

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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# **Minister Arrindell and Port St. Maarten Meet with XL Airways as Destination becomes Pullmantur Cruises Homeport**

**November 29, 2016 – PORT ST. MAARTEN – Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Port St. Maarten Mark Mingo, is very pleased with the progress being made to further advance Sint Maarten as a homeport destination in the Northeastern Caribbean.**

During the meeting that included Minister of Tourism and Economic Affairs Ingrid Arrindell, discussions focused on investments to further develop homeporting at Port St. Maarten with Pullmantur Cruises and XL Airways; and investments to increase airlift via XL Airways to service destination Sint Maarten.

XL Airways was represented by Laurent Magnin, President Director General/CEO/Chairman, Luc Bereni, Director Commercial, Programme & Marketing/Chief Commercial Officer, and Stephanie Cordier, Marketing & Communication.

Mingo and the Sint Maarten delegation traveled to France to meet with XL Airways, the aviation company that will be used to bring cruise passengers to the country who will then board the Pullmantur vessel Zenith for their Caribbean cruise.

XL Airways will start weekly flights from Paris, France on December 18 with an Airbus 330-200. Allocated on the weekly flight are 250 seats for homeporting from a Pullmantur cruise vessel Zenith. There will also be some additional seats for regular passengers who would like to spend their vacation on the island.

XL Airways has close to 20-years' experience. It's a French airline specializing in long-haul flights, and annually flies over one million passengers to the Antilles, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, the United States and the Mediterranean Basin.

The airline is based and operates out of Charles de Gaulle Airport. It also operates flights from Marseilles and four other French airports, Lyon, Bordeaux, Nantes and Toulouse. In addition to the aforementioned regular service flights, the airline also operates chartered flights all year round on behalf of main French and European tour operators.

Pullmantur Cruises is headquartered in Madrid, Spain. It began operations in 1990, and is the largest Spain-based cruise line. The company mainly markets to Spanish passengers, but cruises are also sold by travel operators outside Spain.

Also present for the meeting was, Suzy Kartokromo, Manager Marketing & Customer Service Department of Princess Juliana International Airport (SXM Airport), Damien Schmidt, Business Development Officer, SXM Airport, and Bertrand Peters, Port St. Maarten General & Governmental Affairs Liaison.

Pullmantur Cruises home port will mean a significant boost for the destination as it will add additional tourists and

business for the tourism and hospitality sectors. It also serves part of the diversification of visitors to our island with respect to Latin American and European visitors.

Pullmantur Cruises will start home porting next month, and it is the intention to develop this business into a year-round service. This group focuses on cruise customers from Latin America and Europe. The vessels used carry approximately 1500 cruise passengers and 450-crew.

The home porting business will translate into a significant impact on the country's economy with spinoffs for transportation services, vessel provisioning from food and beverage wholesalers; fueling services; hotels and villa rentals; as well as air transportation to the destination, the airport besides other businesses that provide ancillary services to the tourism sector.

Home porting is nothing new for the destination as the country has had the opportunity to handle smaller vessels of under 500 passengers.

“With Pullmantur Cruises home porting in Sint Maarten, cruise passengers will spend a day or two prior to boarding the ship and beginning their cruise and upon the vessels return when they end their cruise they will have a day or two to spare. These passengers will be short-term stay-overs and potential long-term stay-overs if they enjoy the destination experience while on the island. Therefore shore excursions and local attractions are key for repeat visitors,” CEO Mark Mingo said on Tuesday.



**PHOTO OUTLINE:** Sint Maarten representatives with XL Airways officials after the meeting on Tuesday.

For further questions, please contact: [comments@portofstmaarten.com](mailto:comments@portofstmaarten.com)