

Cabinet Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten



Newsletter

Issue: 02 | Second quarter 2021



Coming soon:

Business network event!

The Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten will be hosting an online Business Network Event. This event will enhance the collaboration between the private and public institutions wanting to develop business activities in Sint Maarten. The Cabinet aims to engage in activities that will further promote investments and business opportunities with companies based in Europe, particularly those in the Netherlands. The overall objective of this event will be to promote our next project, namely, to facilitate a possible trade mission to Sint Maarten. Further details to follow.

Inside This Issue

PG. 2

Doing Business in Sint Maarten Summit

PG. 3

Studying in the Netherlands

PG. 4

Quarterly meetings with institutions

PG. 5

*Emancipation day commemoration
..... and more*

“Doing Business in Sint Maarten online Summit”

Sustainable economic development is paramount for Sint Maarten in order to build and maintain the stability of the Private Sector and SME development. In that regard the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary hosted a “Doing Business in Sint Maarten online Summit” on the 21st of June 2021.

This event was a result of diplomacy, partnership and efforts of the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary Sint Maarten and the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) together with the Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK). With collaboration and the contribution of the Sint Maarten Chamber of Commerce (COCI) and the Ministry of TEATT SXM this summit has been forged into a much-needed facilitation to cater to the private sector and target sustainable economic development for Sint Maarten.

The Cabinet (KGMSXM) initiated the orientation dialog in the Hague about 1,5 years ago with the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) & the Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK). Very soon after, the involvement of other stakeholders started, such as the Ministry of TEATT and COCI Sint Maarten. This evolved into a structural dialog between the respective institutions resulting in direct approaches.

With 84 registrations from Sint Maarten, the Netherlands and the rest of the world, this event proved a great interest of international and local companies to do business in SXM. The event was opened by Mr.R.Violenus, Minister Plenipotentiary Sint Maarten and Mr.Frans Weekers, Representative of the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations in the Steering Committee of the World Bank Trust Fund. The first round of the technical presentations were presented by Mr.R.Vermeeren and Ms.N.J. Ilario from RVO, followed by Ms.J.Webster Rombley from TEATT.

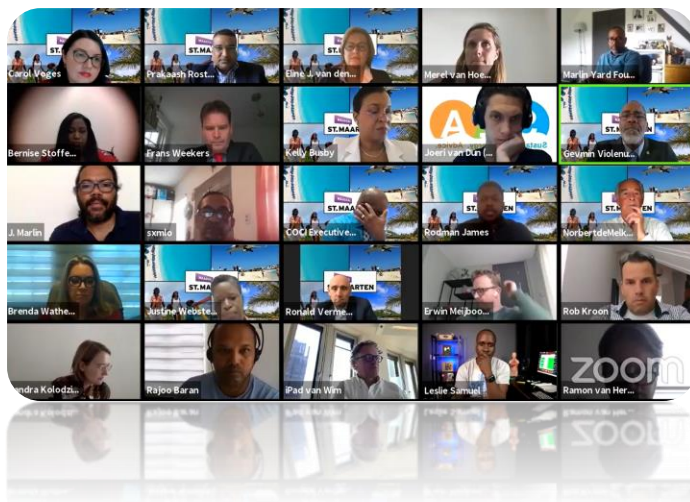
In the second round Mr. J.Houston, Director of COCI SXM and Mr. P.Rostam from KGMSXM enlightened the participants on different relevant subjects. In the third round the EU Chamber of Commerce represented by Mr.J.Spalburg and BAPS represented by Mr.N.de Melker and Ms. E.van den Berg shared their views and role as stakeholders.

The activity was closed by a break-out sessions coordinated by B.Stoffer from RVO. This event was facilitated by two moderators: Ms.Carol Voges, Director of the Cabinet and Mr.P.Rostam, Sr. Economic Advisor at the Cabinet.

The Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary Sint Maarten looks forward to the follow-up of this event and will continue its role in facilitating any bilateral collaborations between international and local parties.

The event can be viewed on the following link:

[Doing business in Sint Maarten](#)



Studying in the Netherlands

On Monday June 14th, 2021, the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary had the privilege to host a Webinar with various organizations in the Netherlands. The purpose of this webinar was to inform students traveling to the Netherlands of what to expect and how to best prepare for the changes facing them.

The following presenters were present to share not only their expertise, but they were afforded the time to share their services to the online viewers. International Student Services (ISS), an organization whose core tasks is to facilitate students in their search for adequate insurance, mobility and telecommunications services, as well as an online platform where international students are able share their experiences and create bonds.

Turangoeloe: a student support and guidance organization with five years of experience in guiding students from the Dutch Caribbean and the autonomous islands. Providing not only guidance in studies, as they also engage in the transition phase of the students. Mediating in the search for proper housing with the necessary amenities also form part of the package they provide.

The University of Leiden: providing a safe space for international students to communicate their concerns pertaining to their studies and overall wellbeing.

Archangels Student support services: providing guidance and counseling for students from the islands, with over 10 years of experience in aiding and extending services to students.

The webinar was aired live on the Facebook page of the Cabinet where viewers were not only provided with practical information, but also were able to have their questions to the panel answered in real time.

The Cabinet intends to host a follow-up session in the month of September, where the students will be afforded the opportunity to talk about their experiences in the transition phase. The panel will be composed of professionals and organizations dealing with study related issues.

Event is viewable on: [Studying in the Netherlands](#)

You can get in contact with the organizations via:

- Turangoeloe: www.turangoeloe.nl
- Archangel student support services: nedwegwijs@gmail.com
- ISS: www.iss-Holland.com



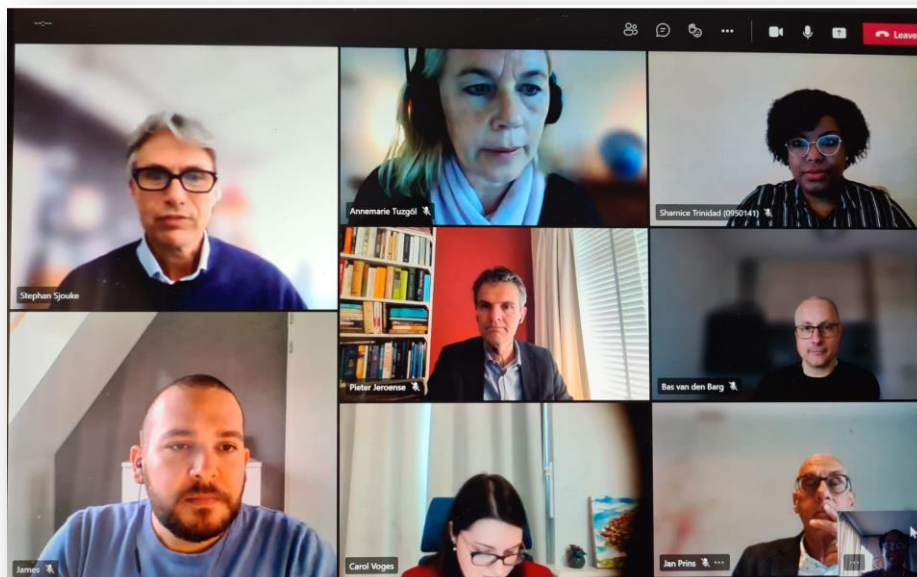
Quarterly meetings VNG, Ombudsman NL and the Cabinets of Sint Maarten, Curaçao and Aruba

Following the research commissioned by the Ombudsman of the Netherlands on study successes of the Caribbean students in the Netherlands, a quarterly meeting schedule has been introduced and convened between the stakeholders. The sole purpose of these meetings can be seen in the light of an intervention to better address the various areas of concern.

One of the most pressing areas discussed during the last meeting was the simplification of the registration process to afford students the opportunity to follow up with their enrollment process, as well as their basic responsibilities such as the opening of a bank account and obtaining proper insurance coverage. The main obstacle faced here is the lengthy process/ time prior to them receiving their BSN (sedula).

The latter being a point of contention as the students are regarded as international students and as such, they do not enjoy the same privileges as their Dutch (born here in the Netherlands) counterparts. This concern is currently on the table and will be formulated and presented to both the Ministry of Health (VWS) and the Ministry of Education (OCW). This is necessary to ensure that our students receive adequate insurance coverage while studying in the Netherlands. After the Summer recess, the deliberations will continue covering other pressing areas highlighted in the report of the Ombudsman.

Click here for [full report](#).



Picture: Meeting with the Ombudsman

Emancipation Day commemoration

During year's national commemoration of the Dutch Transatlantic slave trade on July 1, Sint Maarten was represented by the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten. During the solemn ceremony the Mayor of Amsterdam, Mrs. Femke Halsema apologized on behalf of the Amsterdam city council for their city's role in the transatlantic slave trade. This was a historical milestone and long-awaited moment, the first step in the healing process of the shared past of the Netherlands, the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom and Suriname.

The Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten along with the official representatives of other countries and organizations placed wreaths at the site of the monument of the enslaved in the Oosterpark in Amsterdam.



Picture: The Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten, Mr. Rene Violenus in Amsterdam

Slavery exhibition Rijksmuseum

On July 12, Minister Violenus visited the Slavery exhibition at the Rijksmuseum. This is the first time the Rijksmuseum has focused on slavery during the Dutch colonial period. The exhibition showcases the personal stories of various persons in the Dutch colonies during this period. The Minister was proud to see that our own heroine One Tété Lohkay received a notable place within the exhibition. The exhibition ends August 29, 2021.



Representing Sint Maarten in the EU

The Cabinet's EU representative participated in various EU related activities including the OCTA's Extraordinary Ministerial conference held on June 24. During this conference the 9 UK territories formally withdrew their membership from OCTA, as they are no longer associated with the European Union. A new framework of cooperation detailed in a MoU between OCTA and the United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association (UKOTA) was established during the conference.

Sint Maarten also attended the virtual launch of the Friends of the OCTs group on June 29 co-hosted by OCTA and members of the European Parliament, Ms. Samira Rafaela and Mr. Stéphane Bijoux. This new initiative aims to raise the awareness among European actors of the added value of the EU-OCT partnership.

In the second quarter of 2021 various webinars and meetings were also attended by the EU representative, including the Partnership working Party on Energy and the tripartite meeting between the OCTs, the European Commission (EC) and the Member states, whereby the ongoing EDF territorial and regional programming were discussed. As Sint Maarten is currently the regional authorizing officer (RAO) for the 11th EDF regional programme, RESEMBID, proper representation in Brussels remains crucial.

For more information and to keep abreast of upcoming activities, check out OCTA's new website at [Overseas Countries and Territories Association | OCTA \(overseas-association.eu\)](https://overseas-association.eu).



Kingdom Relations

COHO developments

In the area of Kingdom relations there has been much activity over the past few months. The Cabinet has been closely involved in the technical negotiations pertaining to the agreement bill for the COHO. During these negotiations several changes have been made to the Kingdom law based on the advice of the Council of State and Advisory councils of earlier this year. All four countries have recently come to an agreement, and this will be discussed at the upcoming Kingdom Council of Ministers meeting in early September.



Political lobbying

In the second quarter the Cabinet also had the pleasure of hosting and facilitating two working visits of the Honourable Prime Minister, Mrs. Silveria Jacobs and Honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Ardwell Irión. During both visits it was evident that there was a crucial need to further profile Sint Maarten within the Dutch political landscape and media. Given the instalment of the new Dutch Members of Parliament on March 31, the Cabinet facilitated meetings with the new Kingdom relations committee members. The Prime Minister met with the representatives of D66, Bij1, PvdA, VVD, SPG and Christenunie. Meetings were also scheduled with the Kingdom relations committee of the First Chamber, the Council of State, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mr. M. Rutte, State Secretary Knops and other relevant organizations. During these meetings and interviews with the Dutch media, the Prime Minister shared the government of Sint Maarten's views and concerns regarding the way the current Dutch government handles issues affecting Sint Maarten, specifically within the Kingdom Council of Ministers (RMR). Although these efforts did not directly lead to a change in the RMR's decision-making on May 28, as they followed State Secretary Knops' advice and decided to reverse their previous decision of April 23rd to pay out the 5th tranche liquidity support to Sint Maarten, it has paved the way for a more open discussion between the four Kingdom countries. For instance, the meeting between PM Jacobs and PM Rutte, led to an agreement to hold quarterly Kingdom meetings at the Prime Minister level, the first having been held in early July. Nevertheless, in order to maintain momentum, the Cabinet will continue to lobby on Sint Maarten's behalf within the Dutch political arena.

Update Dutch formation process

The Dutch formation talks have hit a roadblock. Informateur Mrs. Mariette Hamer has requested that the two winning parties VVD and D66 restart negotiations in the second week of August after the summer recess. VVD and D66 will then have a few weeks to present a document that embodies in broad terms an outline for a coalition agreement. The hope is that this will motivate some of the other parties, that until now have been reluctant to join a coalition with either VVD or D66, to reconsider negotiations.

Sint Maarten (DSF) students arrive in the Netherlands

On Tuesday August 10, 27 Sint Maarten (Division Study Financing) students who left St. Maarten to further their studies in the Netherlands have arrived safely. The students were welcomed at Amsterdam Schiphol Airport by members of the Cabinet of the St. Maarten Minister Plenipotentiary, several guidance counsellors and buddies, and were then taken to the Renaissance Amsterdam-Schiphol Airport. Students were then able to rest, exchange important documents and were provided with information before the official welcome ceremony scheduled for the afternoon.

The welcome ceremony was hosted by the guidance counselors on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Youth, Culture and Sport. Various student organizations were present to address the students and shared with them their personal experiences and services. The Director of the Cabinet represented the Minister Plenipotentiary during the welcome ceremony as he was unable to attend.

In the Director's speech she urged the students to make use of the more difficult moments they may encounter in the Netherlands. "Don't turn around or go looking for an escape route, as these will be pivotal moments in reinforcing your personal development." Moreover, she stated that "discipline will be of utmost importance in achieving your goals. For instance, tardiness is not accepted in the Netherlands. This is a lesson many of us learn very early on after arriving in the Netherlands. In times of stress or emotional turmoil, always remember to contact your friends, family and/or guidance counselors. You do not have to go through it alone."

In her address the Director shared that the Cabinet's staff is always there to assist where possible and hoped to welcome the students to the Cabinet in the near future. In the meantime, they were invited to follow and interact with the Cabinet via the Cabinet's Facebook page. On behalf of the Minister Plenipotentiary and the team, the Director wished the students much success in their endeavors and urged them to reach for the stars.

In closing she shared the following quote: *-you can never cross the ocean unless you have the courage to lose sight of the shore-*

"You have all taken the courageous first step...the metaphorical shore will always be there, safe and unchanged. Don't let the uncertainty of the journey, fear or doubt limit you, embrace it all. Only by doing so will you be able to achieve greatness."



Picture: students arriving at Schiphol airport

Some impressions of the student's arrival and welcome ceremony on August 10



More info see [link](#) or [The daily herald](#)

Consular affairs

The Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary has undergone a slight restructuring to further improve the services we provide. In doing so, Ms. Talitha Brandon joined the team on July 1 as our new Consular affairs and management support worker. Ms. Brandon has gathered experience both on Sint Maarten and here in the Netherlands in the fields of consular and public affairs. We are elated to welcome her to the team and wish her much success!



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