



**Ministry of Education,  
Culture, Youth & Sport**

**Honorable Minister Silveria Jacobs**

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Honorable President of the General Conference, the  
Honorable Director General

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Madame President, it is an honor, as Minister  
Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten on behalf of the  
Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport,  
that I stand here at the 39<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO  
General Conference to share the accomplishments  
and visions of St. Maarten on behalf of our  
Government and her people.

Firstly, I would like to thank Madame Irina Bokova for her exemplary years of service as Director General of this auspicious organization, and I would like to congratulate Madame Audrey Azoulay on her nomination by the Executive Board for the post Director General.

This visit serves as an honor to represent my government and country, after the worst hurricane recorded in history to hit the shores of our beautiful island. Our people have proven to be resilient, willing and ready to build back St. Maarten better and stronger.

Madame President, in continuing with the goals and focus of UNESCO, St. Maarten has made important and structural strides in areas such as education, youth empowerment, cultural perseverance and technological efforts.

Madame President,... First allow me to thank and congratulate UNESCO and the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science in the Netherlands for the Intangible Cultural Heritage Workshops hosted in collaboration with UNESCO. The workshops have contributed largely to the development of Cultural and National Heritage on St. Maarten.

It is now 4 years into the celebration of the “Decade of Revitalizing our Natural and Cultural Heritage”, and to get a larger percentage of the community to give their opinion on St. Maarten’s Intangible Cultural Heritage, plus to finalize the island’s first Intangible Cultural Heritage inventory in June 2016, ...the Culture Department and the St. Maarten National Commission for UNESCO launched a national survey, where the community was asked to fill out a questionnaire on St. Maarten Intangible Cultural Heritage, either online or on hard copy. To date, over two hundred surveys were collected,

information sessions were organized and a second National Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Consultations were held. The Department of Culture is also in the process of developing a National Legislation for the protection of its National Cultural (Tangible and Intangible) Heritage.

In order to further protect and preserve our heritage, a program for the digitalizing of our cultural artifacts and archives commenced in 2017.

Madame President,... St. Maarten has agreed to co-ratify together with the Netherlands, the 2001 Convention on the protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. Ratifying the convention is important to St. Maarten for the preservation of our underwater Cultural heritage. The implementation of the 2001 Convention along with the enforcement of our National Maritime Ordinance will assist with the prevention of pillage, destruction and commercial exploitation of our Underwater Cultural

Heritage as well as assist in further developing the National Policy on the protection of Underwater Heritage.

Madame President,...Teaching for the 21<sup>st</sup> century student, is challenging our educational system to facilitate learning for a future unknown to us all. To ensure the students are given the fair opportunity to compete in today's world of technology, two Caribbean Technology & Education Conferences organized by The Foresee Foundation in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and sponsored by St. Maarten Development Fund, Windsong Foundation and UNESCO, were held on the island on November 2015 and October 2016.

The Government of St. Maarten has been and is still committed to the integration of ICT in Education. This goal is to improve the quality of life of the people of St. Maarten in general, by significantly enriching their social, economic and cultural well-being through the development and modernization of the society. Our goal is also to utilize ICT in schools, to transform the educational landscape of St. Maarten. In this context, the Ministry of Education, Culture Youth and Sport has embarked on a project, formerly known as one tablet per child, and now referred to as 'iSTEP', which stands for "Inspiring our Students with Technology in Education Project". iSTEP is a multi-annual project aimed at facilitating the transitioning from the traditional classroom setting to a modern learning environment, to further stimulate 21<sup>st</sup> century learning.

Madame President,... St. Maarten submitted its first nomination for the Memory of the World Programme international registry in 2016, and in 2017 we submitted a joint nomination with Suriname and Curacao to the regional register of the UNESCO Memory of the World Regional Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean entitled 'The Documentary heritage of the enslaved people of the Dutch Caribbean'. I am elated to report that On October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017; the Ministry was informed that the joint nomination was approved. St. Maarten is proud to its first successful entrée of its documentary heritage into the Memory of the World Register for Latin America and Caribbean.

Madame President,...With the admittance of the M.A.C. Comprehensive Secondary Education into the UNESCO Associated School Project Network, St. Maarten is now one of the newest countries to join the ASPnet.

Madame President,..In an effort to continue facilitating the improvement of quality of life and equal opportunity for continued learning, on March 22, 2017, St. Maarten was accepted as a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. As a member, St. Maarten looks forward to sharing ideas and learning from other cities' possible solutions for certain issues relevant to education, which will improve the practice of lifelong learning, and support the achievement of all seventeen Sustainable Development Goals , in particular SDG 4 and SDG 11.

In closing, Madame President,..As you may have noticed, St. Maarten was severely impacted by Hurricane Irma, however, the people continue to prove how truly resilient they are. Service men and women, civil servants, teachers, parents and community members have been working since September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017, in all efforts to clean up and rebuild St. Maarten... St. Maarten is small, but the



people are strong, resilient, and hardworking. We were not where we wanted to be post September 6<sup>th</sup>, but we will rise stronger than ever before, by “building back better” and focusing on our strength as a people to work together to achieve 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills for all our people to be able to thrive locally, regionally and globally.