

Dear Chairman and members of the Kingdom Relations Committee,

My e-mail of August 25th ended with the possibility that I would write you this week with a last update for your next meeting on September 11th.

On a personal note, I see a relationship between the visit of the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality to our island and the fact that a meeting has been planned with the Social Advisory Board as well as a townhall meeting which, it has been promised, will inform the public about some infrastructural projects, including the road project.

A few remarks about this:

1. There has not been a meeting with the aforementioned Social Council or a townhall meeting in such a long time that you have to think of a hypothetical discussion between the Kingdom Representative and the Minister in which the former almost automatically confirms that there is intensive communication with (a representation of) the local population. "*This week a townhall meeting and next week a meeting with the Social Advisory Board*". Don't be fooled: in my earlier reports as well as in the media, there have been several criticisms of the very limited communication with the population as well as with the Social Advisory Council, which is kept extremely short by the Kingdom Representative, because criticism is not tolerated! Townhall meetings that put open consultation on the agenda are not known here. This townhall meeting is also intended - as the announcement states - to inform the population (i.e. one-way traffic).
2. High officials should preferably be "pampered" and informed by the government representative. Much time or space for a broader and more diverse exchange of information is not programmed. Possibly - I think in a somewhat cynical mood now - another starting shot will be fired in the road project with this time the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality in a nice photo position. The appearance should be "*we're doing so well*". The fact that the road project in question has been started again is due to the fact that, for various reasons, the original planned completion in July 2019 was not achieved and has now been set again at March 2020.
3. Recently - August 29th - a milestone has been reached in the so-called Reforestatia project, which is aimed at planting trees and shrubs in as many places as possible on St. Eustatius in order to realise forestry with as much biodiversity as possible, with the higher goal of protecting St. Eustatius against the destructive erosion of the island, among other things. The motto is, of course, that a preventive and island wide project is much more effective and above all much cheaper than retrofitting (as is currently taking place on - for example - the rock face under Fort Oranje). The annoying thing is that such a project is effective in the longer term (think of about twenty years), in any case much longer than the scope as known to the local and central government. And then it's easy that these kinds of sustainable priorities are outweighed by the proverbial delusion of the day. By the way, the hurricane season is already active again: Dorian hasn't done so much damage to the Caribbean islands, but recent history shows that this could have been different just like that. In this context, I would like to point out that where the island makes an effort to plant trees and shrubs, elsewhere on the island it is fairly easy (and apparently

without a permit: if asked, these permits cannot at least be presented) to clear up areas of land for hotel construction.

In that context another observation of which I think "*what about it?*". The impact of Hurricane Irma in 2017 was great (especially on St. Maarten) and it has put various issues on the agenda once again, including on St. Eustatius. One of these things concerned the laying of underground cables for the electricity supply and ICT services. Admittedly, many places were dug and absolutely a lot of cables went underground. I do not know, however, to what extent this project has now been completely completed, because there are still many poles with cabling, particularly outside the village centre. I don't know if these are voltage- or signalless and can be removed better. When you finish laying the cabling underground, you would think: "*remove immediately - in the context of the same project - those poles that could cause a lot of (unnecessary) damage in the event of a storm or hurricane*".

Note: As a concerned resident, you would like to know which projects are running and how they are running over time. Suddenly it turns out that work is being done on water storage basins that are being radically renovated. Consultation with the parties involved is by no means taking place (I am now thinking for example of the Eastern Caribbean Public Health Foundation, based on St. Eustatius, as well as the Island Public Health Department, who are involved in protecting the island as much as possible from rats and mosquitoes, which after all can spread very nasty diseases).

I should like to mention many other things and like to see them on your agenda (such as, for example, payment transactions with NL banks based on euros, the introduction of the BSN and the DigiD in the Dutch Caribbean, the unambiguous legislation in both the European and Caribbean Netherlands and the vision for the future of the island, the need for which has already been placed on your agenda by the Committee of Wise Men), but I, too, have to confine myself to a few points in order to remain effective in my communications with you. In short, I shall leave it at that for now.

Yours sincerely,

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