high on the DP agenda. Our tax system must be devised to facilitate and stimulate such endeavors.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT continued

The DP embarked on a path of diversifying our tourism markets with a view to Europe (the Netherlands) and South America primarily, in close collaboration with the private sector. We have been able to “hold our own” as a destination until now, but permanency is not a guarantee in this rapidly changing environment.

The Party’s economic strategy is one of manageable growth, with an emphasis on ensuring maximum social and economic benefits and minimum economic leakage. We must maintain the infrastructure to keep pace and improve the quality of life here, and we must encourage St. Maarten people to grasp opportunities.

With the autonomy that the country status brought us, a DP government will continue to work with the private sector to seek increased international and regional commerce and trade opportunities. Such partnerships are essential to the success of forging the strategy of economic diversification of the economy of St. Maarten.

The future economy of St. Maarten will thrive and be most successful if it operates on two levels: within the new global economy, and within its own solid foundation of businesses. The DP believes we must prepare ourselves for this future, but that we must first build a solid foundation of local businesses and talents within our workforce. We know we must focus on job creation within the country St. Maarten, and that a focus on growing our small and medium businesses (SME’s) will be the most direct route to success.

We need St. Maarten to be a productive country with much to offer its own residents and the rest of the world. The DP has been able to decrease the unemployment rate, but we believe it can go lower yet. The programs, such as back-to-work, train-for-work have proven successful, but need to be ongoing. We envisage a decrease in the unemployment rate to 8% in the next three years, and to hold it at under 5% within 10 years. To accomplish this, we must focus on creating sustainable opportunities for our population, especially the younger generation, and we must do it while maintaining our economic stability as a country.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT continued

Taking a page from the books of other successful countries around the world, we know that a focus on our SME's can yield great, and somewhat quick results. The DP plan will create an enabling and supportive regulatory and tax environment, establish technical and financial support programs, promote public private partnerships to access existing successful programs, and promote programs that offer credit to start business with affordable financial terms, and build cooperative education programs for our youth.

With the right support within our permitting, regulatory, and tax policies, we can make it easier for SME's to start, and to thrive. Our current systems must undergo some amendments to make this a reality, and we are committed to simplifying the processes that can ultimately create jobs for our residents.

In addition to education, we must create practical programs to train for skills needed in the workplace. For our educated youth, we can create work-study, whereby they will gain the valuable experience within their chosen profession even before they enter the workplace; enabling them to enter the world of work quickly and with confidence and practical knowledge.

We envision a future economy for St. Maarten where all people have an equal opportunity to be financially stable and successful on their own. We will access some of the best practices and programs from around the world to successfully create more jobs. We can expedite all of these initiatives and achieve our goals more quickly by attracting more foreign direct investment. We will focus on this in the longer term, working with other countries to bring in new entities, money and opportunities for St. Maarten to build upon and to ultimately compete in this new global economy.

The DP is in favor of a monetary system that supports the further economic development of St. Maarten as a tourist destination and regional trading partner and a country within the Dutch Kingdom. For St. Maarten, the DP believes that dollarization best suits our economic realities.



LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES

The DP will continue its approach of social dialogue on matters related to labor, allowing workers and employers to contribute to the process. There is a general consensus on more flexibility in the labor market, the need for adaptation of the dismissal law, control on compliance, and unemployment benefits. The DP will bite the proverbial bullet and champion a change from the “cessantia” system to a more modern system of unemployment insurance and pension benefits.

Immigration

Since 2010, the Immigration and Border Management has made great leaps. Our borders can now be much better controlled and managed. Persons wishing to enter St. Maarten other than for the purpose of a visit will have to follow the rules that govern residency on our island. With the new system in place, a much more effective service can be provided, alleviating the temptation by some to try and beat the system.

Foreign Labor

The DP advocates upward mobility for our own people in the labor force. This mobility is enhanced through provision of training and re-training programs, which is most effectively done in cooperation with employers. A versatile and easily adaptable workforce will be the result. Availability of skilled labor is part of the criteria foreign investors use to judge the feasibility of investing in a particular region or country. It also reduces the need for importation of expatriate labor. However, for cases that do require expatriate labor, the foreign labor policy must be transparent and efficient. The DP believes that the foreign labor permit policy should be a differentiated one.



SAFETY AND SECURITY

For every resident and visitor to St. Maarten, a feeling of security and protection is vital. In fact, it is critical to our very economic survivability. The issue of safety and security remains a concern for the DP and we are committed to improving the internal security of the nation.

We believe the critical difference in fighting crime is one of manpower. We need our communities to work together, and we will continue to support Neighborhood Watch programs. We believe in working with the private sector as a partner in implementing programs that will serve the needs of all subsets of our nation. We also believe in partnership with the police force.

Three noteworthy accomplishments by the DP administration were: the Community Police Program, the Justice Academy Training Institution and the Juvenile Detention Center in Cape Bay.

The DP will implement alternative punishment for light crimes, and work towards reducing imprisonment- using the Netherlands as a study example to understand the possibilities, rather than attempting to re-invent the justice system.

In order to achieve the goal of a safe nation, we also need to focus on the programs and support systems including education, foster care, youth facilities, and work training to stop the cycle of crime before it begins.



SPORTS AND CULTURE

DP believes that a determined focus on sports and culture will be important in our national development. True to this conviction, during the DP's most recent governing period, the Department of Sports was created. Its purpose is to exclusively concentrate on, stimulate and support developments in the area of sports and it is charged with the policy and planning aspects of sports development. The National Sport Institute has also been recently established with a purpose of executing planned projects and sport programs. The NSI also coordinates general sports and recreation activities for children, men and women, along with interscholastic sports competitions and sports related activities for the youth as well as for adults and the elderly.

To facilitate the practice of sports and tournaments, the DP envisions a significant upgrading program for our sports facilities, under the charge of the NSI. Upgrade projects on the agenda include: Phase B of the Raoul Illidge Sport Complex, the Little League Ball Park and the L.B. Scott Sports Auditorium.

DP has always believed in nation building in part through strengthening awareness of culture and country pride as a foundation for growth. Several facets of our culture have blossomed over the past years, such as the exposure to unique forms of art, giving focus to our cultural heritage for our youth.

This is a development that must be encouraged and stimulated. Hence the DP interest in the private initiative for the Dutch Quarter area, which includes a center for the performing arts. Further inspired by the Dutch Quarter initiative, the DP will promote programs designed to develop youth in leadership roles. This will enable our youth to actively participate in dialogue with government and collaborate to strengthen their sense of pride in and responsibility for their community, the preservation of its monuments and intangible cultural heritage.



SPORTS AND CULTURE continued

To further stimulate cultural awareness, there are many plans for arts facilities, such as the new Performing Arts and Convention Center and the upgrade of John Larmonie Center. A Cultural Track Project is also under consideration.

Our culture is constantly being transformed as “old meets new,” and this has been visible in areas such as: literary arts, dance, and theatre. In fact, DP will encourage this revitalization through the promotion and support of performance, visual, literary, and creative arts, from recreational to competitive efforts. We will work through our schools and community centers for these initiatives.



FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Since becoming a country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Democratic Party has been working to carve out St. Maarten's place in the region, and in the world. The DP Prime Minister, responsible for the foreign relations of St. Maarten, is charged with the formulation, promotion and execution of the country's foreign policy. In turn, the newly established Department of Foreign Relations advises the Prime Minister and acts as the lead coordinator and manager of the international relations and cooperation of the country.

The Democratic Party attaches great importance to cooperation within the wider Caribbean region. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister Sarah Wescot-Williams, St. Maarten has intensified its engagements in the region by securing membership in the following regional organizations: Caribbean Financial Action Task Force Agency (CFATF), Caribbean Organization Tax Administrators (COTA), Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), Caribbean Telecommunication Union (CTU) and Caribbean Association of National Telecommunication Organizations (CANTO), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Association of Caribbean States (ACS). These associations will strengthen our relations within the region as well as increase our participation in important issues related to our development.

The relationship with the European Union will remain of strategic interest for the Democratic Party. St. Maarten participates as one of twenty-five members in the European Union's Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs). As an OCT, St. Maarten is eligible for EU funding via a number of programs. The European Development Fund (EDF), which is aimed to support the economic, social and human development of the OCTs, has been a major benefactor in our recent development.

In 2011, St. Maarten was granted a sum of 4.75 million Euros from the 10th EDF, which funded the Dutch Quarter Sewage and Drainage Project. In 2013, 7 million Euros from the 11th EDF were allocated to St. Maarten. Additionally, an operational program for cross border cooperation has been created specifically to fund shared projects between St. Maarten and Saint Martin. This important program provides a mechanism for tangible cross border cooperation by pooling resources to achieve economies of scale on needed joint projects.



FOREIGN AFFAIRS continued

EU programming also extends into regional programs, which is also critical for our economic progress. With the Department of Kingdom Relations and Interior Affairs (BAK) as the leading coordinating agent, St. Maarten has benefited from participating in (EDF) regional projects related to HIV/AIDS, SME development and disaster risk reduction initiative (R3I).

The Democratic Party will continue to pursue a focused, effective and results-based foreign policy that is inextricably tied to the development plan of the country. In doing so, we will continue to execute the 4 strategic goals that are embedded in our foreign policy. These goals are:

Support the economic policy of St. Maarten Present St. Maarten internationally, as a respectable partner Promote regional cooperation Develop closer ties with Saint-Martin.

In pursuit of these goals, we will also focus our attention in the coming years on the following ten countries: USA, Canada, Mexico, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Surinam, Brazil, Cuba and China. We aim to build sustainable, mutually beneficial global partnerships with all as we seek to secure our spot in the new global economy.

With Prime Minister Sarah Wescot-Williams at the helm, DP has built a structured and strong foundation for the management of our foreign relations. We have accomplished meaningful membership to organizations that yielded funding and technical assistance for the development of the country. We are also in the process of building bilateral relations with key countries that will aid in the economic advancement of St. Maarten.

We believe that a country's foreign policy cannot be divorced from its national development. Based on this premise, the DP will continue to reinforce the development of St. Maarten through its regional and global alliances.



INFRASTRUCTURE

The DP continues its support for plans to develop the Bethlehem Estate. This plans call for a public private partnership to bring about a development in Dutch Quarter that will change the landscape of the district positively and profoundly. It will provide a number of economic and social impulses and opportunities, but most importantly, it will stimulate jobs.

In addition, the party supports the infrastructural priorities such as link 6, Union Road and Side-walks in the districts. Other than that, updating the Road Network Plan will allow better planning, in sync with the zoning plans which are being developed.

The 11th European Development Fund (EDF) will be allocated to Urban Development, in other words, further district improvements and upgrades. The zoning of the island, while necessary, should not be presented as a fait accompli to the citizens, but to engage these citizens meaningful in discussions about future plans.



GOVERNMENT COMPANIES

Government companies should focus on their core business. More transparency within these companies will be mandated. It is the feeling of the Democratic Party that the St. Maarten government companies can become even stronger if they would pool together in several areas, such as: automation, finances, purchases, etc.

For appropriate areas, such as finance, an overarching (holding) company could offer a beneficial relationship between companies and facilitate investments.

Monetary Union

The DP accepted the solution of a monetary union with Curacao on the basis of parity. While this was negotiated and agreed to by all partners, having the union function in such a fashion has proven elusive at best. While cooperation in the last months has improved and both governments are desirous of making the best of the monetary union, it is clear that political views have changed.

In this changed situation, the DP favors dollarization, de facto formalizing the economic reality of St. Maarten.

However, the DP will work with the government of Curacao to ensure immediate upgrading of the Central Bank branch on St. Maarten in the following areas: training, human resources and a new bank building.