



Ministry of the Interior and
Kingdom Relations

To the Island Council of St Eustatius
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**Ministry of the Interior and
Kingdom Relations**

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Reference

2023-0000373867

Your reference

Enclosure(s)

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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 them 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 St Eustatius

Concurrent with the apology on 19 December last, the State Secretary of Finance was with you on St Eustatius. After the prime minister's speech, he addressed the slavery past and its impact on your island. 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 contribution 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 commitment is that these commitments to the islands will be funded from the € 100 million for measures related to knowledge and awareness, recognition and remembrance, and impact 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 discussions on each island and both digital and physical meetings have taken place with representatives of your government, civil society organizations and descendants. The follow-up to the apology directly affects the islands and it is very important that the islands themselves have the

shaping of the follow-up to the apology. These talks 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 instance through participation or the work of an advisory committee. We are therefore happy to give your island 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

To St Eustatius, the Cabinet has made a commitment to fund a slavery monument or memorial and to financially and technically support the work of the St Eustatius Cultural Heritage Implementation Committee based on their needs. Several ideas for both commitments have already been discussed over the past period, including with your Executive Council. A monument to all enslaved Africans and the reburial of ancestors buried on St Eustatius are important examples. At the same time, the representatives of descendants, civil society organizations and the representatives of your public entity are working on a plan containing the needs for the implementation of the commitments. This measure is part of the commitments in the Cabinet response for which the Cabinet has earmarked €100 million. I see the implementation of the commitments in broader process of raising awareness of the slavery and colonial past. There have been several discussions on this, including decolonization in various aspects of society. Various means have been suggested for raising awareness, such as the further development of teaching materials on the slavery past on St Eustatius, facilitation of social dialogue and Oral History projects.

Overarching topics

Several topics were repeatedly mentioned during the various discussion rounds on the islands, including the preservation, management and accessibility of cultural heritage relating to the colonial and slavery past, access to the national cultural funds on the islands, the available cultural infrastructure and museum facilities. The various ideas expressed in relation to these topics will be included in the individual plans for each island. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science will also examine how this can be supported, for example through existing policy initiatives such as the Cultural Covenant or through a partnership with the National Archives and the National Library of the Netherlands in The Hague.

Looking ahead

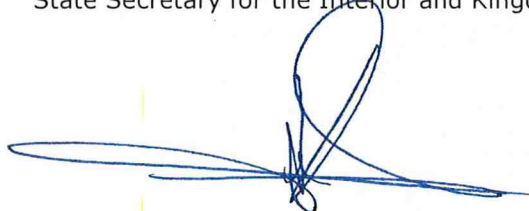
We are standing at the eve of the Slavery Memorial Year 2023-2024. Where I myself will be attending Emancipation Day and the opening of the Memorial Year on St Eustatius. During the Memorial Year, we will reflect throughout the Kingdom and together with Suriname on our shared history so that it will 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,



Alexandra C. van Huffelen