

Dear Chairman and members of the Commission on Kingdom Relations,

With interest but also with some surprise I took note of the news in The Daily Herald ¹ that the independent member of the Island Council of St. Eustatius, Mr. Koos Sneek, is going to the Netherlands to explain his document "*A new beginning*" ², aimed at approval of the government (which of course includes the necessary funding).

With regard to the contents of his plan I do not want to detract from anything; perhaps I myself would place other accents and perhaps I could mention other matters (and I have done so in previous letters as well), but that is not my concern at the moment. The fact that he takes the initiative to bring his points to the fore with you (and others) is not a point that bothers me either. That is hardly possible either: after all, I do it myself, albeit only in writing for the time being.

No, what bothers me are two things. One case I base on what he would have said according to The Daily Herald and the second concerns the introduction of the plan. I start with the introduction of his plan.

- The introduction of his plan is written entirely in the 'we'-form. As if it were an island-wide document. That does not appear to be the case at all. Who is involved in the drawing up of the plan is unknown to me, but in any case I know for sure that the PLP, after all the largest party in the recent elections, is not involved. It is not a document that has been put on the agenda and agreed in the Island Council. I don't know if the party from which he was recently separated - the DP - is involved, but I don't rule out the possibility that Mr. Koos Sneek is engaged in a well-intentioned but nonetheless not well-prepared solo action. This is all the more important because he himself appeals more than once to cooperation (with The Hague and with the other islands in the Dutch Caribbean).
- Then the article in The Daily Herald itself. The article says to quote Mr. Koos Sneek when he expects that his new status as an independent island council member will not hinder him in the effective contact with the Dutch parliamentarians and other officials. After all, government commissioner Van Rij has already expressed his support for these initiatives. Well, what am I supposed to think of that. So there is nothing discussed or agreed in the Island Council and the government commissioner has already expressed his support for the initiatives mentioned in the plan. A salient detail is of course that both Van Rij and Sneek are members of the same political party in the European Netherlands (which 'coincidentally' is also the party of State Secretary Knops): the CDA ³. It gives the appearance of backroom politics and in any case not of an open, island wide balance of interests.

¹ See <https://www.thedailyherald.sx/islands/koos-sneek-launches-his-action-plan-in-the-hague>

² See <http://stata.nu/bibliotheek/Action-Plan-2020-A-New-Beginning.pdf>

³ A nuancing remark about this. It seems obvious to me that Van Rij and Knops are members of the CDA. As a DP member, Sneek was the driving force behind the cooperation between DP and CDA. That there are direct ties between him and members of the CDA seems obvious to me. Whether he is actually a member of the CDA I'm not sure.

It is not up to me to tell you what your position should be like, but I would like - in your position - to give Mr. Sneek the message to make the intended cooperation work on his 'own' Statia first.

Kind regards,

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Cc: *Government commissioner on St. Eustatius*
Mr. Koos Sneek