



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism

# **The Commencement of WINAIR flights from Sint Maarten to Port of Spain**

Remarks by

**Senator the Honourable Satyakama Maharaj**

Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism

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## Salutations

- Senator the Honourable Eli Zakour, Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation;
- Permanent Secretaries;
- Chairman and General Manager of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago;
- CEO of Winair, Mr. Hans van de Velde; Captain and Crew;
- Specially invited guests; members of the media;
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, we mark a practical and important step forward in Caribbean connectivity as we welcome Winair's inaugural service between Port of Spain and Sint Maarten. This is a new, direct air bridge linking Piarco International Airport with Princess Juliana International Airport, strengthening movement between two major regional hubs.

On behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, I congratulate Winair, the Airports Authority, and our colleagues at the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation for the partnership that made this route a reality. This moment is not merely symbolic, it is strategic.

For decades, the ties between Trinidad and Tobago and Sint Maarten have been built through people, through travel for work, education, trade, and family. Those people-to-people connections have always been the backbone of Caribbean integration, and today's inaugural flight honours that history while opening a new chapter of cooperation.

This service is also an economic enabler.

I have noted in recent years, WinAir has undergone a remarkable transformation:

- The airline has expanded its fleet, more than doubling in size since 2023.
- It now operates the largest intra-Caribbean network, serving 17 destinations with over 30 routes.

In the first half of 2025 alone, WinAir recorded:

- 16% growth in scheduled capacity
- 22% increase in passengers carried, and
- 28% rise in total revenue

These are not just numbers — they are proof of stability, reliability, and vision.

WinAir's decision to select Port of Spain as a key route is a vote of confidence in Trinidad and Tobago's economy, our tourism potential, and our role as a regional hub.

From the standpoint of trade and investment, improved air access supports smoother business travel, stronger commercial relationships, and new opportunities for exporters and service providers to expand into wider regional markets.

From the standpoint of tourism, this route increases our potential for multi-destination travel, supports higher-value visitor arrivals for our festivals, conferences, and events, and strengthens the flow of travellers between the Northern Caribbean and the Southern Caribbean.

And from the standpoint of connectivity, it expands practical onward links across the region helping Trinidad and Tobago extend its reach and competitiveness in regional travel and business mobility. It reaffirms our commitment to expanding air transport options and ensuring Trinidad and Tobago remains competitive, accessible, and attractive for global travel and investment.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we see our airports as more than transit points. They are national gateways and regional enablers. And as we build stronger regional networks, we also strengthen the foundation for larger international routes, supporting a wider vision for Piarco as a leading Southern Caribbean hub.

To Winair: thank you for choosing Port of Spain.

To our partners: thank you for your dedication.

And to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and Sint Maarten: thank you for keeping our regional bonds alive.

Trinidad and Tobago is open for business, and today, we take flight together.