

NEWS RELEASE

First US\$55M Grant from the Sint Maarten Trust Fund for Recovery & Resilience

PHILIPSBURG, July 12, 2018 — Sint Maarten Prime Minister Leona Romeo-Marlin and World Bank Country Director, Tahseen Sayed, signed yesterday the first grant of the Sint Maarten Recovery, Reconstruction and Resilience Trust Fund funded by the Government of the Netherlands. With this grant, the first project will repair public shelters, support the repairs of severely damaged houses of low income families, increase the resilience of the electricity utility and water system, as well as strengthen the emergency response capacities of the fire brigade and first responders in the face of natural disasters.

This project is one of four emergency projects fast-tracked and endorsed by the Sint Maarten Trust Fund Steering Committee last June to rebuild the island after Hurricane Irma in 2017.

“Patience is a virtue as the saying goes, with the signing of this Emergency Response Project for 55 Million US dollars, we have achieved yet another milestone in the recovery process of Sint Maarten. As I have stated on numerous occasions, the Government of Sint Maarten remains committed to seeing this process through to its conclusion and thus ensuring a successful recovery on behalf of the people of Sint Maarten”, said **Prime Minister Leona Romeo Marlin.**

A Steering Committee meeting will take place on July 13 with representatives from Sint Maarten, The Netherlands and the World Bank, to review additional recovery needs and advance the preparation of new projects.

“The signing of this first grant agreement is not just another piece of paper; it is the turning point from project preparation towards realization. I look forward to achieve tangible results in the next few months” said **Frans Weekers, Steering Committee Representative for the Netherlands.**

Since the signing of the agreement with The Netherlands to establish the Trust Fund on April 16, significant progress has been made including successful convening of the first Steering Committee meeting of the Trust Fund, preparation and endorsement of four projects, and identification of ongoing reconstruction activities for retroactive financing. All financing systems and processes to ensure transparency and appropriate environmental and social standards will follow World Bank guidelines and policies. The new Trust Fund manager from the World Bank, Michelle Keane, was appointed on July 1 and brings many years of experience in post disaster reconstruction and program management.

“I am encouraged by the commitment of the government and pace of the progress so far”, said **Tahseen Sayed, World Bank Country Director for the Caribbean.** *“Our experience in post-disaster situations across the world is that it is essential to build back better and promote resilience. The Sint Maarten National Recovery and Resilience plan recognizes this, and this first approved project is well aligned with these priorities”.*

The World Bank team of experts is already working with the Government and other local partners on the island to strengthen capacities to better manage disaster risk.

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