

**ADDRESS FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF SINT MAARTEN: PRIME MINISTER THE
HONORABLE WILLIAM MARLIN REGARDING HURRICANE IRMA**

15 September 2017

While the devastation of this tragedy is still very present to all of us, and the pain still quite raw, I ask you today to unite together.

We are a nation of strong-willed, humane and compassionate people. As your leader, I too, feel the distress when I wake each morning to realize the devastation of our beloved Sint Maarten. However, while some may think that the obvious beauty of our nation has been lost in the destruction; I insist that you are the beauty – the power of our people, and the power of collaboration and kindness – and together, we are all the hope for a new tomorrow.

I understand that many of you are angry, that you don't have answers and that your lives have changed, perhaps forever. I hear your cries for help. Tourism: the very core – the very heart of our destination - has been destroyed, yet not forever. While rebuilding will be on the horizon, the Government's focus right now is on humanitarian relief efforts; I am here to support and ensure that you are safe, and have the fresh water, food and shelter that you need to simply get through the day in each and every district. Rebuilding will come, in time.

As of September 13th the 24 hour curfew has been lifted from 8 am - 3 pm daily to allow you – our valued citizens and businesses – to start your overall recovery and rebuilding process.

Recovery efforts have begun. Safe evacuations of tourists continue. We have the support of the Dutch Marines on the ground to assist in law and order. We also have a Disaster Assistance Response Team from Samaritan's Purse on the ground working tirelessly. This leading disaster relief organization is delivering food, water and supplies to those who need it most, and this effort is continuous. Our neighbors are showing their humanity too. After all, we are all the Caribbean. We are one.

The restoration of our telecommunication networks, electricity grid and water distribution network have begun. Telem and UTS are operational and four gas stations have opened during the curfew from 9am to 2pm daily. Several supermarkets have opened as well, and two radio stations are broadcasting. While life as we knew it is still far away, it's these little things that will help us along each and every day.

To the international community, I want to thank you for all your support thus far – we are forever grateful, and to you, the people of Sint Maarten; we will overcome; we will grow together, we will prosper – may we all look forward to hope, and a brighter tomorrow.