

Dear chairman and members of the KR, I&W, VWS and EZK Committees,

As a follow-up to my letter of January 2nd, in which I make some remarks about the granting of the mortgage loan by the Dutch government to Winair, I note that apparently some commotion has arisen after all; up to and including Parliamentary questions.

If I try to analyze the commotion to some extent, I see a certain emphasis on the financial aspect: the amount of the amount, the duration of the loan, the collateral, the interest with Parliamentary questions about the salaries of Winair's management. All of these are very important of course, but with this letter I want to shift the focus a bit.

There is the question of ownership: a small part (7.95%) of the shares is in the hands of the European Dutch government, the remainder in the hands of the government of Sint Maarten. In my experience, the European Netherlands (and therefore the Caribbean Netherlands) has more trouble than ease of ownership of this share. This is because it means that the ambition of Winair and Sint Maarten can become irresponsibly great and that the European Netherlands - with its minority interest - can (or: will?) put up little opposition to this and, moreover, seems to be bound by the ambition to keep any competition from Winair out of the door.

Instead, I would like to plead for the disposal of this minority interest in its entirety (for the benefit of the government of St. Maarten), so that the government of the European Netherlands can focus without any burden on the issue of how to solve the connectivity puzzle in the Caribbean region while taking into account all relevant and related aspects such as

- 'public transport',
- postal care and distribution,
- transport of the sick to a focal point that might just as well be the collection of Leeward Islands - including Bonaire, as part of the BES islands - rather than the combination of Sint Maarten and Colombia,
- which parties can best be deployed on which connection,
- desired independence in the broad sense of the country of St. Maarten as far as the Dutch Caribbean can be self-sufficient.

Furthermore, I read in various media on January 8, 2021 <sup>1</sup> (luchtvaartnieuws.nl, The Daily Herald, BES-reporter.com and Koninkrijk.nu) an open letter from Mr. Hans de Jong, who approached the case mainly from a financial and political point of view. The latter perspective becomes clear at the end when he makes a link with the elections in March 2021. As far as I am concerned, a somewhat debatable point of view would, in my opinion, it should be a better one if the need for mobility of the islanders were seen against the background of the relatively poor population and the relatively high rates. Another somewhat underexposed angle in this open letter is the fact that Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba should actually have a good and frequent mutual connection (given the status of these three islands, jointly forming the Dutch Caribbean). For Mr. Hans de Jong the same issue seems to be at stake, but mainly seen from the role that Winair can play in this. In view of his role as a member of Winair's Supervisory Board, this may also be explainable.

---

<sup>1</sup> See <https://luchtvaartnieuws.nl/nieuws/categorie/2/airlines/winair-financiele-steun-uit-nederland-terecht-en-noodzakelijk>, <https://www.thedailyherald.sx/islands/winair-says-loan-is-not-a-free-ride>, <https://bes-reporter.com/index.php/2021/01/08/letter-to-the-editor-financial-support-to-winair/>, <https://koninkrijk.nu/2021/01/07/nederlandse-steun-winair-dient-publiek-belang/>

While reading this open letter I also noticed that he - Mr. Hans de Jong - makes a reference to the report *Connectivity Caribbean part of the Kingdom* <sup>2</sup>. In that report the different lines in the (Dutch) Caribbean region are analyzed. At the time I already noticed <sup>3</sup> that the expert group (a steering group above the project group that drew up the SEO report) did not mention a desired connection between Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba at all. According to me this need has existed since 10-10-10 because as of that date the Dutch Caribbean came into being with an administrative center of gravity on Leeward Bonaire and Saba and St. Eustatius as sister islands.

Now I have no idea what was on the board of the expert group when the selection of lines to be investigated was made. However, I do notice that Mr. Hans de Jong joined Winair as a commissioner shortly after the realization of the SEO report (according to his LinkedIn profile). From November 2017 until July 2020 he appears to have been director of the CCAA, the aviation authority of Curaçao. Since August 2020 he is (again) a member of the Supervisory Board of Winair. All this is public information and there is nothing wrong with it, of course. But what is becoming a lot clearer to me now is that:

- a direct line between St. Eustatius/Saba and Bonaire will not be a favorite connection of Mr. Hans de Jong (because Winair cannot handle that distance with its own equipment) and he will therefore not have been dissatisfied with the choice of lines of the expert group (in which he himself was a member);
- in his role as Commissioner he has to supervise the proper interpretation and application of the conditions attached to the so-called wet-lease construction while, with his background as director of CCAA, he should be very well aware of this construction and the conditions attached to it; this combination may also make it easy for him to ensure that the wrongful wet-lease construction is used by Winair to pursue its regional 'greatness';
- the lines of communication between the Supervisory Board and the Dutch government are short enough to effectively negotiate the financing provided.

Once again, all this is not secret information. But it gives (more) insight into Mr. Hans de Jong's motives to radiate a positive message with his open letter and above all not to let the light shine on information that, in his view, should not be emphasized.

With this letter I hope to have broadened the information available to you sufficiently to make wise decisions when it comes to connectivity in the Caribbean region (which should mainly meet the mobility of the population and its administration, and to a lesser extent support monopolists).

Kind regards,

J.H.T. (Jan) Meijer MSc MBA,  
Bellevue Road 4, Upper Round Hill,  
St. Eustatius, Dutch Caribbean.

*CC: Government commissioner on Sint Eustatius*

---

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.jhtm.nl/stationews/bibliotheek/connectiviteit-caribische-deel-van-het-koninkrijk.pdf>. This report is dated July 2018, but is only presented to the House of Representatives eight months later (March 2019).

<sup>3</sup> As a result of the publication of this report, I wrote to the Lower House on March 8, 2019 and advocated this interconnection. See my correspondence on <http://statia.nu/en/24.php>.