

Dear Chairman and members of the Kingdom Relations Committee,

On September 23rd there was actually another townhall meeting. Of course it was known for quite some time, but it was only announced shortly before. With a feeling of mistrust towards the local government, which has been practiced in the meantime, I suspect that the aim was to keep the number of visitors to a minimum. After all, difficult questions are not appreciated. The State Secretary's impatience was explained by himself with a sense of self-mockery and humour, but also without that explanation on photos that were shared on Facebook, you can clearly see that the State Secretary as well as the Government Commissioner and his deputy were looking forward to the end of the question session.

Unexpected things obviously did not fit in with the "roadmap" drawn up in advance because - as it turned out a few hours later - the letter to the Lower House of Parliament was already ready to be sent. The truly open agenda and the sincere exchange of views on the future of the island have not been discussed at all since the intervention, and this time too, of course, the protocol had to be followed.

This townhall meeting, too, had the character of "communicating what lies ahead". No, you don't have to think along, we will do that for you. Which independent press reports? None of them.... The letter from the House of Representatives, as you are supposed to believe, tells the ultimate reality here. For the record: I do not question the truthfulness of the letter to the House. What I would like to highlight, however, is the fact that the Stadians are not spoken to in any way, but only written about.

Note: The day after the townhall meeting I will write an e-mail about this to the State Secretary. On September 30th I will receive an e-mail with an acknowledgement of receipt which also states that I may expect a response within three weeks. That period is now behind us and I will inform you immediately when I hear something but I will leave it to you to (critically) question the Secretary of State about this. To this end, I will send you my e-mail exchange with (the office of) the State Secretary separately.

Should the reader have the feeling "what does the author of this e-mail actually want?" I would like to give a concrete answer to that question. I would like to see the government commissioner and his staff actively involve and consult the Stadian population when it comes to the future of the island. This will not be easy, because the interim administration has already put this issue aside (or: put it off) one and a half year ago and - I have mentioned this many times - there is no question of any transparency regarding what is intended (aimed at the future of the island), what activities are being developed for this purpose and what has already been done about it (and with what effect). I foresee the need for many regular (I am thinking of approx. once or twice a month) townhall meetings in order to get this broad public debate off the ground. It is understandable that things will initially be difficult: after all, the feeling among the population that they are de facto treated as second-class Dutchmen has been manifestly present for decades (if not longer). The honesty compels me to say that within my own circle of family and friends I

sometimes emphasize that the special Dutch congregation that St. Eustatius should be in short, is above all special and very little Dutch.

I wish you again and again much wisdom in channelling this viscous matter, which, moreover, by objective standards concerns "only" about three and a half thousand people, with the desired speed and in the desired direction.

With kind regards,

J.H.T. (Jan) Meijer MBA,
St. Eustatius, Dutch Caribbean.

Note: If you would ask me to draw up an agenda for the future which would have to be discussed with both European Dutch officials and the Statian population (in a setting of mutual equivalence), then I do not have the ultimate wisdom (of course) on lease either. A start (call it a "plan") I have described in the website <http://www.statianews.info> (in both the English and Dutch language).