

Philipsburg, Sint Maarten – The Kingdom Chair on Democratic Representation, in collaboration with the University of St. Martin (USM), will host a seminar titled *“Democracy in Focus: 15 Years of Autonomy in St. Maarten”* on Friday, September 19, 2025, at the University’s Lecture Hall. This will be the first event held in Sint Maarten under the auspices of the Kingdom Chair, which is led by Professor Wouter Veenendaal and housed at Leiden University.

The Kingdom Chair was established in 2024 to strengthen academic research and education on Kingdom Relations, with a particular focus on the quality of democratic representation within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The research project asks how citizens of the Dutch Caribbean are represented by their local leaders and within the broader Kingdom, and how democratic citizenship in the Kingdom might be promoted and improved. Its work is organized along four lines of inquiry: the character of politics and democracy on the Caribbean islands; the representation of these islands in Kingdom institutions; the perception of Kingdom relations in the European Netherlands; and comparative research with other non-sovereign territories worldwide. In addition to research, the Chair actively builds cooperation with universities and scholars across the six Caribbean islands in the Kingdom, and has appointed local research assistants to bridge academic study and community realities.

The September 19 seminar will bring together leading voices to reflect on Sint Maarten’s democratic journey since gaining country status in 2010. The seminar is moderated by Leandra Leslie, research assistant for the Kingdom Chair on St. Maarten. The president of USM, Dr. Antonio Carmona Baez, will give the opening speech. Subsequently, Dr. Julio R. Romney will give the first presentation on *“15 Years of Autonomy and Democracy in Review.”* Former Ombudsman of Sint Maarten Dr. Nilda Arduin will speak on *“What is Autonomy? How it Looks in Practice and How We Have Dealt with It.”* Professor Wouter Veenendaal will conclude with a lecture on *“The Position of Sint Maarten within the Kingdom.”*

The event is open to students, academics, policymakers, journalists, NGO representatives and the wider public. Interested persons can register via the link [“Registration Event Democracy in Focus.”](#)