

Dear Chairman and members of the Commission on Kingdom Relations,

Today, Monday, October 5, 2020, I take note of the letter from the Secretary of State for the Interior and Kingdom Relations, dated the same October 5, 2020. Although I realize that it is a letter from the government to parliament and (thus) Dutch will suffice, I note that for the time being this letter is only available in the Dutch language, so the idea that the local population might be interested in the contents of this letter has not played any significant role in its drafting or sending. That is a pity.

Under 'General view' I read that overcoming the (effects of the) crisis requires a lot from the government commissioner and his team. All the more so, I read, because the number of infections has increased. The fact that this increase is largely attributable to carelessness on the part of the same government commissioner and the hospital's staff is not mentioned. Understandable but not open and honest. Here was an opportunity to show that governing the island and the hospital is also human work, where sometimes mistakes are made. But, as I wrote before, like a real regent, the population is reminded by the government commissioner to maintain personal hygiene and to be resilient. Because only then will we come to a good end together. It sounds like a kind of prayer with the aim to keep the number of Covid-19 cases as low as possible and thus manageable (because the so-called "white column" may not know what to do when a real outbreak takes place here).

In the letter - I confine myself to the 'General picture' and the part 'Conditions prior to phase 1' - mention is made of a lack of affordable flight connections. That has been the case for a long time (at least as long as I live here: about six years). Lately it has been mentioned a bit more often (also by myself) as a bottleneck, but apart from the uncomfortable test balloons over a ferry there is actually nothing or nobody who wants to do something about those too expensive flight connections. And that while the Dutch government (together with the government of Sint Maarten) owns the monopolist Winair. I would like to say here "who fits the shoe, put it on".

In a new paragraph I read literally "Consensus building through dialogue and transparency is still a priority of the government commissioner". Other than so-called 'backroom consultations', however, do not take place in reality. It is pertinently untrue that the Social Advisory Board is involved in the subjects that are taken up, at least in the sense that substantive consultations take place. In order to verify this point, you should read the minutes of these consultations. There are few, if any, of them (note: the responsibility for drawing them up has already been assumed by the government commissioner as of 2018, just like that of drawing up the agenda for the consultation) and should you actually ask this question, then - I suspect - some minutes will be made up at that moment. It seems to me that the words "dialogue" and "transparency" had to be included in this letter in a positive context, whether or not what is written is true.

I myself have already asked the government commissioner where I can find the minutes of the consultation with the Central Dialogue. As a hiding answer I was told that the initiative of the Central Dialogue does not lie with the local government and that they (therefore) do not make minutes. On the radio, the government commissioner also reported that a consultation has started with the Statian list leaders about the Covid-19 situation. As far as I am concerned, what is further discussed here falls under the term 'backroom consultation' again, because the general public on the island only knows

what is made known through the radio (and that is nothing about this kind of dialogue or consultation)¹.

The sentence "In the preparation of the elections, political parties and interested parties are invited to participate in live or online meetings to engage in dialogue to support the step towards democratic recovery" is one that I cannot place at all in my daily experience on the island. As far as I know, there is no such invitation at all. In the coming period, I read further on, attention will be paid to informing the population about the first phase of the St. Eustatius Provisions Restoration Act. I am curious if I will get some of this (other than what I find out by actively searching for it myself on the internet).

I also read that a sufficiently reliable electoral register is available. At the time of writing this reaction (5 October 2020), it is still sixteen days before the day of the elections. Should I have expected my 'call' already? I don't know, maybe it will come, but I haven't received anything yet.

I can tell you little or nothing about the reorganization of the civil service. I simply don't know. A change manager has - apparently - been appointed before. It will be so, but don't ask me who that is, because I wouldn't be able to tell you.

Well, so much for a few comments on the letter from the Secretary of State.

As always I wish you much wisdom.

Kind regards,

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¹ Speaking of the radio broadcasts. It is an exception (and certainly not a rule) that such broadcasts start on time. It even happens that one day the government commissioner reports that "further information will be given tomorrow" after which there will be no broadcasts the next day. And that 'further information' then evaporates over time, so that we are kept stupid rather than informed.

At the time of hurricane 'Irma' I have already pointed out this "doing what you promise" regarding radio broadcasts. Precisely when everyone is possibly deprived of electricity and people want to be economical with their batteries, it is important not to make people wait unnecessarily long at the radio. Anyway, this rather disrespectful attitude has now also been adopted by our government commissioner instead of 'fighting' against it.