

JULY 2023



## *Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten*

### **HIGHLIGHTS:**

- **Excursion to agro-business**
- **BESTLIFE2030**
- **Study success**
- **Emancipation Day and more...**



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# ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

## @The CabinetAfter5

On the 31st of March, the @theCabinetafter5 event took place, with Prof. dr. Peter Diekman, RA as the guest speaker. The theme was “Corporate Governance: A prerequisite for economic development”.

With guests invited from the Dutch Parliament, Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland (Netherlands Enterprise Agency), the Ministry of Interior Affairs and Kingdom Relations, the corporate world, Ondernemend Nederland, entrepreneurs, diaspora, and students, it was a great opportunity to get acquainted with the recent developments on corporate governance. The guests were very critical and their questions led to a vivid discussion.



Prof. Dr. Diekman speaking at @TheCabinetAfter5



## Excursion to agro-business

A business excursion was organized to an innovative and sustainable based agro-business in June 2023. With some diaspora and students as well as the staff of the Cabinet being present, an in depth overview of the process and possibilities was presented.

A future partnership with this company is also discussed taking into account that the agriculture policy is focusing on exploring projects of food security. The Cabinet's findings will be shared with the Ministry of TEATT in Q3 2023 and follow-up with possible other agro-companies will be sought in order to advise on the development of agro-business on the island.



Business excursion to an agro-business

# FOREIGN AFFAIRS & REPRESENTATION

## The Governor of Sint Maarten

In March the Minister Plenipotentiary met with His Excellency the Governor of Sint Maarten, mr. Aجامu Baly, who had traveled to The Netherlands for a working visit. This was the first visit of Governor Baly to the Cabinet since his installation as Governor in 2022.

On behalf of His Excellency the Cabinet organized a networking event on March 16th titled “Economic Development & Capacity building – how can you play a role?”.

The target audience consisted of Sint Maarten young professionals and entrepreneurs living in the Netherlands. During this event participants discussed a number of issues restricting them back from returning to Sint Maarten, as well as ways and means to support the economic development of Sint Maarten from abroad.



Networking event hosted by the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary, for the Governor of Sint Maarten

## Air Services Agreement Finland

On June 1st, the Minister Plenipotentiary and the Ambassador of Finland, Mr. Ilkka-Pekka Antero Similä, signed an air services agreement that regulates air transportation services between Finland and Sint Maarten. The agreement is necessary to comply with international rules and regulations, and new developments within the aviation sector.



The Minister Plenipotentiary and the Ambassador of Finland sign the agreement

## South Africa

The Counselor Bilateral of the Embassy of South-Africa, Ms. Lebelo, visited the Cabinet for a farewell visit. During the visit she elaborated on the position of South Africa towards geopolitical developments.

## Kingdom Ambassador to Trinidad & Tobago

The Minister Plenipotentiary met with the soon to be appointed Kingdom Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Hersbach. One of the topics of discussion was the importance of him being stationed there for the CAS islands as well.

Moreover, due to his extensive HR background at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Minister Plenipotentiary Violenus made use of the opportunity to enquire in-depth about HR procedures within the Kingdom embassies. This formed a large and quite interesting part of the discussion.

## Colombia

Minister Plenipotentiary Violenus met with the new Ambassador of Colombia, Ms. Carolina Olarte Bácares. Some of the topics discussed were Spanish language education on St. Maarten and the slavery past discussions.

## Other meetings and receptions

The Minister Plenipotentiary represented Sint Maarten at various diplomatic national day receptions, such as those for Haiti, the Dominican Republic, India, the USA, the Philippines and Panama, as well as the State Banquet hosted by the King for the President of France.

# KINGDOM AFFAIRS

## Meetings with Dutch Parliamentary members

The Minister Plenipotentiary often has meetings with various members of the Dutch Kingdom relations parliamentary committee. The Minister Plenipotentiary met with the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, Mr. Robbert Dijkgraaf, and the Minister of Climate and Energy, Mr. Rob Jetten.

The meetings with Minister Jetten specifically explored areas of cooperation, the importance of energy transition on the island, the opening of the SDE++ fund for the CAS islands' energy funds and how the Ministry of Climate and Energy can be of assistance. At a technical level the Cabinet is in discussions with the Ministry of Energy to ensure follow-up of the recently signed MOU and to discuss the implementation of the funding mechanism for the CAS islands.

The discussions with the Minister of Education focused on the slavery apology and also on the topic of Sint Maarten students studying in the Netherlands receiving adequate support during their studies as well as when moving to the Netherlands.

## Secretary Day

On March 15, an annual meet-up organized by the secretariat of the Ministry of General Affairs brought together all the secretaries from the different Ministries and directorates-general of the Dutch government, as well as the secretaries for the Ministers Plenipotentiaries, marking the first gathering since the pandemic. Held at the Binnenhof in The Hague, the event aimed to foster stronger ties and collaboration on all levels of government, from ministerial to secretarial.



Group picture of Secretary Day

## Work visit PM Jacobs

During the Prime Minister Jacob's working visit in June, the Cabinet had introductory meetings with faction leaders Jesse Klaver of GroenLinks and Jan Paternotte of the D66 party.

Moreover, a closed door session was organized by the Cabinet with the Dutch Kingdom Relations parliamentary committee, where the discussion focused on the slavery discussions, the need for capacity on the island and the Kingdom Conference. The Kingdom Conference was of importance to the Committee as their role was yet to be determined.

The Minister Plenipotentiary also accompanied PM Jacobs to several other meetings, such as the Raad van State and State Secretary for Kingdom Relations and Digitalization Ms. Alexandra van Huffelen.



PM Jacobs and the Minister Plenipotentiary at a meeting with State Secretary Van Huffelen

## Meet and greet Sint Maarten IPKO Parliamentary delegation

On Wednesday May 31st, 2023, the Cabinet organized a meet & greet on behalf of the Parliamentary delegation of Sint Maarten, themed "Influencing change back home".

This event focused on students and young professionals of Sint Maarten who reside in the Netherlands. During the interactive session participants were given the opportunity to pose their questions to the Parliamentarians present.

The topics ranged from incentives to move back to Sint Maarten, facilitating contributing to the island from the Netherlands, ideas to better develop Sint Maarten, and student wellbeing.



## EU AFFAIRS



### OCTA

In order for Sint Maarten to have a strong voice with the EU, Sint Maarten is a member of the Overseas Countries and Territories Association (OCTA). The Director of the Cabinet is currently also Sint Maarten's EU representative within OCTA and was the Vice-President of OCTA's executive committee until April 7, 2023. OCTA is currently undergoing structural changes and organized an Extraordinary Ministerial Conference on June 30th, 2023 to discuss this and other matters.

Furthermore, aside from the structural moments of dialogue with the Executive Committee of OCTA and its membership, the European Commission and member states, the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten actively participated in significant EU-OCTA webinars and workshops over the past few months. The Cabinet's economic advisor, Mr. Prakaash Rostam, and the Deputy Minister Plenipotentiary, Mr. Richard Pannefle, participated in for example the BESTLIFE 2030 conference, about biodiversity and climate targets, and the Green Overseas Program.

### BESTLIFE2030

The BESTLIFE2030 project will establish a financing facility to give support to applicants and grantees for enabling projects that will ensure impact on the ground and that will ultimately demonstrate the commitment of the EU Overseas towards regional and international biodiversity and sustainable development strategies.

The project will:

- provide specific support to local stakeholders in ORs and OCTs for the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of ecosystem services, including for climate adaptation, as set out in the Commission Communication 'A stronger and renewed partnership with the EU's outermost regions;
- empower local stakeholders in ORs and OCTs to define and implement projects tailored to their respective challenges and to address effectively concrete conservation issues;
- stimulate the inclusion of conservation and the sustainable use of biological resources into decision-making, and mainstream issues across all sectors of local economies and policy-making frameworks;
- contribute to the achievement of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to be adopted at the CBD COP 15.

Over 80% of Europe's biodiversity is found in the European Overseas.

These Outermost Regions (ORs) and Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) are essential for achieving the EU's biodiversity and climate targets and commitments. The EU's ambitious 2030 Biodiversity Strategy requires that the extent of well-managed protected and conserved areas increases to 30% of the EU's land and sea area. At global level, the EU is signatory to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and committed to achieving the goals and targets set at the CBD COP 15 in December 2022.

With their rich marine, terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity, the ORs and OCTs are among the most vulnerable places on Earth. Action to halt biodiversity loss, avert resource degradation, and adapt to climate change is therefore vital, with a high return on investment in both biodiversity and social outcomes. Since 2011, the BEST Initiative has supported local actors on biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of ecosystem services, including ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation, in the nine EU ORs and 25 OCTs through 153 grants. This event will take stock of the success stories and lessons learnt of the first 12 years of the initiative, and celebrate a new milestone, with the launch of BESTLIFE2030: a new partnership and a renewed 32 million EUR commitment, for the benefit of people and biodiversity in Europe's overseas.

# EDUCATION

## Nationale Carrièrebeurs

The Minister Plenipotentiary attended the opening of the Nationale Carrièrebeurs (National Career Fair) on April 14th. This year marked the debut of the event's exclusive section, "Working in the Caribbean," dedicated to showcasing Caribbean companies.

The Minister's presence underscored the importance of regional collaboration and highlighted the potential for professional growth and development in the Caribbean. The inaugural inclusion of this dedicated area in the fair reflects the growing recognition of the Caribbean as a prime destination for career advancement.



Minister Plenipotentiary Violenus at the National Career Fair

## Study Success

Since last year, the Cabinet has participated in structural meetings with the Ombudsman, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and Ms. Nicole Spellen from Strategic Education Alliance (SEA). The meetings focused on obtaining a BSN-number for new students, health insurance and repayment of students loans. While certain issues have been solved, they will not be implemented until the start of the 2024-2025 school year.

There was a round table meeting with the Ombudsman and representatives of most, if not all involved stakeholders, in which the Minister Plenipotentiary also participated. Goal was to identify the next steps in the process of improving the Caribbean students' study success and a smoother transition to life in the Netherlands. The final report will be published by the Ombudsman's Office in the summer of 2023.

## Haagse Hogeschool

The cooperation with Haagse Hogeschool continued in 2023. The Minister Plenipotentiary, Mr. Rene Violenus, together with the Ministers Plenipotentiary of Aruba and Curaçao, attended a Q&A session with a group of Dutch civil servants working in various ministries in the area of Kingdom relations.

In this interactive session 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



Deputy Minister Plenipotentiary Panneflek at the Memorial Day Service

The Deputy Minister Plenipotentiary, Mr. Richard Panneflek, attended the yearly Memorial Day Service in Amsterdam on Thursday the 4th of May. 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, Deputy Minister Panneflek laid a wreath to remember the war victims since the beginning of World War 2.

On May 5, Liberation Day, the Deputy Minister Plenipotentiary attended the Bevrijdingsconcert in Amsterdam. Among the performers were the singer Alain Clark, pianist Wibi Soerjadi, and singer Trijntje Oosterhuis.

## Run-up to Emancipation Day

Given the focus on the slavery past discussions the Minister Plenipotentiary has had several meetings with key persons and institutions charged with the implementation of the remembrance activities, such as Ninsee and the slavery museum quarter masters.

On June 15th, the Minister Plenipotentiary and the Prime Minister of Sint Maarten attended a meeting at the Provinciehuis Zuid-Holland to discuss the progress of the Dutch government's apology and the public's response. The Minister Plenipotentiary also attended a dinner organized by the Royal Marechaussee on June 29th and the Deputy Minister Plenipotentiary attended a memorial ceremony on June 30th.



PM Jacobs and the Minister Plenipotentiary meeting with Ninsee



Minister Plenipotentiary Violenus at the Slavery Remembrance Day

## Emancipation Day

On Saturday July 1st, the Minister Plenipotentiary attended the Nationale Herdenking Slavernijverleden (Slavery Remembrance Day) in the Oosterpark in Amsterdam. The event, organized by Nationaal Instituut Nederlands Slavernijverleden en Erfenis (NiNsee), is held annually to commemorate the abolition of slavery in the former Dutch colonies in 1863.

This year's commemoration also marked the start of the Slavery Memorial Year as it was 160 (150) years ago that slavery was abolished. King Willem-Alexander extended an apology on behalf of the royal family.





## CONSULAR AFFAIRS

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

### Caribbean visa

A Dutch national, who is married to a Russian national, contacted the consular department to inquire about visa requirements. They would like to visit Sint Maarten, but the caller is not sure if their spouse would need a Caribbean visa to be allowed entry to the country. The caller also mentioned their spouse is in possession of a valid residency permit for the Netherlands, and since Sint Maarten is part of the Kingdom should be able to travel.

A lot of travelers are unaware that visas are a Kingdom government affair, so when someone might need a Caribbean visa to be able to visit Sint Maarten they will contact the Sint Maarten House for more information. Since the Sint Maarten government does not issue (Caribbean) visas, the caller was referred to [Netherlandsworldwide.nl](http://Netherlandsworldwide.nl) to review if based on their personal situation a visa is required. The fact that the caller's spouse has a valid residency permit for the Netherlands is irrelevant, because of the constituent country-status of Sint Maarten. Sint Maarten issues their own residency permits, which are not valid in the Netherlands, and vice versa.

### PUBLISHED BY:



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