

***International Association of Economic and Social Councils***

***and Similar Institutions***

**(AICESIS)**

**April 2014**

**Social Dialogue in Sint Maarten**

**Introduction**

In April 2012 the government of Sint Maarten signed a cost sharing agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This agreement puts into effect the partnership between the government of Sint Maarten represented by the Ministry of General affairs and the UNDP through the Program “Building a Nation: St. Maarten National Development Plan and institutional Strengthening’.

**History**

On October 10, 2010 Sint Maarten became an autonomous country within the Dutch Kingdom, prior to October 10, 2010 the social dialogue in Sint Maarten was lacking in development. Once Sint Maarten received “country status” pertinent institutions such as ESC Sint Maarten, tri-parte committee were called into existence. Institutions and committees wherein a social dialogue was top priority.

**Participants**

The planning of these multiple dialogue consultations requires an organizational structure in which not only government is represented.

Since the overall objective of the social dialogue is to create a platform where different parties involved assent with one another on the National Vision and development plan for St. Maarten, the entities who will carry out the Dialogue process and have the responsibility to accomplish this are categorized as follows:

- Governmental Departments/ Public sector;

- Citizenry/ NGO-sector;

- Private sector

**Process**

This program aims to support the Nation Building/Social dialogue process by means of:

1. Formulating a National Vision.

2. A National Development Plan through a broad scale democratic dialogue process.

3. Capacity building in the areas of Results Based Management and evidence Based Management.

The National Vision will be built on the outcome of a highly participatory and inclusive Dialogue Platform, complemented by existing strategic development plans.

By bringing together all stakeholders on St. Maarten, the program will support the social dialogue. The planning of these multiple dialogue consultations requires an organizational structure in which not only government is represented.

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**The Economic and Social Council of Sint Maarten**

**Introduction**

As part of the constitution of the new Country Sint Maarten and as one of the required organic national ordinances, to this end, on October 10th 2010, the national ordinance Social Economic Council (SER) (GT no. 9) became effective. A properly functioning SER is of essential importance for a society with many social-economic issues. The SER can provide government with solicited or unsolicited advice on socio-economic topics.

**History**

The board of the SER was appointed on May 1st 2011. The Council comprises nine acting members and nine substitute members, of which six representatives of the employers’- and employee organizations and three independent members (experts). The (independent) members are appointed by national decree upon recommendation of the Minister of General Affairs.

**Structure**

The SER, as an advisory- and consulting body of employers’ and employees and independent experts, want to make a contribution to the social affluence of Sint Maarten. To do so, the SER strives for quality and support: great expertise in combination with broad based agreement and support in the society.

The SER is authorized to invite others to the SER meetings and to allow them to participate in its deliberations with an advisory vote. Each Minister can request the SER to allow one or more appointed civil servants admittance to the SER meetings as an observer. In the event that the SER grants the request the civil servant will have an advisory vote at the respective meeting.

The logo of the SER is built up from a combination of three colors, red, green and blue,  which together represent the employers’- and employees’ organizations and independent experts in the SER.

The circle symbolizes the strong tie of each partner that is represented in the SER. Each part of the circle is of equal size, this reflects the balance within the SER, all partners are equal. All elements together result in a strong circle, which reflects the power of the SER as partner in the social economic development process.

The members of the Social Economic Council and their replacements resign every three years after which they can immediately be reappointed.

**Work**

The Secretariat consists formally of six permanent positions and is under the supervision of the Secretary General. The Secretary General is appointed and dismissed by national decree after hearing the Council. Suspension takes place upon a proposal of the Council via a decree of the Minister of General Affairs. The staff of the Secretariat supports the Council in its advices and consultation work by doing:

       Research, studies and presentations

       Gathering information for the meetings

       Providing the members with information

       Making up the minutes and taking care of the final editing of the advices.

**The future of the Social Dialogue in Sint Maarten**

Institutions such as ESC Sint Maarten, tri-parte committee should work more closely together. Institutions and committees wherein a social dialogue are top priority, should be granted the opportunity to be more involved in the decision making process. Continued participation and the experiences gained in international institutions such as the AICESIS, should be used to address the challenges facing the people of Sint Maarten.