

Joint Press release
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Ministry of Justice moves to expand detention capacity through Foreign Detention Center upgrades

PHILIPSBURG, Sint Maarten.— The Ministry of Justice is advancing plans to temporarily expand Sint Maarten's detention capacity through upgrades to the Foreign Detention Center (FDC), creating accommodation for up to 16 low-risk detainees while the new Point Blanche Prison is under construction.

The intervention forms part of the Ministry's broader Detention Sector Reform Program (DSRP) and was formalized through an amendment expanding the Sint Maarten Rule of Law Facilities Project under the existing agreement between the Government of Sint Maarten, the Government of the Netherlands and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

A preliminary technical assessment identified the adaptation of the Foreign Detention Center (FDC) in Simpson Bay as the most feasible and time-efficient option for expanding short-term detention capacity. The intervention is expected to take approximately nine months from approval by all parties to handover, providing additional low-security accommodation to ease detention capacity constraints, support the work of prosecutors and courts, and reduce overcrowding-related risks.

The additional accommodation will support the transition to the new Point Blanche Prison and once its temporary use for prison detention ends, the upgraded area will be returned to the Immigration Service for immigration-related detention. The improvements will therefore serve both the immediate need for additional detention capacity and the facility's longer-term function, with upgraded safety and essential infrastructure supporting its continued use.

Minister of Justice Nathalie Tackling highlighted the importance of addressing the detention system's current needs: *"While construction of the new Point Blanche Prison is progressing, we also have to address the realities facing our detention system today. By*

adapting a currently unused section of the FDC, we will create additional temporary capacity without interrupting the facility's ongoing use for immigration detention. This gives us a practical temporary solution while we continue working toward the long-term reforms already in motion. Importantly, the investment is not temporary, the upgrades will remain and ultimately strengthen the FDC's infrastructure for its continued use by Immigration".

UNOPS, as the implementing partner, will oversee the design, procurement and execution of the upgrades to improve safety, functionality and detention conditions. The works will be guided by national regulations and relevant international detention standards, including the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, known as the Nelson Mandela Rules.

"Supporting Caribbean governments in strengthening their justice systems means helping turn national priorities into facilities and services that uphold human dignity and enable institutions to fulfil their responsibilities. In Sint Maarten, UNOPS is supporting the Ministry of Justice in addressing immediate detention needs while building capacity for the future", said Giuseppe Mancinelli, UNOPS Barbados Country Director and Caribbean Coordinator.

Alongside the works, preparations will include procedures for managing and maintaining the facility. The Government of Sint Maarten will provide the custodial staff needed for the facility to become operational once the upgrades are completed.

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Notes to the editors:



[Photo](#)

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About the 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.

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