



Ministry of the Interior and
Kingdom Relations

To the Island Council of Saba
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Saba

**Ministry of the Interior and
Kingdom Relations**

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Enclosure(s)

1

Date **27 JUN 2023**
Subject History of slavery - Letter on the process following the
apology for the slavery past

Dear Members of the Island Council,

Since the apology for the slavery past on 19th of December last year, there have been good discussions with your government and civil society organizations from your island. I would like to thank you for the openness during these talks. We see these discussions as a good basis to continue building a culture of remembrance, in which there is room for awareness of our shared past and room for the conversation about a common future. Attached please find the letter in which the cabinet reports on the follow-up of the apology. This letter has also been translated into English. This letter specifically addresses the state of affairs for the Caribbean part of the Kingdom. A special point of attention for the Cabinet is that each island will be given the opportunity to go through this process according to its own needs and thus be in charge of the follow-up of the apologies.

Follow-up to the apology on Saba

At the same time as the apology on 19 December last, the State Secretary of Health, Welfare and Sport was with you on Saba. After the prime minister's speech, he addressed the slavery past and its impact. In addition to the measures announced in the Cabinet response of 19 December last, he made a number of commitments. These stem from your island's contributions to the 'Chains of the Past' report and the discussions that took place as a result. The implementation of these commitments and the realization of the measures in the Cabinet response will be done in cooperation with your Executive Council, civil society organizations and descendants. As indicated in the Cabinet's response, the aim is for these commitments to the islands to be financed from the € 100 million for measures concerning knowledge and awareness, recognition and remembrance, and implementation and processing. The implementation of these commitments is part of a broader discussion with the Caribbean part of the Kingdom about the further implementation of the entire package and their specific needs within it.

Since December, we have engaged in island-by-island discussions and held both digital and physical meetings with representatives of your government, civil society organizations and descendants. The follow-up to the apology relates directly to the islands and it is of great importance that the islands themselves are in charge of shaping the follow-up to the apology. These discussions revealed,

among other things, the extent to which certain commitments can already be concretized and implemented. A number of commitments require further research and/or deliberation, for example through participation or the work of an advisory committee. We are therefore happy to give you space and time to shape the implementation of commitments and the establishment of a position yourself. In addition, the government is examining how the various organizations can be supported in their work, with a special focus on grass roots organizations and community engagement. Within this framework, a meeting in the Caribbean will therefore be organized after the summer, to which stakeholders from all six islands will be involved and invited. This is as a follow-up to the meeting in Curaçao on 23 November last year.

Status of commitments

Several discussions have taken place on Saba with representatives of descendants, civil society organizations and your government. From these, several ideas emerged about the implementation of the commitments for a monument and the mapping of possibilities and support of genealogical research for descendants. The implementation of these commitments fit within a broader aim to raise awareness of the slavery and colonial past, for example by facilitating a social dialogue, organizing Oral History projects, developing teaching materials on Saba's slavery past and designating 1 July as an official holiday on the island. We are now developing these various ideas together with your government and relevant civil society organizations and descendants.

It is worth noting that during the Parliamentary debate on the Cabinet response on 25 January this year, the Simons c.s. motion was passed. That motion requests the government to also facilitate the search for where exactly one comes from, through DNA research by non-profit institutes such as Erasmus University. The intent of the motion is in line with the commitment made by the government to Saba on 19 December. The elaboration of the commitment to Saba could therefore serve as a pilot for a broader roll-out of this.

Looking ahead

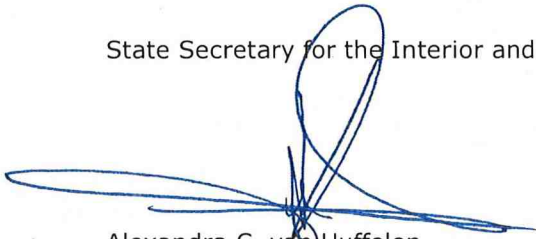
We are standing at the eve of the Slavery Memorial Year 2023-2024. Where I myself will be attending Emancipation Day and the opening of the Memorial Year on Saba. During the Memorial Year, we will reflect throughout the Kingdom and together with Suriname on our shared history so that it will have a permanent place in our collective memory. Initiatives will be organized throughout the Kingdom, aiming at recognition and awareness of this past. Part of this, then, is learning about the stories, gaining knowledge and listening to how this impacts on the present.

Given the different concerns of the islands, I think it is very important that each island is in charge of following up on commitments and apology. In the coming period, I would therefore like to engage with your Executive Council to discuss their thoughts on, for example, the social initiative scheme and the committee. Accessibility and visibility are also topics we would like to discuss with them. I am convinced that we will only achieve a good joint follow-up if we involve the descendants and organizations involved in this. That is why we plan to organize a

meeting on the Caribbean islands after the summer to discuss this and arrive at concrete starting points for, for example, the subsidy scheme and the organization of the intended Committee.

Yours sincerely,

State Secretary for the Interior and Kingdom Relations,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large loop at the top and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Alexandra C. van Huffelen