

Excellency,

On Monday afternoon 25 November 2019 there was an interview with me. It was the conversation you had put me in the limelight on 31 October, through the intervention of your Director of Kingdom Relations. You expressed the hope that this conversation would lead to a satisfactory solution.

In some respects the conversation was also satisfactory, but there is also a remaining part that is incomprehensible. The lack of understanding focuses on two points. Firstly, there is the discrepancy between what I expect, on the one hand, and the narrow view of the task as deduced by the government commissioner from the "temporary law on the neglect of the task of St. Eustatius" on the other hand. Secondly, there is the concept of 'transparency', which can be used in various ways.

The government commissioner explains that he takes a very strict view of his task: accountability is only given to you and not to (any representation of) the Statian population (whatsoever). As far as the scope of the tasks is concerned, it mainly concerns the filling in of those matters that were neglected or insufficiently filled in by the previous (now set aside) government. As long as it's about accountability I don't see where I disagree with you or the government commissioner. But if that marks the regular communication with the Statian population at the same time, then in my opinion this is still a point of attention. Here the government commissioner notes that the government website and the Facebook page of the local government meet a need. I do not want to fall into an inappropriate discussion, but I dare you to get a picture of the adequacy of the two sources of information mentioned. The messages on the website are incomprehensible due to the lack of underlying documents and Facebook is indeed a locally widely used medium, but for the purpose of formal reporting (and finding it) it is still rather unsuitable.

When it comes to transparency, the government commissioner has achieved enough when the parties *directly* involved were invited to discuss the various subjects. My understanding of transparency is broader: the extent to which an organisation, company or enterprise is visible, open and accessible. If those *directly* involved are also invited *directly* without a public announcement about this, then in my view it is quickly called a so-called backroom consultation. In the case of the government that has now been set aside, the meetings of the Island Council and of the commissioners were in any case still public, and the agenda had also been made widely known in advance. In the view of the government commissioner, transparency in the broad sense of the word may be a wish on my part, but it is certainly not part of his experience of the necessary island government during the current regime.

Where the government commissioner has an absolute point, it concerns the difference between my wish (*but certainly not only mine*) for transparency in the broadest sense of the word and his view of his duties in the narrow sense of the word. For example, I see an important challenge in the question: "In what direction do the Stadians like to see their island experience moving in the next ten to twenty years". The government commissioner, on the other hand, speaks of a policy-

poor period that will last as long as necessary but as short as possible. For this reason, he does not care at all about this question and limits himself to - in my words - clearing the rubble. I agree wholeheartedly with him that the future does not directly concern his responsibility, but a broad, island discussion remains an undiminished necessity and in my opinion his role should be limited to facilitating this discussion (all the more so because such a discussion will not easily lead to a broad consensus: this requires a lot of time and a lot of (townhall) consultation with an open agenda).

It is my opinion (*but certainly not only my own*) that if the current, limited view of the tasks of the Government Commissioner is continued, without much broad, public involvement, the sustainable improvement of the administrative, economic and social situation in St. Eustatius will in fact not take place (for this last sentence I refer to the bill and the explanatory memorandum, as submitted to the Lower House). In my own words: "the *hearts and minds* of the Statians will certainly not be won". After termination of the current intervention, I firmly believe that life on the island will soon fall back into the situation that led to the intervention in February 2018.

Let me conclude. Yes, the conversation took place in good harmony and was partly satisfactory. There are two main differences of opinion. Where, in my opinion (*but certainly not only my own*), transparency should be extended (call it a legitimate wish in my opinion), the government commissioner only sees himself as complying with what the law requires of him and does not intend to act more broadly than this legal framework (and the current provision of information to the public suffices as far as he is concerned). Furthermore, there is a need for a broad social discussion about the future of the island. It seems important to me to involve the Statians as much as possible in this issue. The government commissioner is of the opinion that this broad social discussion is not his responsibility, so he does not want to contribute to it, not even in a (merely) facilitating sense.

Kind regards,

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Note: Marginal we discussed the differences in legislation between the European and Caribbean Netherlands. In this respect, I noted, among other things, that it is important that the legislation in both the Netherlands should in principle be entirely the same, whereby, if necessary and with the approval of the court, a difference in the application of the law should be possible, solely on the basis of climatological or geographical arguments. However, this discussion is one that belongs in The Hague and not in the island government.