

Dear Chairman and members of the Kingdom Relations Committee,

Here are a few comments on recent events.

CONNECTIVITY

First of all I see developments at the front of the connectivity between the islands. Recently - August 19th - State Secretary Knops writes a progress report to the Lower House about this. Although I generally welcome every positive development with regard to connectivity in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom, I would like to bring the comment I made in my letter to you of March 8, 2019 into the limelight with you.

This comment concerns the demarcation made by the expert group in the further analysis of the various air connections (see page 11 of the SEO report: "demarcation"). It is precisely the interconnections between Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius that are not the focus of the SEO report, while in my opinion there are good arguments for including these connections in the consideration. I will mention them briefly here:

1. The administrative structure of the Dutch Caribbean has three islands, with an administrative centre of gravity on Bonaire. Easily available transport between the three islands seems to me to be desirable, if not necessary.
2. When the care contracts with Colombia are being phased out in favour of care contracts with care suppliers on the Leeward Islands (with mostly Dutch-speaking practitioners), on the one hand an efficiency improvement can be made in the care domain (budget ZVK!) and on the other hand a better occupation of the flights between the Windward and Leeward Islands (more specifically Saba/Sint Eustatius and Bonaire) can be achieved.

My letter of March 8th concludes with the consideration to you to endorse the recommendation from the report "Connectivity Caribbean part of the Kingdom" and a structural public (flight) transport function on the model of the PSO (Public Service Obligation) to be set up between the three islands of the Caribbean Netherlands.

Note: The website Bonaire.nu publishes on 23 August 2019 a critically tinted article on this subject. Some of the criticism ("who are actually the members of the expert group") can easily be dispelled. After all, page 10 of the SEO report mentions them all by name. Another part of the criticism concerns the working method of the expert group. None of the parties involved seems to have been heard. Well, that criticism is, of course, wholeheartedly supported by me!

TRANSPARENCY OF MANAGEMENT

On both the site Bonaire.nu and Koninkrijksrelaties.nl the 18 and 19 August 2019 respectively the initiative is reported that the Executive Council of the Public Entity of Bonaire wants to intensify the provision of information to the Island Council (and thus the public). To this end, the so-called "Council Information Letter" (RIB) has been developed.

Such an initiative is warmly welcomed by me but the board of the Public Entity of St. Eustatius does not seem that far yet. Here the consultation by or with the island government takes place in principle in the proverbial back rooms. Minutes of the Executive Council are placed on the government website but without underlying documents are almost unreadable or incomprehensible.

RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY ON SINT EUSTATIUS

On 10 August 2019, I wrote all my views on the democratisation wishes and developments on the island. This was prompted by a publication by Koninkrijksrelaties.nu on the Democratic Party's election wishes (7 August 2019) and a critical article by the Caribbean Network (8 August 2019).

The pressure seems to be increasing now that an article of the Caribbean Network appears on 24 August 2019. No new arguments but the general complaint about the decision-making in back rooms without a public debate. You can guess what I think of that: I miss the public debate enormously!

Yet another comment. In line with what I have already written to you on 10 August 2019, I do not think it is wise to choose only people. The old guard is already warming up, but of course it is the content that matters. It is precisely because of the lack of any public debate that no progress has been made on the issue of 'how are we now going to shape the future together'.

Once again, I would like to urge you not only to stick to the (twelve) conditions that have already been laid down, but also to demand an administrative agreement with regard to the realisation of a shared vision of the future. After all, votes must be cast on the content and not just on the leaders of the existing political parties.

Note: I share the idea of Koos Sneek in the Caribbean Network (i.e. "how difficult can it be to get the population administration of about 3000 people in order?") and at the same time I object to the fact that apparently this point was not realized during the DP's administrative years either.

It is still summer recess so I suppose that this writing too will only increase your pile of post to be worked on for the time being, but I feel free to provide you with a final update if necessary in the run-up to your next meeting (11 September 2019).

Kind regards,

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