



February 22, 2021

Prime Minister and Minister of General Affairs
The Honorable Ms. Silveira E. Jacobs
Government of Sint Maarten
Government Building
University Drive, Philipsburg
Sint Maarten

Dear Prime Minister Jacobs,

On behalf of the St. Maarten Airline and Handlers Association (SAHA) Airline Operating Committee (AOC), we would like to draw your attention to some urgent matters with regards to the Princess Juliana International Airport (PJIA) terminal reconstruction project.

Since Hurricane Irma severely damaged the airport over three years ago, we have seen many publications, presentations, and airline facilitation meetings in which plans, timelines and priorities on the reconstruction of the airport were presented. Furthermore, delegations from Delta Air lines and Air France/KLM visited PJIA management demonstrating their commitment to the destination. These meetings were held in a very constructive and positive atmosphere with the management of PJIA after which there were high hopes for an efficient completion timeline of the SXM terminal reconstruction project. However, to date none of the projected deadlines have been met.

In light of the above, Airline and handler staff remain housed in sea containers that serve as offices; a solution that may have been acceptable for a limited period of time, but it has now been over 3 years. Based on the latest forecast announced by PJIA, the new offices will only become available in Quarter 2 of 2022. This means, that staff will continue to be housed in these containers for more than 5 years. The lack of a proper working environment is unacceptable. Making sure that staff can work in proper facilities that meet all normal standards of work environment, should be the number one priority. Employees cannot continue to perform their duties in an environment that impacts morale, motivation, and the high customer service culture we are known for in St. Maarten.

In addition to the aforementioned, the working conditions as described, can ultimately lead to a lack of employee focus resulting in poor judgment resulting in an increase in human error that can potentially jeopardize operational safety and security. Furthermore, the rules and regulations on COVID19, such as social distancing, cannot be adequately met in a container environment and puts our staff at an increased risk of contagion.

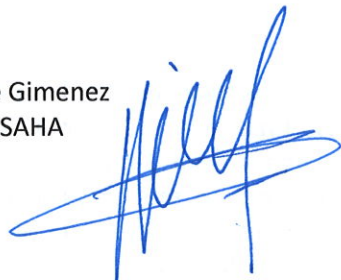
Madam Prime Minister, airlines, handlers, and the airport alike can no longer continue to accept these conditions which ignore some of the basic principles in aviation. Safety and security departments in all companies that operate at PJIA are becoming more concerned and as such SAHA is raising the alarm to urge PJIA management for a complete revision of the priority setting stages of the reconstruction plan. SAHA hereby requests that the office delivery timeline for airlines and handlers is brought forward by at least 6 months.

In 2019, the industry through consultation with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and PJIA, agreed to increase the airport improvement fee, paid by airline customers, from \$5,50 to \$11,00. In 2020 PJIA indicated that traffic volumes were lower than anticipated and as such the fee was raised to \$12,50. At the time PJIA indicated that these funds were desperately needed for reconstruction purposes. Additionally, to our knowledge, there are other sources of funds available to finance the reconstruction. In that respect, we request a clear and comprehensive statement from PJIA in which the application of these funds is explained.

We hope that we can count on your support towards a speedy resolution to the above and look forward to your favorable response.

Yours Respectfully,

Mr. Alcide Gimenez
President SAHA



Cc: Mr. Brian Mingo, CEO, PJIA
Mr. Dextor Doncher , Supervisory Board Holding
Mr. Rolando Brison , Chairman of Parliament
Ms. Ludmila De Weever, Minister of TEATT
Mrs. Annaleen Lord, Area Manager, Caribbean, IATA
SAHA membership