

St. Eustatius, April 13, 2022.

Dear Chairman and members of the Kingdom Relations Committee,

I was pleasantly surprised when I read the analysis of Mr. Harald Linkels in BES-reporter ¹ about the functioning of the Island Council of St. Eustatius. I am of the opinion that this analysis well reflects how I think about it myself. Especially where the analysis states that if Hague parliamentarians would really want to know how the Island Council functions that they should actually attend the Island Council regularly. Instead, the functioning of the Island Council is found by the Government Commissioner who reports on this to the State Secretary who himself is in charge of the appointment of the Government Commissioner. In other words: if The Hague finds that the strings must still be pulled tight, then the government commissioner will come up with findings that naturally lead to that 'desired' outcome. Like the butcher inspecting his own meat, or "we of WC-eend advise WC-eend".

And in any case, I would like to give you the thought that the government wants to continue to have a say in the fortunes of St. Eustatius until the point of no return will have been reached with what the investor(s) imagine(s) with the investments on St. Eustatius. These will lead - so is my firm expectation - to a kind of St. Barths: a playground for the rich in which the population of Statia does not share at all in the increase of prosperity. At best, they can get a job as a cleaner or a waitress. It is this 'hypothesis' that, for the time being, proves itself in daily practice but which is preferably kept out of sight in The Hague. Consultation or consent of the people of Statia or their representatives in the Island Council has never been put on the agenda, so the control 'must' remain in the hands of the Dutch government and its accomplices (I am referring to the government commissioners) for some time to come. Just as long as the wishes of the investor(s) are fulfilled. Of course, all this is a hypothetical vision of the (near) future, but the fact that it remains jealously undiscussed speaks - it seems to me - for itself.

As an aside, I note that a similar process seems to be taking place on Bonaire when looking more closely at the 'Bolivia project'. And also with the actions of the Central Government that were so neatly exposed in the recent Zembla documentary. On average, the Bonairean population is only getting worse, in favor of a small elite (on Bonaire and in the European Netherlands). It is the image of the merchant versus that of the minister that tips the balance towards that of the merchant, with the

¹ See <https://bes-reporter.com/is-statias-island-council-dysfunctional-i-would-argue-its-not/>

disadvantages falling on the local population, some 7000 kilometers southwest of their own comfortable seat in the Lower House (and other offices in The Hague).

If the similarity of the Public Entity, as defined in the Constitution, with the Dutch municipality (in the corridors the three BES islands are called 'special Dutch municipalities') is indeed so great, then it seems justified to me to ask whether the Dutch government at cabinet level should interfere so intensively with the ups and downs of these islands (or more specifically: with that of St. Eustatius). A more preconditional management based on an administrative agreement (with which the 'what' is agreed) while the answer to the 'how' question can then be found locally.

Finally, a reaction to a much-heard argument in this discussion "that legislation cannot simply and easily be reversed". This is, of course, an occasional argument. If the will really exists to give democracy to the islands (or more specifically: St. Eustatius), then good, equal and mutually respectful consultation is in my opinion considerably more effective than sticking to this artificial situation. I explicitly say 'artificial' because the conditions alone that should be met have been unilaterally imposed and, moreover, lie largely outside the influence of the Island Council.

Moreover, are laws not a reflection of what people 'want' in society? Instead of obstacles to the interpretation of what parties 'want'?

I would therefore like to plead for a speedy termination of the legislation that has gagged St. Eustatius until now and a transition to a management based on the mutually agreed upon administrative agreement.

With kind regards,

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