

Cabinet Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten



Year review 2021

Issue: 04 | February 2022

A dynamic year

2021 was a very dynamic year for the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten. With many activities planned and executed, intensive negotiations with Kingdom partners, the creation of partnership platforms, and exploring several economic and cultural opportunities, the Minister Plenipotentiary and his staff were able to reach a number of set objectives for the year 2021. In doing so, the Cabinet continues, where possible, to reach out to ensure the involvement and inclusion of the Sint Maarten diaspora in the Netherlands.



A compilation of our activities in the areas of:

Cultural & Student Affairs

Economic & Diplomatic Affairs

EU Affairs

Political & Kingdom Affairs

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1. Cultural and student affairs

With the focus on serving the community of Sint Maarten in the best way possible, the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary strives to involve various stakeholders and the Sint Maarten diaspora in the Netherlands in the implementation of our strategic plan. A series of activities took place in 2021 to support our cultural and student affairs action plan.

Education

1.1 Welcome ceremony Sint Maarten (DSF) students and workshop at the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary

On Tuesday August 10, 2021, 27 Sint Maarten (Division Study Financing) students who left St. Maarten to further their studies in the Netherlands 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 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."

On Saturday the 24th of September, during the official welcome ceremony of the class of 2021, students were 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.

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.



"Hon. Minister Rene Violanus during the welcome ceremony"

1.2 Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences 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.

The Cabinet will continue to work with Rotterdam Business school on developing a cooperation program for the coming years.

1.3 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. Some 70 students followed 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 was selected to focus on an assignment developed by the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary related to Sint Maarten. They conducted research into the effect that media has on the relationship between The Netherlands and Sint Maarten. Based on this, they developed a media strategy in which Sint Maarten, despite the existing democratic deficit, can position itself in an

equitable manner. An MOU was signed between the Ministers Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten, Aruba and Curaçao and the Haagse Hogeschool to continue collaborations on the minor Kingdom Affairs.



1.4 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.



1.5 Assistance and support to Sint Maarten students in the Netherlands

The ongoing pandemic has made adjusting to life in the Netherlands for students ever more difficult. In the first quarter of 2021 a lot of special assistance and attention was provided to the Sint Maarten students here in the Netherlands. Most of the issues were related to independent studies, integral integration and program choices. In a consorted effort to properly address this matter and inform students and parents alike, a virtual townhouse meeting was held under the auspices of the Minister of ECYS and the guidance counselors.

Leading up to the arrival of the students from Sint Maarten to the Netherlands in 2021, meetings were held with various service providers throughout the Netherlands across the various municipalities to better address the most urgent needs of students. The areas of concern ranged from proper and thorough insurance policies to ensuring adequate housing prior to arrival in the Netherlands. During the second quarter the above mentioned was further worked on and the Cabinet organized a webinar on the preparation of students to transfer to the Netherlands. This took place in the month of May and involved various stakeholders.

Culture

1.6 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. Among the works displayed was work by Lisandro Suriel, an artist of Sint Maarten descent. Through his unique photographic artwork he has captured a notable mention in Vogue magazine. Artist Suriel also held a mini expo at the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary on November 11, 2021.



1.7 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 reminiscent 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 recorded excerpt of Mr. Plantz reciting one of his many old tales for the then “Wereld Omroep”.



1.8 Emancipation Day commemoration

During annual 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

1.9 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 showcased the personal stories of various persons in the Dutch colonies during this period. The Minister was proud to see that our own heroin One Tété Lohkay received a notable place within the exhibition. The exhibition ended on August 29, 2021.

1.10 Sint Maarten Day reception

On the 11th of November 2021, the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary hosted a day of commemorations comprising of two parts. In the afternoon, Minister Violenus hosted a luncheon for Seniors of Sint Maarten origin. During the lunch, memories of Sint Maarten of olden days were shared and the seniors and staff were offered the opportunity to extend their well wishes to family and friends on Sint Maarten.

The evening activity in the form of a reception centered around this year's theme "Standing Triumphant, even in the face of adversity".

Ambassadors and representatives of befriended countries, members of the Second Chamber and representatives of the various Sint Maarten organizations in the Netherlands were in attendance.

The representative of the French Embassy, Colonel Christian Bachmann, spoke of the relationship between Sint Maarten and Saint Martin over the decades and the joint corporation in moments of adversity during his congratulatory remarks.

Henk Brons, Director-General of the Ministry of Kingdom Affairs, in his congratulatory remarks spoke of the relationship with Sint Maarten within the Kingdom. He expressed the hope that this relationship, even though strained at times, would mature into a stronger bond for the sake of both countries and its people.

During the reception, four Sint Maarteners were recognized for their outstanding contributions. In the field of Sports, Denzel Richardson and Dudley Leonora were recognized; in the field of research Ms. Lysanne Charles was recognized, and Lisandro Suriel in the field of digital arts and photography.

Mr. Suriel's work was showcased during the event, where the pieces on display were a clear representation of ancestors in their natural state and grace. Musical accompaniment during the evening was provided by Mr. Quincy Adolphin.





2. Economic and diplomatic affairs

In order to achieve good sustainable economic development it's imminent for the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten to promote and support private sector development and cooperation between States, institutions and businesses. In that regard, a series of initiatives were executed in 2021. The many bilateral meetings with representatives of States in The Hague also delivered some perspectives on future development cooperation projects and initiatives.

2.1 The initiation of the B2B matchmaking program phase 1

After thorough analysis of how to best facilitate the private sector development on Sint Maarten, the Cabinet started having business network meetings at the Cabinet with entrepreneurs. These pre-Covid-19 meetings contributed to the identification of the challenges Netherlands-based companies encountered, when exploring business opportunities on Sint Maarten. This resulted in our objective to focus on creating partnerships between companies based in Sint Maarten and the Netherlands.

The Cabinet has received support from the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), who were able to get the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Kingdom Relations (BZK) on board. Together with the Ministry of TEATT and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry a platform has been created. The stakeholders meet bi-weekly to discuss the process and way forward. A project manager and an intern have been assigned at the RVO to do more research on this issue and present viable recommendations in order to facilitate the process of creating partnerships and doing business on Sint Maarten.

For the research phase several Dutch based companies were identified and nominated by the Cabinet to participate in this pilot project. The meetings with at least 10-12 companies were successful.

2.2 “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 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 initiated the orientation dialog in The Hague about 1,5 years ago with the RVO & the Dutch Ministry of 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 Sint Maarten. The event was opened by Mr. R. Violenus, Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten and Mr. Frans Weekers, Representative of the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations in the Steering Committee of the

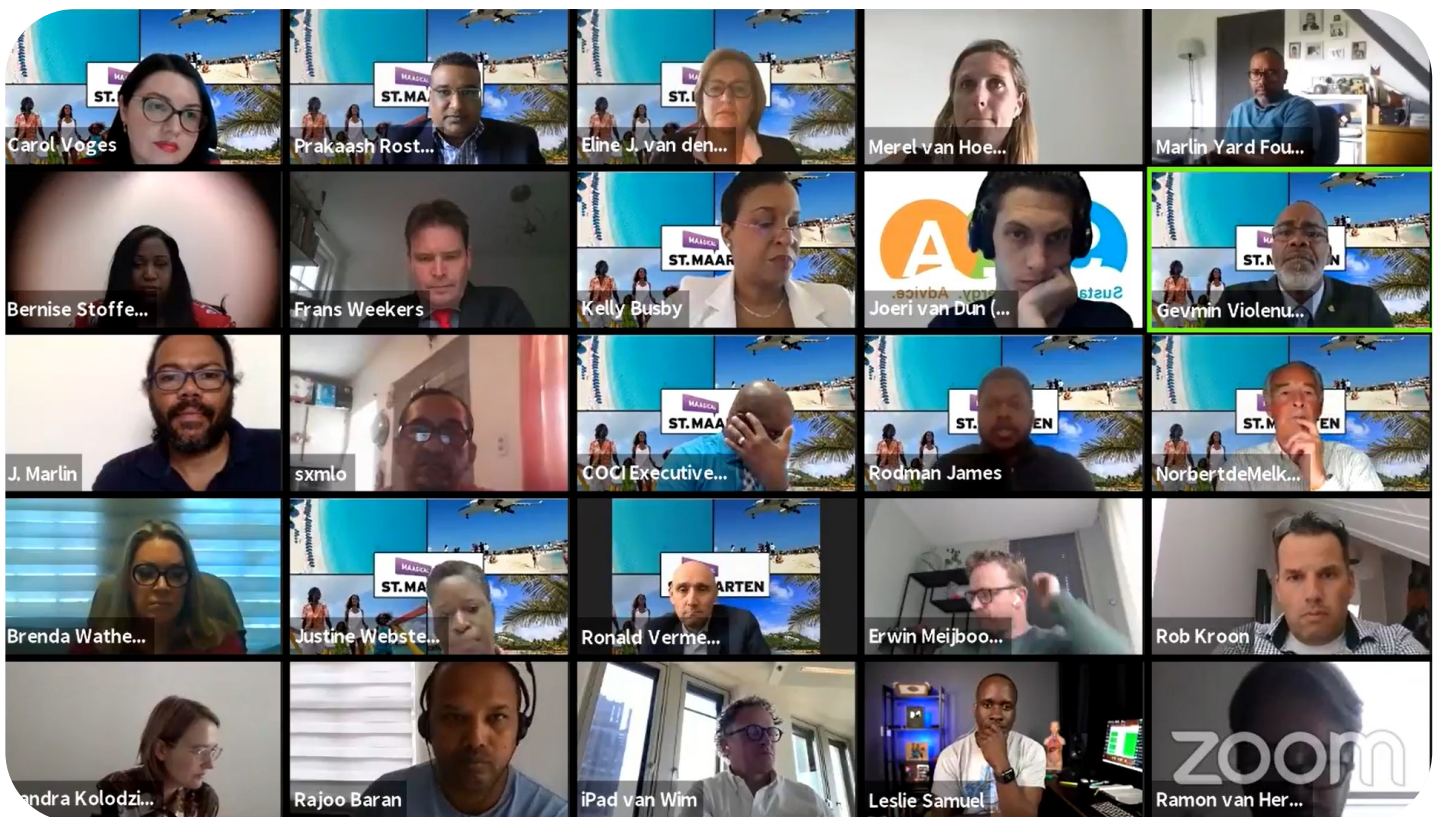
World Bank Trust Fund. The first round of the technical presentations were presented by Mr. R. Vermeeren and Ms. N. J. Ilario from RVO, followed by Mrs. J. Webster-Rombley from TEATT.

In the second round, Mr. J. Houston, director of COCI SXM, and Mr. P. Rostam from the Cabinet 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 is looking 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](#)



2.3 Connecting European innovation investors- businesses with Sint Maarten

The Cabinet supports all businesses that are willing to invest in clean and innovative solutions for the many problems Sint Maarten has to deal with. Creating innovative solutions for the mobility challenges is the main business of “Future Mobility Park (FMP)”, who are willing to set up a test center on Sint Maarten for self-driving vehicles. Minister Plenipotentiary, Mr. R. Violenus, the director of the Cabinet, Ms. C. Voges and the senior economic advisor, Mr. P. Rostam had the privilege to visit the test center in Rotterdam. As a follow-up, a field-visit on Sint Maarten and a round of meetings were executed by the Management of FMP and its technical staff to inspect the available location on Sint Maarten. Moreover, a series of meeting with government officials and the private sector was arranged by the Cabinet.



2.4 Approval and continuation B2B Matchmaking Program phase 2 by the Ministry of Internal and Kingdom Relations (BZK)

The Dutch Enterprise agency received approval from the Ministry of Internal affairs and Kingdom Relations to proceed with phase 2 of the B2B Matchmaking between Sint Maarten and the Netherlands. This is an initiative that started in close collaboration with the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary, Sint Maarten Chamber of Commerce, Government of Sint Maarten/TEATT, Business Acceleration Platform Sint Maarten, Caribbean Chamber of Commerce in Europe.

The aim is a physical matchmaking on Sint Maarten during SMILE 2022 on March 25-26 in close collaboration with Sint Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association (<https://shta.com>).

2.5 Facilitating investors and the private sector

Throughout the past year many European based companies showed interest in investing in Sint Maarten. The Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary facilitated many companies and fulfilled the role to brand and promote Sint Maarten as a business destination. The Cabinet also produced memos and research in order to contribute to the update of an investment guide, Investment Promotion Agency and clear policies on Foreign Direct Investment.

2.6 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.



2.7 Diplomatic courtesy 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 business event in December in order to get better acquainted with Nigerian companies interested in doing business within the Kingdom.

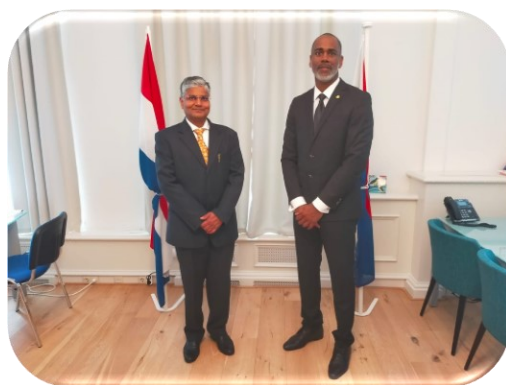


Picture: Ambassador Dr. Eniola Olaitan Ajayi and Minister Rene Violenus

India

On September 13th, the Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of The Netherlands, Mr. Pradeep Kumar Rawat paid a courtesy visit to the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten. 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 in 2021.



Picture: Ambassador Pradeep Kumar Rawat and Minister Rene Violenus

Courtesy calls

Japan

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 subjects were discussed. Further discussion will be continued in the near future.

Colombia

With the courtesy visit of the Ambassador of Colombia to the Cabinet the possibilities to broaden the tourism market, business to business possibilities with the Holland House Colombia were discussed. The ambassador's interest also extended to organizing a trip to the Dutch Caribbean islands later in 2022.

Germany

The discussion focused on participation in the annual tourist trade fair in Berlin, trade possibilities, and bringing STEM expertise to the region, the Ambassador of Germany also elaborated on planning a tour to the Dutch Caribbean in 2022.

3. EU-OCTA affairs

3.1 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, which was 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 2021 various webinars and meetings were attended by the EU representative, including the Partnership working Parties on Energy and Trade, and tripartite meetings 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).

3.2 New Overseas Association Decision

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>

3.3 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 hosted a virtual @theCabinetafter5 on November 24th at 6pm, during which Mr. Halley and Mr. Blaise presented and shared their experiences, lessons learnt and recommendations. This event was aired live on our Facebook page.

3.4 Strategic documents and administrative resolutions

Given the recent departure of the British overseas territories, the new Overseas Association Decision, and the negotiations for an EU grant that co-finance OCTA for up to 80%, the association prepared a strategic document for the period 2021-2027. This document defines the way forward for the association and forms 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 took place during the virtual Extraordinary Ministerial Conference on November 30th, 2021.

Furthermore, the [Sint Maarten Territorial Multiannual Indicative Program \(MIP\)](#) was recently approved by the European Council. The MIP has a duration of 7 years, whereby the proposed focus area and distribution for the territorial allocation are "Sustainable and resilient energy and green cross-border cooperation" for an amount of EUR 7 million.

The Specific Objectives (SO) will be the following:

SO1. Increase the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix and strengthen energy efficiency and resilience against natural hazards

SO2. Enhance green cross-border cooperation with Saint-Martin.

4. Political & Kingdom Affairs

4.1 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's 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 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.



4.2 Prinsjesdag 2021

On September 21, Minister Plenipotentiary Mr. Rene Violenus attended the Prinsjesdag ceremony 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.



4.3 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 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. Throughout the year, the deliberations will continue covering other pressing areas highlighted in the report of the Ombudsman.

Click here for the [full report](#).

4.4 Presentation to parliament members

On December 7, The Minister Plenipotentiary welcomed several members of the Parliament (MP) of Sint Maarten to the Cabinet. During their visit he gave the MPs a presentation on the role and organizational structure of the Cabinet in The Hague. Moreover, a detailed outline of the various tasks of the Cabinet in the areas of Kingdom relations, EU affairs, diplomacy and economic, cultural and education policy was shared with the delegation from Sint Maarten. The most important aspects regarding the mandate of the Minister Plenipotentiary within the Kingdom Council of Ministers were also presented to the delegation.



Picture: Honorable Minister Rene Violenus presenting to the members of the Sint Maarten Parliament

4.5 InterExpo meeting in The Hague

On the 8th and 9th of December 2021 the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary participated in the 31st Congress and Trade Mission “10 jaar na de ontmanteling van de Nederlandse Antillen” held at Nieuwspoor, The Hague. A delegation from the Parliament of Sint Maarten was in attendance as well. With representatives from Aruba, Curaçao and the Netherlands, this two-day event focused on the subject of “the Statute for the Kingdom”. With respectable speakers, mostly prominent academic researchers, members of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament, and Kingdom Relations experts, the political positioning of the Caribbean part of the Kingdom and its citizens was thoroughly discussed.

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