

St. Eustatius, December 14, 2021.

Dear Chairman and Members of the Kingdom Relations Committee,

This time a reaction from me to some reports.

Loan Winair, divestment of shares, instruments for Winair related to transport SXM - SAB/EUX

It seems as if the NL-government is committed to have Winair execute the transport between St. Maarten and Saba respectively St. Eustatius at any cost. In my opinion the most obvious instrument is (consciously?) ignored: open competition. I am not saying this for the first time, but apparently you (or the State Secretary) do not want to hear it: what is wrong with letting EZ Air provide a regular scheduled service between St. Eustatius and Bonaire and letting SXM Airways provide a (connecting) regular scheduled service between St. Eustatius and Saba? The latter could perhaps also provide traffic to Sint Maarten (from Sint Eustatius) and thus become a competitor of Winair. It seems to me that both airlines (EZ Air and SXM Airways) are open to cooperate on a PSO (public service obligation) for these scheduled services. Again a loan to Winair seems to me to be equivalent to plugging a bottomless pit. My (repeated) proposal is in that sense also pure that it mitigates the dependence of the BES islands on an independent country like St. Maarten, moreover it seems possible to me with periodic flights between the European Netherlands and Bonaire also to bring the postal delivery problem that has been dragging on for years to an end.

Note: How it is possible that a ferry service is provided while the Island Council places much more emphasis on affordable and frequent flight connections is beyond me but it illustrates once again that the input of the Island Council does not really matter to the Government Commissioner and the State Secretary. Let it be my prediction: as soon as the 2 million Euros in subsidy is spent on this ferry project it will die a soft death. Once - so I may hope - the quay will turn the ship; or else: perhaps the affordable and frequent flight connections will come about one day.

Note: Winair gets a loan and almost at the same time new direct flights to Dominica, Barbados and St. Lucia are advertised. A direct flight from St. Eustatius to Bonaire simply does not seem to fit with Winair.

Communication with Statians (e.g., through a Citizen's Partnership Council)

In general, at least in my opinion, any initiative for frequent(r) and especially two-way communication is to be welcomed. I do understand that the current Island Council is not eager for the time being. After all, the Island Council is still being kept short and it seems to me that it is first important for the Island Council to be seen as a serious discussion partner itself. The last townhall meeting was in June of this year and was aimed at providing technical information about the excavations. More emotional or ethically oriented questions - for example, about the unsolicited excavation of ancestors of Statians - were shelved or dismissed as irrelevant. To this day, this project remains silent. See also the annex to this letter.

Furthermore there is - apparently: on the part of the State Secretary - some irritation about the communication of the Island Council members towards the Deputy Government Commissioner. I have taken note of the text that the State Secretary thought he had to spend on this point, but I have my reservations (and I was also an observer at this particular meeting of the Island Council).

Mr. Clyde van Putten said that he was speaking with a mandate and both government commissioners were not (and indeed he was addressing the deputy government commissioner in particular). These commissioners are 'only' appointed by the Secretary of State while the mandate of the members of the Island Council is derived from the elections, according to Mr. van Putten's argument. In my opinion, there is nothing wrong with that; in any case, it does not seem to me to be a lie. If I learn through the newspaper how the communication in the House of Representatives sometimes goes, there is talk of more disrespectful use of words (I think for example of the tribunals for which some members of parliament should answer according to other members of parliament).

By the way, I do understand it: it is very important, if not everything, for the Secretary of State to discredit the Island Council members as much as possible. After all, this makes it easier to argue that the intervention should continue so that the investors can continue to operate at maximum and undisturbed (namely protected by both the Secretary of State and the government commissioners and other stakeholders) without a permit or without corona protective measures. In my view, Animal Farm (by George Orwell) applies here with "some animals are more equal than others". Who else but the observer of the meeting should provide the House of Representatives with an independent observation here?

The letter from the Secretary of State to the House of Representatives is downright mendacious about communication

There are probably more comments to be made but one really stands out, and that is when it comes to citizen participation and communication. Literally the letter states: "The OLE gives substance to citizen participation by organizing regular town hall meetings. Consultation rounds are also held when policies or regulations are drafted and the Government Commissioner and the Deputy Government Commissioner have opened a weekly consultation hour since last September 1."

I can attest to the latter. There is indeed a weekly consultation hour (á 15 minutes), in any case with the government commissioner, for the rest someone has written down something that may be considered desirable but for the time being has nothing to do with reality. Consultation rounds? Town hall meetings? And then of course with respectful two-way communication with the real will to listen and do something with the comments brought in: I have not experienced it yet (from the beginning of the intervention: February 2018). This is where you are being outright lied to.

Concluding

It is my intention to remain brief and concise and to respond only in outline form. Hence, I will stop there. I do draw your attention to the attachment to this letter.

Kind regards,

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

Cc: National Ombudsman

Attachment to my letter about St. Eustatius, dated December 14, 2021

Below is my mail confirming our conversation dated December 8 ("us" being Alida Francis, Mel Raboen and Jan Meijer).

alida, mel,

this morning we spoke about a message that was sent through the website <https://excav.jhtm.nl> from the address reg-commissaris@statiagov.com and was received by me on November 24, 2021, at 10:53. it is also automatically sent to the submitter of the message and to the address that was entered (in this case reg-commissaris@statiagov.com, the official address of alida Francis.

i have shown the message in question.

for the record, I have printed the message in this attachment (literally as it was received by me).

We use Dr. Haviser, because he gives us scientific permission for continuing with any spatial development. We have brought Secar, Shrc, Stenapa and Cnsi and some other foundations in a position as our feasibility team, so new hotels, new office buildings and expansion of oil terminals becomes possible. So don't bother us with your letters. We do as we please. You call it arrogance, we don't. Mr. Knops is our boss, not the people of Statia.

later that day - 24 november 2021 - at 15:29 I asked by email (sender jhtm.nl@gmail.com) for a confirmation that this message was indeed sent from or on behalf of alida.

on 26 november 2021 at 20:09 I sent another email (again with sender jhtm.nl@gmail.com).

on sunday 28 november 2021 at 20:49 i sent a whatsapp with the same question (for confirmation).

there was no response to any of my messages. that is why, I explain, I am having this conversation on 8 December 2021 (this conversation was requested within the framework of the weekly consultation hour).

alida makes it clear that she does not know the site <https://excav.jhtm.nl> and therefore has not left a message at all on that site.

i want to believe her, but there are still some observations that need to be clarified.

for example, there is a message that is submitted by "someone" that mentions alida's address.

the message is also received at that address (at least it is automatically sent there) and if you then want to distance yourself from that message, then I expect that the recipient of the confirmation (so that is alida, or someone on her behalf who manages her mail account) will approach the webmaster of <https://excav.jhtm.nl> and want to rectify a few things.

that does not happen; nothing happens at all, not even after the aforementioned pushing twice by mail and once by whatsapp.

alida claims that she receives a lot of e-mail and therefore may not have seen this e-mail. moreover, she indicates that she has previously taken the position that there is no communication about excavations and that she first waits for the final report from the SHRC (the scientific research commission set up for this purpose).

i want to believe that, but on the other hand, "a lot of mail" can be organized: after all, that also happens to members of the house of representatives (and other large organizations). the content of the mail does not concern just anything about the excavations; on the contrary, alida is confronted with statements that she does not seem to have made at all but against which she does not defend herself.

the argument of "a lot of mail" and therefore not seen implies that also other mail may have escaped her attention; that seems to me to be bad and undesirable, but that aside.

mel indicates that he will investigate (or have someone investigate) how the various messages were received and how they were subsequently dealt with (or deleted).

i would like to hear about the findings of that investigation.

thank you in advance.

yours sincerely,

jan meijer.

To date, I have not received any further notification of an investigation at the ICT department (and frankly, I don't expect to). It seems to me that logs (which - I expect - are automatically created and updated) should be able to provide clarity on this quickly. But that does not happen (at least not until now). So which mail was received by whom and from whom, and what did the recipient do with it afterwards (for example: deleted it).

It does not seem to me that citizens, residing on St. Eustatius, should be written to in this way. As said, I want to understand that the government commissioner wants to distance herself from the message, but she did not do so (at least not in writing) until now (and as of November 24, 2021).