

JULY 2022



Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten

HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Kickoff B2B Matchmaking project phase 2**
- **Introductory meeting with ministers Rutte-4**
- **12th WTO Ministerial Conference**
- **Guest lecture at Clingendael institute and more...**



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ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

Kickoff B2B Matchmaking project phase 2 and a successful Smile event

As the B2B Matchmaking project phase 1 was successfully implemented in 2021, the Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland (RVO) received approval from the Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) to continue with phase 2 of the project. The focus of this phase was on the facilitation of and participation in the SMILE -event organized on the 25th and 26th of April on Sint Maarten.

Another aspect of focus is the support and guidance in the implementation of required instruments like the setup of an investment promotion agency, access to funding and more. The Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary was again one of the main partners together with the Sint Maarten Chamber of Commerce (COCI) and the Ministry of TEATT in supporting this phase of the project.

The project B2B Matchmaking phase 2 started off on the 19th and the 26th of January 2022 with a workshop facilitated by RVO. Almost 20 persons participated representing the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary, Ministry of TEATT, COCI, Business Acceleration Platform Sint Maarten (BAPS), SMILE-event organizing team (SHTA), the Dutch Representation office in Sint Maarten (VNP) and more.

On behalf of the Cabinet, Mr. Prakaash Rostam, Senior Economic Policy Advisor contributed to this productive session, carving the pathway for the coming months on this subject. With specialized online applications this session illustrated the involvement and targets that needed to be addressed.

This session on both dates contributed to:

- Better understanding the roles of all stakeholders in the economic (private sector/SME) Development of Sint Maarten;
- Exploring all the key elements that needed to be addressed for the success of this project;
- Designating specific roles and responsibilities to all partners;
- Reaching a consensus on the way forward

After the workshop it was agreed to have structural bimonthly meetings between all the stakeholders and partners. The objectives of the second phase of the B2B Matchmaking project are the following:

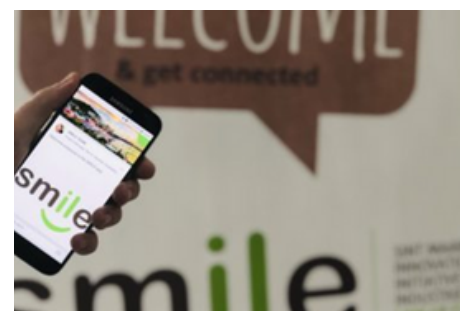
- Implementing the priority recommendation by each stakeholder (institutionalization)
- Organize a B2B event in 2022 (SMILE Event 25th & 26th April 2022)
- Guarantee a structural business matchmaking process (after involvement period RVO & BZK until end project - September 2022)
- Involvement of RVO and BZK: Facilitate and support activities of the project (initial workshop, Smile event etc.)
- Offer technical support (access to finance research)



Smile event 25th & 26th April in Sint Maarten

The event was a success. The RVO, TEATT and COCI were present and actively involved in this event. The Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary promoted the event within its network of entrepreneurs. Additionally, valuable information based on lessons learnt was shared with speakers at this event.

Detailed information can be obtained from the following website:
<https://www.smilesintmaarten.com/press-release>



The Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten, the honorable Mr. Rene Violenus, continued to represent Sint Maarten within the diplomatic community in The Hague, meeting with representatives of States.

HIGHLIGHTS OF SOME OF THE MEETINGS WITH AMBASSADORS OF STATES

Italy

Minister Plenipotentiary Violenus met with the Ambassador of the Republic of Italy to the Netherlands, Mr. Novello. The progress of the construction of the new hospital as well as cooperation in the area of sports were among the topics discussed.

Dominican Republic

The Minister Plenipotentiary met with the Ambassador of the Dominican Republic to The Netherlands, Mr. Bautista Durán, to discuss food security and how to strengthen the ties between the two countries.

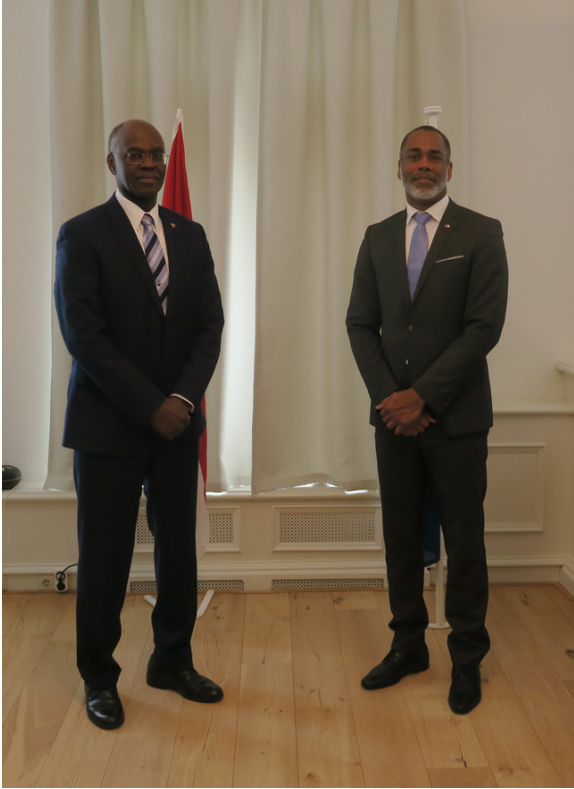
South Africa

This meeting took place at the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary. The Ambassador of South Africa to the Netherlands was also accompanied by his political attaché. Topics discussed were cultural heritage, airline routes, possible new sectors, and educational exchange programs.



Suriname

The Minister Plenipotentiary attended a strategic meeting with the Ambassador of Suriname, Mr. Khargi. The main subject discussed related to Suriname's Chairmanship of the Caricom and the preference of Sint Maarten, Curaçao and Aruba joining the Caricom as Associate Members. These discussions were followed up in the second quarter and are set to be continued on a strategic and political level. With the Caricom chairmanship, Suriname intends to involve the Dutch part of the Kingdom more intensively.



Meeting with His Excellency The Governor of Sint Maarten

The Governor of Sint Maarten

In March the Minister Plenipotentiary met with His Excellency the Governor of Sint Maarten, who had traveled to The Netherlands for a working visit. Due to the corona crisis it has been quite some time since the Minister Plenipotentiary has had the chance to meet with His Excellency. They had a fruitful discussion about Kingdom Relations.

Introductory meetings with Ministers of Cabinet Rutte-4

After the installation of the new Cabinet in The Netherlands the Minister Plenipotentiary had introductory meetings with State Secretary of Kingdom Relations and Digitalization, Ms. Alexandra van Huffelen; the Minister of Education, Culture and Science Mr. Robbert Dijkgraaf; and the Minister of Climate and Energy Mr. Rob Jetten.

Ministers Jetten and Violanus explored areas of cooperation, the importance of energy transition on the island, the opening of energy funds and how the Ministry of Climate and Energy can be of assistance.

Introductory meeting with Jacqueline Prins, Social Economic Council (SER)

Building partnerships is the focus in the Cabinet's journey of economic diplomacy. After reaching out to Ms. Jacqueline Prins, Secretary-General/Director of the Social Economic Council (SER) of The Netherlands, the Cabinet managed to have an interesting and fruitful meeting. The Minister Plenipotentiary emphasized on the importance of community development, access to the network of SER NL, and building a sustainable relationship.

This is a beginning of a new relationship between Sint Maarten and a very important institute in The Netherlands. Ms. Prins also reached out in supporting Sint Maarten in building partnerships with other institutions in The Netherlands, as well as programs for research.

Other meetings

Other noteworthy meetings included the Ambassador of India Ms. Sandhu, US Consul-General Ms. Bond, the Ambassador of Kazakhstan Mr. Zhumagaliev, the Ambassador of Canada Ms. Helfand, The Ambassador of Belgium Ms. van Calster, President of the Integrity Chamber Ms. Vogels and the Ambassador of Colombia Mr. Grillo Rubiano.



Minister Plenipotentiary Violanus and Minister Jetten

EU AFFAIRS



OCTA joins the EU4Ocean coalition

OCTA recently joined the EU4Ocean coalition and attended the the EU4Ocean Summit on May 19-20 in Italy. This was a concluding event for the EU4Ocean pilot programme, celebrating the most successful initiatives, collaborations and actions of the EU4Ocean Platform, the Youth4Ocean Forum and the Network of European Blue Schools. These three main components of the EU4Ocean project gather organisations, individuals, young people, schools and teachers that have been involved in the coalition.

OCTA, as a new member of the EU4Ocean coalition, attended the event to bring the OCTs to the discussion table, promoting that the OCT's oceans are adequately included in ocean literacy actions.

For more information on the EU4Ocean coalition, check out <https://bit.ly/3IJiEXV>

OCT Youth Network

The European Commission's Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), responsible for formulating the European Union's (EU) international partnership and development policy, including with the OCTs, has launched the OCT Youth Network.

The OCT Youth Network will bring together 25 young people (aged 20-28) from the 13 OCTs. This network will provide members the opportunity to discover in depth and first-hand the collaboration between the European Union and the OCTs (known as the EU-OCT Partnership), and the functioning of the European institutions, while connecting with other young people with similar interests.

Applications closed on June 3 and it is expected that the selection process will be finalized by the European Commission in early July. Our hope is that this platform will foster the championing of OCT youth issues within the EU.

EU workshops support participation of OCT's in EU-programs

Aside from the structural moments of dialogue with the Executive Committee of OCTA, the European Commission and member states, the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten actively participated in several significant EU-OCTA webinars over the past few months.

These included the following programmes:

- Erasmus+ cooperation partnerships in the field of education, training and youth for ENGO's.
- Life Program 2021-2027
- The Citizens equality, rights and values program 2021-2027 (CERV)
- OCTA side event COP26

The objective is to learn more about potential EU- funding options and programs and disseminate this information among local authorities and stakeholders on Sint Maarten.

More information can be found on OCTA's website:

<https://www.overseas-association.eu/events/>

EU-OCTA operational grant

Over the past few months there have been many exciting developments within OCTA. On May 11, the European Commission and OCTA signed the operational grant for 2022 which funds 80% of OCTA's activities as defined in its annual work plan.



12TH WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

The Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten, the Honorable R. Violenus, and Mr. P. Rostam, Senior Economic Policy Advisor, participated as part of the Kingdom delegation in the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva on 12-15 June 2022. The delegation, headed by Ms. Liesje Schreinemacher, Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, consisted of about 20 delegates.



The dynamic week started with delegation meetings, conference events and bilateral activities. Facilitated by the Dutch Permanent Mission of the Kingdom in Geneva and under supervision of Ambassador Paul Bekkers, several productive meetings and bilateral discussions took place with senior officials and representatives of various countries and institutions. One of the highlights was a bilateral meeting with the Director and Management of the International Trade Centre (ITC). During this meeting the ITC representatives pledged their full support to Sint Maarten in order to diversify its economy and possible modalities in order to increase Sint Maarten's involvement within the WTO.

Moreover, by strengthening the relations between the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten and the Office of the Permanent Mission of The Netherlands in Geneva, the Cabinet hopes to further collaborate in exploring the benefits of the WTO for the sustainable development of Sint Maarten.

KINGDOM AFFAIRS

Working visits COHO discussions

The Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary has been closely involved at a technical level in the discussions surrounding the draft Consensus Kingdom law COHO. Upon the request of the Prime Minister's office, the Cabinet's director and legal advisor attended the technical discussions held in Curaçao from May 30- June 1.

During these meetings the areas for further consensus and discussion were identified for the four-country Ministerial meeting that was held in June on Aruba. The director of the Cabinet formed part of the Prime Minister's delegation at this Ministerial consultation.

During these discussions the four countries presented their various positions based on the questions posed and concerns shared by the four Parliaments within the Kingdom in their various reports on the draft law. Additionally, three alternatives to the law were presented, and it was decided that Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten's preferred option would be further worked out by the islands in the coming months.

EDUCATION

Guest lecture at the Clingendael Institute

Minister Plenipotentiary Violenus was invited to provide a guest lecture at the Clingendael Institute to a group of new policy makers of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs following a 7 week course in international affairs.

One of the students participating in the course currently works at the Directorate of Foreign Affairs Sint Maarten, Mr. Rogelio Voges.



Group picture after the lecture at Clingendael Institute

During this session Minister Violenus provided the students with an overview of the Cabinet's core objectives and activities. The second part of the session provided room for an interactive Q&A, during which Minister Violenus shed light on the work of the Kingdom Council of Ministers, as well as the modes of cooperation between the countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Guest lecture at the Haagse Hogeschool

The Minister Plenipotentiary, Mr. Rene Violenus together with the Deputy Minister Plenipotentiary of Aruba, Mr. Juan Thijssen, gave a guest lecture to a group of Dutch civil servants working in various ministries in the area of Kingdom relations.

It was a very interactive session whereby a number of controversial statements regarding topics concerning the Caribbean countries were debated. This led to a very open discussion, whereby the Cabinet hopes to have contributed to a better understanding of the varying viewpoints within the countries, as well as the differing realities that the Caribbean countries face.

CULTURE & REPRESENTATION

Memorial day & Liberation day



The Minister Plenipotentiary attended the yearly Memorial Day Service in Amsterdam on May 4. Together with the Ministers Plenipotentiary of Aruba and Curaçao, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, the Minister of Defense, and the State Secretary of Health, Welfare and Sport Minister Violenus laid a wreath to remember the war victims since the beginning of World War 2.

On May 5, Liberation Day, the Minister Plenipotentiary attended the Bevrijdingsconcert in Amsterdam. Among the performers were the rapper Fresku, mezzo soprano Tania Kross and singer Anita Meyer.

Dinner Corps Diplomatique

The dinner for the Corps Diplomatique is an annual gala dinner by His Majesty the King Willem-Alexander and Her Majesty the Queen Máxima. The goal is to improve international relations. About 150 foreign representatives and some 100 local government officials were invited, as were the Ministers Plenipotentiary of Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten. This year the dinner's theme was politics and government.

Rondetafelgesprek Slavernijverleden

On Monday the 27th of June the Minister Plenipotentiary attended a roundtable meeting about the history of the Dutch Transatlantic slave trade, which took place in the Dutch Second Chamber. Among the speakers invited were social and cultural anthropologist Francio Guadeloupe, Lionel Martijn (director of OCAN), Linda Nooitmeer (Stichting Ninsee), Government Commissioner Alida Francis (St. Eustatius), MP Solange L. Duncan, and Island Council Member Vito Charles (Saba). Their contributions were informative, sometimes emotional, but overall gave the members of the Second Chamber in attendance much to reflect on and consider for a next round table discussion.



Appeltjes van Oranje

The Appeltjes van Oranje are a yearly prize awarded to three social projects that successfully connect different groups of people and ensure that they participate in society again. The theme for 2022 was 'Equal opportunity for all young people'. K1 Britannia's scholarship fund was one of the nominees, but did not win the prize.

The award ceremony took place at the Royal Palace at Noordeinde in The Hague on May 12th. Aside from Minister Violenus the Ministers Plenipotentiary of Aruba and Curaçao were present as well.



CONSULAR AFFAIRS

As some persons rely on the services of the Cabinet regarding consular affairs, it's important to highlight some of the cases. Two of these cases were the following:

Scattering of ashes

A German national plans to travel to SXM to scatter a deceased person's ashes at sea. Flight, accommodations and the boat have all been arranged, but it's not entirely clear what paperwork needs to be presented to transport the ashes. The airline stated a death certificate and a bill of loading would suffice, but just to be sure the German national contacted the consular department to have clarity. A short check with the Ministry of VSA proved that the airline was correct, but the law also states that the ashes cannot be scattered earlier than one month after arrival. In certain cases it is possible to get an exemption, which must be requested from the Public Prosecutor. Because the caller would not be on island for such a long time, he was put in touch with the Public Prosecutor to request the exemption.

Consular assistance to other embassies

The head of the consular department of an embassy in The Hague contacted the Cabinet in regards to one of their nationals who required repatriation. The person only possessed an ID-card, but that is insufficient to travel back to his native home in the EU. The embassy wanted to provide an Emergency Travel Document, but could only send their national a copy to travel with. The embassy wondered if it would suffice to also send a letter of authenticity. Because it is not possible to travel on a copy of a travel document, the advice was to contact the Cabinet of the Governor and have a Laissez-Passer issued. Alternatively the embassy could send their national the ETD by courier.



OTHER MATTERS

Easter gifts

The Easter weekend did not go unnoticed. Some 30+ first year students and their guidance counsellors received a small gift from the Minister Plenipotentiary, as a reminder that they are not alone and that the Cabinet is always here for them.

Minister Samuel meets with students

In the second week of March, the Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport Rodolphe Samuel made an official trip to the Netherlands to attend the Four Country Education Consultation. While the Minister and his team were in The Netherlands, they made use of the facilities of the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary to meet with Sint Maarten students and their guidance counselors. During this session the students were invited to share their experiences in the Netherlands with the Minister and his team.

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