

Cabinet Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten



Newsletter



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Working visit to Sint Maarten

A delegation of the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten headed by Minister Plenipotentiary, Mr. Rene Violenus, travelled to Sint Maarten for a working visit. The purpose of this visit was to enhance the direct lines of communication between departments, but also to create a blueprint for future cooperation, as the Cabinet's aim is to serve the community of Sint Maarten from The Netherlands. More information on p.8.

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Welcome ceremony and workshop at the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary



On Saturday the 24th of September, during the official welcome ceremony of the class of 2021 were all welcomed to the Netherlands by the Minister Plenipotentiary, member of the Council of State representing Sint Maarten, Mrs van der Sluijs-Plantz and the member of the second chamber and former Minister Plenipotentiary, Mrs. J. Wuite. The Minister reminded the students to set their goals high and work at achieving them. A key component in the Minister's statement to the students was that they should not be afraid to fail, as this is also a part of the learning process.

After the official welcome ceremony the students had the privilege to attend a workshop hosted by the Unified Sint Maarten Connection. The theme of the session "The Wheel of Life" centered around finding the right balance in life, making goals achievable and knowing who they are while embracing their flaws. This session is part of a series of workshops to be given by the Unified Sint Maarten Connection.



Hogeschool for Economic Studies Rotterdam minor

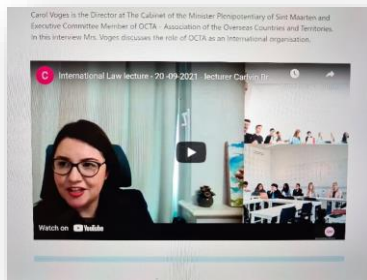
The Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten together with Calvin Brooks (Law lecturer at the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences) are working to bring more awareness to the international development of Sint Maarten.

For the academic year 2021/2022, Mr. Calvin Brooks will be working with students who are following the minor "Working Worldwide". During this minor, the students will be studying different subjects, which will allow them to operate in an international environment.

This year's assignment "The international perspective of a developing state" will focus on:

1. Migration, discrimination, and inclusivity, whereby the focus of their research will be on the impact these areas have on developing states in terms of widening inequality and the mitigation of these challenges.
2. Power balance and poverty. The focus here will be on how developing states can lessen inequalities that arise as a result of power imbalance.

Via interviews with members of the Cabinet, the students were familiarized with Sint Maarten's perspective as a SIDS, in order to get a better understanding of the situations faced on the island. To facilitate the students, two contact moments were organized.



Caption: Director Carol Voges and Senior policy officer Kelly Busby during the contact moments with the students

Haagse Hogeschool, minor Kingdom Affairs

The Honorable Minister Plenipotentiary, Mr. Rene Violenus, together with the director of the Cabinet, Ms. Carol Voges and the Cabinet's senior legal advisor, Ms. Farida Telgt met with students following the minor Kingdom affairs at the Haagse Hogeschool on Tuesday, September 14th, 2021. Currently some 70 students are following the minor coordinated by Mr. Marcel Daniels, which has gained in popularity since its introduction in 2019.

During the visit, Minister Violenus and his staff provided information about the Cabinet, as well as some insight on the current situation within the Kingdom and his role in the process. The students were very interested in the discussions surrounding the COHO, EU relations and the relationship with the French side of the island.

A group of four students has been selected to focus on an assignment developed by the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary related to Sint Maarten. They will be conducting research into the effect that media has on the relationship between The Netherlands and Sint Maarten. Based on this, they will develop a media strategy in which Sint Maarten, despite the existing democratic deficit, can position itself in an equitable manner.



Caption: Minister Violenus, Ms. C. Voges, Ms. F. Telgt and some of the students following the minor Kingdom Affairs

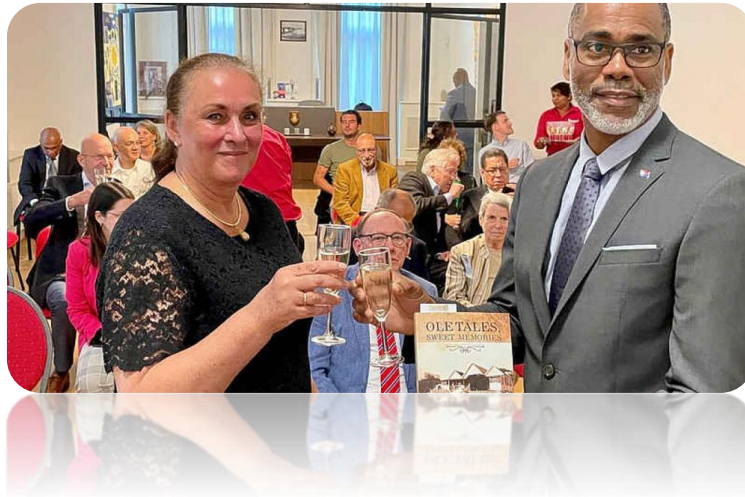
Art exhibition at “The UNSEEN FAIR” featuring Lisandro Suriel

Minister Plenipotentiary, the Honorable Rene Violenus attended the opening of the art exhibition “The Unseen Photo Fair” on the 16th of September in the municipality of Amsterdam. On display was work by Lisandro Suriel, an artist of Sint Maarten descent. Through his unique photographic artwork he has captured with one of his pieces, a notable mention in Vogue magazine. Artist Suriel also held a mini expo at the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary on November 11, 2021.



Book presentation “Ole Tales, Sweet Memories” by Maria van der Sluijs-Plantz

On Wednesday September 22nd, 2021, the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary had the privilege to host the “Ole tales, Sweet Memories” book launch of Mrs. van der Sluijs-Plantz. All were treated to the reminiscient stories of the storyteller Mr. Irving Plantz by Mr. Gilbert Wawoe and Mrs. Van der Sluijs-Plantz. Minister Plenipotentiary Violenus spoke on the importance of cultural heritage on Sint Maarten. After the introduction and the life story of Mr. Irving Plantz, all were treated to a recording of the then “Wereld Omroep” excerpt of Mr. Plantz reciting one of his many old tales.



Meet & Greet Minister of Justice at the Haagse Hogeschool

The Honorable Minister of Justice, Mrs. Anna Richardson, courtesy of the Cabinet held a meet and greet for students and young professionals. The purpose of this gathering was mainly to exchange views on the judicial issues faced by Sint Maarten and the possible solutions.

The discussions were quite interesting as the group was afforded the opportunity to pose questions, express their sentiments, as well as offer their advice to the Minister of Justice.

The Minister was very pleased with the commitment of the group and wished them much success with their future endeavors.



Study success workshop in collaboration with Division Study Financing Sint Maarten and lecturer Dr. Jean Marie Molina.

To ensure that our students utilize their full potential to obtain their individual degrees and to encourage a smart approach to learning, the Division Study Financing Sint Maarten enlisted Dr. Jean-Marie Molina to provide a series of workshops geared at increasing the study success of our students here in The Netherlands. Dr. Molina utilizes her successful and accredited method of TOUGH LOVE, which in the recent past has produced successful graduates, amongst whom several Sint Maarten graduates.

To get an idea of the contents of this workshop, please visit the Facebook page of the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten.



Meeting with the President of Suriname and delegation

The Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten, Mr. Rene Violenus met with the President of the Republic of Suriname, Mr. Chandrikapersad Santokhi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation, Mr. Albert R. Ramdin and the Ambassador of the Republic of Suriname in The Hague, Mr. Rajendre Khargi. The Ministers Plenipotentiary of Aruba and Curaçao, Mr. Edmond Paris and Mr. Carlson Manuel were also present during the courtesy visit. Intensifying cooperation between the countries in various fields and areas was discussed. Follow-up will be planned in the near future, in particular, in the areas of business development, trade, agriculture, food security, culture and tourism. The Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary was represented by Minister Violenus, Ms. Carol Voges, Director of the Cabinet, Mr. Prakaash Rostam, Sr. Advisor International Economic Affairs and Mr. Rogelio Voges, Policy Advisor DBB Sint Maarten.



Picture: An impression of the meeting at Hilton Hotel Den Haag with the Surinamese Delegation

Diplomatic visits

Nigeria

The Honorable Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten, Mr. Rene Violenus received a courtesy visit from the new Ambassador of Nigeria to the Kingdom of The Netherlands, Dr. Eniola Olaitan Ajayi. Ambassador Ajayi has been in office for about four months and is presently exploring the value of cooperation with the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom, in particular Sint Maarten.

Minister Violenus and the ambassador briefly discussed direct airlift possibilities via Sint Maarten to the region, as well as attracting Nigerian tourists to our shores.

Currently Nigeria is seeking to enhance its agricultural and mineral export market. Therefore, Ambassador Ajayi extended an invitation to Minister Violenus to attend her Embassy's upcoming business event in December in order to get better acquainted with Nigerian companies interested in doing business within the Kingdom.

Picture: Ambassador Dr. Eniola Olaitan Ajayi and Minister Rene Violenus



India

On September 13th, the Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of The Netherlands, Mr. Pradeep Kumar Rawat paid a courtesy visit to the Honorable Minister Plenipotentiary, Mr. Rene Violenus. The Ambassador thanked the Minister for the hospitality shown to Indian nationals living on Sint Maarten.

During the meeting the possibilities for expanding relations beyond consular affairs were discussed. Ambassador Rawat was particularly interested in the areas of trade, business and culture. Minister Violenus shared Sint Maarten's interest in regaining eligibility to India's Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program, which offers civilian trainings in various sectors, as well as tailor-made programs and technical assistance opportunities.

The Ambassador was elated to hear of Sint Maarten's interest in the program and offered to assist in expediting the process once all necessary documents are submitted. Ambassador Rawat intends to travel to Sint Maarten for an official visit later this year.



Picture: Ambassador Pradeep Kumar Rawat and Minister Rene Violenus

Courtesy calls Japan and Kazakhstan

The Cabinet also had the honor to receive a courtesy call from the Minister and Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of Japan to the Kingdom of The Netherlands, Mr. Mitsuru Myochin. The Minister expressed his interest in exploring possible development cooperation with Sint Maarten. The possibilities of trade, agro-development, and other subject were discussed. Further discussion will be continued in the near future.

Furthermore, during this last quarter, on behalf of the Cabinet of the Minister of Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten, Mr. Prakaash Rostam, Senior Advisor International Economic Affairs, had a meeting with the First Secretary of the Embassy of Kazakhstan to The Hague, Mr. Almas Makulbekov. The possibilities of trade missions, economic and cultural diplomacy, tourism development, enhancement of their mineral export market and more were discussed. In order to get better acquainted with the cultural and economic assets of Kazakhstan, the Cabinet will be invited to the next national day celebrations at the embassy in The Hague.

Working visit to Sint Maarten

The Minister Plenipotentiary, Rene Violenus, and senior staff members of his cabinet, conducted a working visit to Sint Maarten in October. The delegation included the Cabinet Director, Carol Voges and legal advisor, Farida Telgt. The main purpose of



the mission was to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the cabinet, its mandate, structure and the many opportunities for collaboration and facilitation. Additionally, the team came to maintain and establish relations, improve lines of communication, offer assistance and share findings and perspectives from working for St. Maarten in The Netherlands. Amongst other institutions, they visited departments within the Ministry of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunications and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DBB) to have an initial discussion on attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and to share the cabinet's view on the development of a foreign economic policy. Attracting investors has been a challenge for Sint Maarten, thus the delegation finds it important to get a better understanding of the challenges on the ground from the various stakeholders.

As an extension of the Government of Sint Maarten, the Cabinet meets with various dignitaries from all over the world. In order to attract investors and follow through on cooperation with interested governments/states, the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary plays a crucial role in relaying Sint Maarten's vision to these entities. This includes the areas in which Sint Maarten would like to collaborate with other countries. As such, it is important that we continue to promote Sint Maarten abroad, not only in terms of branding but also in letting the world know what makes this 37 square miles stand out from others in the region or globally.

The delegation also met with departments within the Ministry of General Affairs to streamline the processes for the preparation of the Kingdom Council of Ministers meetings, as well as with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, His Excellency Governor Eugene B. Holiday, the Dutch Representation Office (VNP), the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Parliament and the office of the Council of Advice. All discussions had were fruitful and served to reconnect and establish bridges geared at the enhancement of opportunities for the people of Sint Maarten. Minister Violenus looks forward to continued dialogue and keeping the lines of communication open for more collaboration between Sint Maarten and The Netherlands.



EU Affairs

New OAD

On October 15th the European Council approved the new Overseas Association Decision (OAD) that will go into effect on January 1st, 2022. This new decision aims to promote cooperation between the European Union and the OCTs, particularly in order to build their resilience and enhance competitiveness, as well as to achieve the SDG goals. The total approved allocation for the OCTs under this new OAD is 500 million euros for the period 2021-2027. For a copy of the new OAD go to: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021D1764>

OCT youth week

OCTA organized an OCT youth week in Brussels and Strasbourg from October 4-10. During this week Sint Maarten was represented by Mr. Matthew Halley and Mr. Nelly Blaise. This activity, co-funded by the European Commission, gave participants the opportunity to meet with the European Commissioner on International Partnerships, Mrs. J. Urpilainen, Members of the European Parliament, such as Ms. Samira Rafaela and other European officials to discuss the EU Green Deal and the workings of European institutions. In order to follow-up on the trip, the Cabinet will be hosting a virtual @theCabinetafter5 on November 24th at 6pm, during which Mr. Halley and Mr. Blaise will present and share their experiences, lessons learnt and recommendations. This event will be aired live on our Facebook page.



OCTA affairs

Given the recent departure of the British overseas territories, the new Overseas Association Decision that will go into effect on January 1st, 2022, and the upcoming negotiations for an EU grant that co-finances OCTA for up to 80%, the association has been preparing a strategic document for the period 2021-2027. This document will define the way forward for the association and form the basis of OCTA's annual work plans as of 2022.

The approval of the strategic document and the administrative resolutions, as well as the discussion and approval of the new membership fee scheme are set to take place during the upcoming virtual Extraordinary Ministerial Conference on November 30th, 2021.

Kingdom Relations

Prinjesdag 2021

On September 21, Minister Plenipotentiary, Mr. Rene Violenus attended the Prinjesdag ceremonies on behalf of the Government of Sint Maarten. King Willem-Alexander's address highlighted the hardships the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom are currently facing due to the pandemic and the support measures put in place by The Netherlands to assist during this crisis. The King stated that the objective of The Netherlands is to enhance resilience to shocks in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom. However, he noted the importance of continuing to seek unity within these discussions.



Update Formation Dutch Government

In the meantime, Rutte III has broken the record as the longest functioning caretaker government since WWII. After much back and forth, the formation talks have been reconvened between the current coalition members, namely: VVD, D66, CDA and ChristenUnie. For the moment no timeframe has been shared with the public regarding the appointment of the next government, though media outlooks are reporting a possible coalition agreement by the third week of November.

Consular affairs

Each quarter we will be highlighting a case handled by the consular affairs department. We hope this fosters awareness and a better understanding of the mandate of the Cabinet in regard to social and consular matters.

Financial assistance for remigration

A woman recently moved to The Netherlands with her children and due to unfortunate circumstances, the family became homeless. The mother wanted to move her family back to St. Maarten, but did not have enough money for tickets for all of her children. Family members could provide just enough money for two of the children to come back home and a social worker contacted the Consular department for assistance. Although financial assistance from the Cabinet is not possible the family was referred to the Netherlands Migration Institute (NMI), which can sometimes provide financial assistance in migration cases.

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