



## **Statement by the Government of Sint Maarten**

**Delivered by Hon. Silveria Jacobs, Prime Minister of Sint Maarten**

**On the occasion of the 2023 SDG Summit  
High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development under the auspices of the 78<sup>th</sup>  
United Nations General Assembly**

**Accelerating SDG Commitments: 1.8 Billion Adolescents and Youth Transforming our World**

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*[Transcribed by PMNCH]*

Good afternoon.

Similar, to our poet, I am an educator that is used to receiving a response and I want to say thank you for setting that trend this afternoon and also inspiring as a girl myself, I'm truly inspired by your words and can find myself in all of them. We definitely need creatives to set the stage to be able to forward the SDGs.

Distinguished guests today, I stand before you to address you on behalf of my tiny island nation Sint Maarten, an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, situated in the northeastern Caribbean.

In preparing for today, I read something very important. Youth are engines of growth and development active participants, but they must be active participants. Who agrees that that is very, very necessary.

But there are some prerequisites for them to be active participants. It requires us. It requires us, as governments and other stakeholders within the Community, international agents, NGOs, CSO's and what we in Sint Maarten call the village.

The village that's needed to raise each young person to be the best that they can be. I started out as a teacher. I started out touching lives individually and that is what inspired me to reach this level. I'm convinced that all of us stand to gain if we are truly serious about incorporating the voices of young people. As adolescents and young people navigate the path towards a brighter future we must recognize and appreciate the immense significance of nurturing your well-being and providing you with the support, tools and skills that you need to thrive. I want to repeat, young people must be actively engaged, and as governments and your village, it is our responsibility to do that by actively listening.

In the Sint Maarten context, I want to bring something to you. Following the devastation of Hurricane Irma in 2017, we initiated the child resilience and Protection project in collaboration with UNICEF. This project focused on nurturing emotional well-being by creating a school-

based screening tool, implementing a psychosocial programme for students as well as their caregivers and providing violence prevention training for teachers.

Because we know you were going through a trauma, and we needed to be aware of that to be able to address this. The project focuses on nurturing emotional well-being by creating a school-based screening tool, as I said, and it's aligned with our national development vision for Sint Maarten for a prosperous and resilient future. We like to talk about the youth are our future, but there is no future unless we engage them today.

So, while addressing the needed needs of our youth, we must seek to address the long-term goals and fostering more collaboration, and for such we have a very active youth, Parliament. We have a Youth Council that supports all of our youth organisations and trust me, when they hit the floor of Parliament, they hit us hard, and we listen. We take them along. We have youth conferences and ensure that they are supported in everything they do. As a matter of fact, a lot of what we're struggling with to put into policies and programmes just walk into any science fair and you see it in front of you. They are much more aware, and I think since they're the engines, we need to engage them even more and make "achieving the SDG's" cool.

Last night I was very much inspired by the artists, the poets, the singers, the dancers and the musicians, and I think that's the role that we need to play to ensure that they have a voice because TikTok and social media is going to be the way that we make the Change.

Make the SDGs "Cool"! Make gender equality "Cool"!

Make getting healthcare to every person "Cool" and it is going to be your generation that does it.

And we are here to support that!