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NewsRelease

Tourism Organization for Northern Caribbean islands one step closer to establishment

New immigration forms on stream, northern European emerging markets and new tourism information booths at PJIA coming soon.

MARIGOT, St. Martin (May 18, 2012)—Tourism directors and airport and airline officials from St. Martin, St. Maarten, Anguilla, St. Barths, and Saba met at the Tourist Office here on May 18 to further discuss and strategize the development of an Inter-Island Association that would enable the five territories (and St. Eustatius, which was not present) to be marketed as one destination.

The delegation was also formally introduced to the newly elected Territorial Council Member of Economic Development and Affairs Jeanne Rogers-Vanterpool.

May-Ling Chun, director of the St. Maarten Tourist Bureau, said that having the islands “in close proximity to each other provides a unique package that doesn’t exist elsewhere in the region.”

During the meeting, St. Barths was chosen as the official headquarters of the new organization, which is still undergoing further development.

Councilor Rogers-Vanterpool in her opening remarks said that “for us (St. Martin/St. Maarten) to move forward in tourism we need to start collecting statistical data to see what markets are profitable.”

Chun disclosed at the meeting that the Tourism Statistical Information System (TSIS) was soft-launched on April 15, 2012, with the implementation of new arrival and departure immigration cards. Chun told the attendees that “the cards were already in use.”

Princess Juliana Int’l Airport (PJIA) is the pivotal hub airport for the six territories.

Chun said that “the cards carry a barcode and ... passenger information relating to origin and final destinations will be analyzed.” The tourism director added that “currently, the form is only in English as a hard copy” and that forms in other languages like French and Spanish will be available online in the near future.

PJIAE Marketing & Communications Manager, Kalifa Hickinson, spoke about the finalization of plans for the new tourist information booths to be constructed at the airport for the respective tourist offices. The booths will also allow each island to market the destination before passengers leave the airport in St. Maarten. The booths are expected to be erected in a few weeks and will be situated in the arrival hall.

Upcoming trade shows, fairs and expos were also discussed at the meeting. Chun said that St. Maarten/St. Martin should look at future marketing to the Scandinavian countries in northern Europe as that is an emerging market for the destination.

Chun noted that the people of the Scandinavian group of countries spend largely on travel and that the Inter-Island Association member islands can offer diversity to travelers from this market.

Winair Director of Marketing and Sales Claudio Buncamper, whose airline will play an important role as a main passenger carrier to and from the islands in the association, asked that tourism organizations call on their respective governments to help small regional carriers like Winair by reducing taxes that contribute to the bulk of the fare.

Silvane John, head of St. Martin Tourist Office, chaired the meeting. The next meeting will be held at PJIA.

Photo Caption1:

MARIGOT—Tourism directors and airport and airline officials from St. Martin/St. Maarten, Anguilla, St. Barths, and Saba met here at the Tourist Office (5.18.12) to strategize the development of an Inter-Island Association to market the territories as one destination with PJIA as the hub airport. (*PJIAE photo*)