



Ministry of the Interior and
Kingdom Relations

To the Parliament of St Maarten
Maarten
Wilhelminastraat 1
Philipsburg
St Maarten

**Ministry of the Interior and
Kingdom Relations**

www.rijksoverheid.nl
www.facebook.com/minbzk
www.twitter.com/minbzk
[www.linkedin.com/company/
ministerie-van-bzk](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ministerie-van-bzk)

Contact

postbus.slavernijverledenKR@
minbzk.nl

Reference

2023-0000373848

Your reference

Enclosure(s)

1

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

Dear President, Dear Members of Parliament,

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 country. 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 Sint Maarten

At the same time as the apology on 19 December last, the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport was present on Sint Maarten. 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 two commitments. The implementation of these commitments and the realization of the measures from the Cabinet's response are done in cooperation with your government, civil society organizations and descendants. As indicated in the Cabinet's response, the commitment is that these commitments to the islands will be financed from the € 100 million for measures related to knowledge and awareness, recognition and remembrance, and effect 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 with every island and held both digital and physical meetings with representatives of your government, civil society organizations and descendants. The follow-up to the apologies 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 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 very keen to give your country 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.

Your government established the Advisory Committee on Slavery, Atonement and Reparations with the mandate to advise the Government of Sint Maarten on the follow-up to the apology, including on the basis of social dialogue. In the recent period, Minister of Education, Culture and Science and my officials, among others, have met with the Advisory Committee and exchanged views on the impact of the slavery past, the Memorial Year and the follow-up to the apology. I look forward with interest to the committee's recommendations to the government of Sint Maarten. In addition, the government considers it important that St Maarten can go through this process at its own pace, after which we want to shape the follow-up to the apology together.

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 on St Maarten. 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.

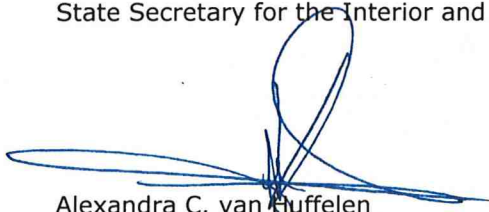
Given the different concerns of the islands, I think it is very important that each island is in charge of following up on commitments and apology. In the coming period, I would therefore like to engage with your government to discuss their thoughts on, for example, the social initiative scheme and the 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.

Reference
2023-0000373848

Yours sincerely,

State Secretary for the Interior and Kingdom Relations,



Alexandra C. van Nuffelen