

Sint Eustatius, July 23, 2021.

Dear Xiomara, dear Petra,

Yes, it seems that you and we are fighting for the same cause and yes, of course it would be good if we act together as much as possible and speak with one voice.

The matter for which both you and we are fighting concerns the dignity with which the excavations near the airport on Sint Eustatius are being conducted.

Both you and we seem to agree that the current methods being applied not only lack dignity, but that the island government is indiscriminately dealing with the feelings that the local population have about this.

However, the way you and we proceed seems to be rather different. We without political affinity, in silence and by writing in a focused manner, wish to achieve and regain dignity (for example by stopping the excavation works and changing the research approach). We view Kenneth's approach to include much fuss to draw attention to the struggle with Ubuntu as a 'vehicle'. Big words are not avoided (e.g. "plundering" the graves of our ancestors) and this approach has accentuated a lot of media attention.

It may be that in the longer term the approach of Ubuntu and Kenneth is successful in the sense that a change in attitude is sought. But in the shorter term, the goal is to stop the digging through the island government.

From the long term perspective, it is understandable that you want us to stand behind you and leave the communication to you. But it is our conviction that without all the attention (in the media) the short term goal can also be achieved effectively. Just as respect and dignity are expected, if not demanded, by you from the "opponent" (in this case the island government), we prefer to see this expected dignity obtained by showing it ourselves to be so ("what you do not want to be done to you, do not do to another either").

Thus, we prefer not - at least not initially - to seek publicity and create a frenzy through the media, but to fight the battle in writing and to build up a file so that, if necessary, media attention can always be sought later.

We therefore propose to seek joint action along these lines and to prepare the letters jointly in order to pursue both our goals. Transparency in action is a powerful factor here. After all, it is important not to allow ourselves to be divided by the island government, who would benefit the beneficiaries.

It is therefore our request that in the future we no longer communicate to an individual basis and using Whatsapp or Zoom, but with words on paper. Whatever the future looks like, we will continue to follow

developments critically and demand transparency in reports of consultations, decision lists, accountability of the use of budget resources, etc.

We have meanwhile written three succinct, respectful but definitely sharp and demanding letters to the island government whereby we also await a response. We do not mince words and we are conducting the correspondence in the light of the public by also allowing the Kingdom Relations Committee of the Lower House to have a view of the proverbial arena.

It is certainly not about me but the group of concerned and involved Statians with whom and on whose behalf I write. This group has chosen to have me sign the letters as a visible official. In effect, I am their secretary, as it were.

As far as we are concerned, nothing is known yet about, for example, the composition of the supervisory group (whose independence is assumed) - in this case the Statia Heritage Commission - and perhaps non-transparent developments have already taken place. It is among other things this non-transparency that we strongly disapprove of. Perhaps there are already plans and research proposals on the table but if so, they are being discussed by only a few people in which the local population has not been or is not being involved until now. If it is up to the island government, there will be no independent commission at all, but one that is on the leash of the island government.

All things considered, we therefore propose to continue the fight together based on the method described here, through which an irrefutable dossier will be built up. For that reason I ask you not to approach people on our behalf on an individual basis anymore but to write a letter or email with me - Jan Meijer, jhtm.nl@gmail.com or j.m@jhtm.nl - as the central point of communication

I would like to hear from you.

With kind regards,

J.H.T. (Jan) Meijer MSc MBA.

*Cc: Chairman and members of the Kingdom Relations Committee of the Lower House
(Deputy) Government Commissioner
Cultural Heritage Agency
Members of the Island Council of Sint Eustatius*