

PRESS RELEASE

St. Maarten's Sub-Hub possibilities promoted in Panama

St. Maarten's strategic position as a sub-hub within the Caribbean region was highlighted recently at the 18th Conference of Free Zones America 2014 Forum which took place in Panama City, Panama. The Conference which ran from November 13 -14th was attended by St. Maarten Chamber of Commerce & Industry (COCI) Executive Director, Claret Connor, who traveled to Panama last week to give a presentation to the over 400 delegates in attendance from Latin and North America as well as the Caribbean Region. The forum organized by the Asociación de Usuarios de la Zona Libre de Colón AU and the Asociación de Zonas Francas de las Américas aimed to establish industrial ties and business opportunities between the various free zones. Topics at the Forum ranged from issues such as free zones' logistics to expansion of the Panama Canal. Economic growth, sustainable partnerships and cooperation were also emphasized throughout the event.

Connor spoke to the audience in attendance on "**Building on St. Maarten and Panama's Natural Partnership in Economic Development for the Caribbean**". His presentation touched on the Island's ties in regional organizations such as the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), bringing attention to the fact that as one combined market of 14.4 million inhabitants, the West Indian region represents a significant market for future trade and export development. Connor also called attention to the fact that St. Maarten is in an ideal position to embrace economic diplomacy.

Also highlighted at the Conference was the upcoming Trade Mission and Business Exposition being collaboratively held on St. Maarten in January 2015. The joint venture being hosted by the COCI, partners with the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Panama and the Panama Chamber of Commerce; the main objective being to promote trade and strengthen economic ties between St. Maarten, Panama, the Netherlands and countries within the Caribbean region.

The aim is that the upcoming Trade Mission and Business Exposition will create opportunities for increased commercial activity and foreign investments throughout the Caribbean.

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