

## Prime Minister signs Grant Agreement for Debris and Landfill project



**PHILIPSBURG** - On Friday, December 21, Prime Minister Leona Romeo-Marlin signed the grant agreement with the World Bank for the Emergency Debris Management Project. This agreement provides US\$ 25 million in funding to suppress the fires on the landfill, salvage damaged vessels in the Simpson Bay Lagoon and clear the island of any remaining hurricane debris. The project will also provide financing to improve the management of the landfill and decommission the Irma-dump.

“I’m very pleased to sign this important agreement for the people and visitors of Sint Maarten. The Interim Recovery Committee, the Ministry of VROMI, the Ministry of VSA and the World Bank have worked tirelessly to make the start of this crucial project possible. Now it is time for the next step” Prime Minister Romeo-Marlin stated.

The Prime Minister was joined for the signing of the grant agreement by the Representative of the Netherlands on Sint Maarten, Mr. Chris Johnson, as well as Minister Emil Lee of VSA and Minister Miklos Giterson of VROMI.

On behalf of the Government of the Netherlands, Chris Johnson applauded the signing of the grant agreement. “Solving the problem of waste has been identified by the Netherlands as one of the priorities in establishing the Trust Fund. In recent months, the World Bank and Sint Maarten have been working diligently to prepare a plan to fight the fires and attain proper dumpsite management.

This signing is an important milestone which addresses an issue that is of absolute importance to the people of Sint Maarten. The Netherlands is glad to financially support an initiative of this magnitude” Mr. Johnson stated.

With the signing of the grant agreement, funding becomes available for the different activities of the Emergency Debris Management Project. One of the most crucial activities under this project is the suppression of the smoldering fires in the landfill. These fires and related smoke are a major concern for the people living in the area and the wider community of Sint Maarten and need to be managed as soon as possible.

In preparation of the fire suppression activities, the Government and the World Bank have conducted several environmental studies and tests to determine the best approach to fight the fires on the landfill. Last week, a team of experts also visited the neighborhood next to the landfill to speak with residents about possible solutions for relocation. Due to the fires on the landfill, there are risks for persons living in the area right next to the landfill, specifically once the fire suppression activities start. The Government is therefore looking into options for closing off part of the neighborhood.

The Government is committed to finding a permanent solution for the landfill and on the longer term, Sint Maarten’s solid waste issues more broadly. Throughout the implementation of the Emergency Debris Management Project, the Government will work with the World Bank on the preparation of a second project for solid waste management and environmental improvement, with an estimated budget of 35 million US dollars. This project will aim to improve long-term waste management and will implement key elements of the Roadmap for Sustainable Waste Management on Sint Maarten.

Photo caption: Chris Johnson(l) - Office of the Representation of the Netherlands, Prime Minister Leona Romeo Marlin and Minister Emil Lee (r) – Ministry of VSA.