

Joint Press release
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Ministry of Justice launches Sint Maarten's Detention Sector Reform Program with support from BZK, NRPB, and the United Nations

Philipsburg, Sint Maarten.— The Ministry of Justice has officially launched the Detention Sector Reform Program (DSRP), a landmark national initiative designed to transform every part of the detention chain, from pre-trial to post-detention. The program aims to build a modern, safe, and humane system that reflects Sint Maarten's values of dignity, accountability, and fairness.

Led by the Ministry of Justice on behalf of the Government of Sint Maarten, the DSRP is supported by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) and the National Recovery Program Bureau (NRPB), and implemented in collaboration with two United Nations agencies; the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Minister of Justice Nathalie M. Tackling said the initiative represents a turning point for Sint Maarten's justice system.

"After 35 years, our detention facility has outlived its purpose. The DSRP is about more than building a new facility; it's about creating a fairer and more humane justice system. The way we treat people in detention says a great deal about who we are as a society. When we invest in rehabilitation and reintegration, we give people a real chance to return to society better prepared, with skills, confidence, and purpose. At the same time, it gives our staff the tools, training, and environment they deserve to perform their duties safely and effectively. This reform shows that Sint Maarten's justice is rooted in fairness and human dignity."

Under the DSRP, UNOPS provided technical expertise for the design of the new facility and now, they will lead the construction of the new Point Blanche Prison, a modern, resilient, and sustainable correctional facility that meets the highest international standards. The facility will double the current capacity and include spaces for education, healthcare, mental health, vocational training, family visits, and recreation, reflecting a holistic and human-centered approach to rehabilitation.

“At UNOPS, we are proud to be in charge of the construction component of the Detention Sector Reform Program. The new Point Blanche facilities will be a modern correctional complex designed to promote safety, dignity, and opportunities for rehabilitation, which are essential pillars of peaceful and inclusive societies. We will implement the construction by applying the best standards for a resilient and sustainable infrastructure, and ensuring the efficient use of public resources while enhancing governance and transparency”, says **Giuseppe Mancinelli, UNOPS Deputy Director for Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office.**

The infrastructure project is jointly financed by the Government of Sint Maarten and BZK, with an investment of USD 52 million. Construction is expected to begin in early 2026 and take approximately three years.

Meanwhile, UNODC will support the Ministry in strengthening prison management, staff training, and rehabilitation programs. Their technical team is working alongside local personnel to enhance leadership and operational systems, prepare for the transition to the new facility, and expand reintegration initiatives to reduce reoffending and improve community safety.

“This initiative represents an important opportunity to build a stronger, fairer and more accountable justice system in Sint Maarten. By focusing on the people who work in prison, as well as those in their care, this programme will help create a system that truly supports prison-based rehabilitation activities , facilitate support after release, as well as contribute to community safety. We are proud to work alongside the Ministry of Justice and the people of Sint Maarten to make this vision a reality”, said **Rafael Barreto Souza, Programme Officer, UNODC.**

The DSRP demonstrates Sint Maarten’s commitment to justice reform through local leadership, international collaboration, and shared responsibility. Implemented in

alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 16, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, it emphasizes transparency, accountability, and human dignity in detention management. “This is Sint Maarten’s reform, led by our Ministry, for our people,” said Minister Tackling. “It’s about building a detention system that strengthens our institutions, protects our people, and restores confidence in justice.”

Through the DSRP, the Ministry of Justice and its partners are setting a new standard for humane, accountable, and sustainable justice in Sint Maarten.

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Notes to the editors:

Images (click on each picture to get link to download it on hi-res):



Photos from the launching event on 30 October:



Image 4 - From left to right: Steven Carty, Pointe Blanche Prison director; Nathalie Tackling, Minister of Justice; Hon. Luc Mercelina, Prime Minister of Sint Maarten; and Giuseppe Mancinelli, UNOPS Deputy Director for Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office.

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About UNOPS

UNOPS offers practical solutions across peace and security, humanitarian and development operations. We help the United Nations, governments and other partners, such as the European Union and its Member States, to manage projects, and deliver sustainable infrastructure and procurement across the world. Read more: www.unops.org.

About Ministry of Justice, Sint Maarten

The Ministry of Justice of Sint Maarten is responsible for overseeing and managing law enforcement, criminal justice, and the legal system. It leads and coordinates key entities within the justice chain, including the Police Force of Sint Maarten (KPSM), Immigration and Border Protection Services, the Court of Guardianship, and the House of Detention, among others. The Ministry works to uphold the rule of law, ensure public safety, and safeguard fundamental rights by fostering a transparent, accountable, and effective justice system. In collaboration with regional, Kingdom, and international partners, it continues to strengthen institutions, modernize systems, and implement reforms that reinforce security and justice for all.

About UNODC

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) traces its origins to the UN's early post-war efforts to promote human rights and penal reform. Among these efforts was the adoption in 1955 of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, which laid the foundation for prison reform globally. Revised in 2015, they are now known as the Nelson Mandela Rules and remain central to UNODC's work today. Since 1997, UNODC builds on this legacy by working in over 50 countries to provide technical assistance, training, and policy advice that support governments in strengthening prison management, reducing reoffending, and upholding human dignity in places of detention. www.unodc.org