



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

### **HIGHLIGHTS:**

- **Minister Violenus attends 19th EU-OCT Forum in New Caledonia**
- **Sessions at Catshuis about Dutch Slavery Past**
- **Farewell reception Governor Holiday**
- **SXM Day Basketball tournament, and more...**



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*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**

### **United States of America**

Minister Plenipotentiary Violenus met with the Ambassador of the United States of America to the Netherlands, Mrs. Razdan-Duggal. The American Ambassador recently assumed office and wanted to discuss a number of priority areas, including climate change and human rights.

### **Receptions**

Both the Minister Plenipotentiary, Rene Violenus, and the Deputy Minister Plenipotentiary, Richard Panneflek, attended several receptions and diplomatic events. Among these were receptions hosted by France, Belgium, Brazil, Kazakhstan, Romania, Uruguay and Suriname.

### **St. Eustatius**

The Minister Plenipotentiary received the Government Commissioner of St. Eustatius, Ms Alida Francis, who was in The Netherlands to attend the InterExpo. Ms. Francis provided updates on the governmental and sociopolitical developments in Statia.



Ms. Alida Francis and the Minister Plenipotentiary

## SXM EU YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES

# EU AFFAIRS

On October 28th, two of the three newly appointed EU OCT Youth Network members from Sint Maarten, Ms. Keisha Rousseau and Mr. Rodman James met with Minister Violenus and Carol Voges to discuss their experiences thus far as part of the youth network and their recent trip to the European Commission in Brussels.

The OCT Youth Network was created in early 2022 and is composed of 25 young people (aged 20-28) representing 10 OCTs associated with the EU: Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, French Polynesia, Greenland, New Caledonia, Saba, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, Sint Maarten, and Wallis and Futuna. OCT Youth Network members will serve a one-year mandate.

The OCT Youth Network aims to increase the ties between young people living in OCTs and the European Union (EU), and enhance the knowledge and involvement of young people in the EU-OCT partnership.

## Minister Violenus attends 19th EU-OCT Forum in New Caledonia

The 19th annual EU-OCT Forum and Overseas Countries and Territories Association (OCTA) Ministerial conference was held from November 18-22, 2022 in Nouméa, New Caledonia. The Honorable Minister Plenipotentiary, Mr. Rene Violenus headed the delegation which consisted of Ms. Carol Voges, the EU representative for Sint Maarten and Director at the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary, and Ms. Nikima Hickinson, Senior Policy advisor at the department of BAK.



The Ministerial Conference is OCTA's highest governing body and establishes the mandate to the executive committee for the next 12 months. During the conference the OCTA financial statements for the years 2021-2022 and annual report were also presented.

The exchanges between the representatives of the 13 European OCTs mainly focused on the evolution of OCTA's governance as well as on the results and prospects of the partnership with the European Union post 2021. The agreements were outlined in the OCTA political declaration and presented to the European Commission during the EU-OCT Forum.

Noteworthy elements of the declaration were reaffirming the need to closely involve the OCTs in the post-Cotonou agreement, with due regard to their observer status, and in the EU's regional partnerships with the OCTs' neighbors. Moreover, the importance of the regional programming process, and having better adapted and strengthened cooperation tools and mechanisms which contribute to the OCTs' regional cooperation with the ACP, the Outermost Regions, regional organizations and other territories, for greater development and complementarity of action between countries within the same group was reiterated.

Additionally, the key role that the OCTs have to play in the context of the Green Deal for Europe was underlined, for instance regarding biodiversity protection or clean energy transitions, whereby the European Commission was strongly encouraged to develop flagship initiatives or projects dedicated to archipelagos, including the OCTs, such as the "Clean Energy for Islands" initiative.

During the conference, the election for the chairmanship of the Ministerial Conference and membership of the executive committee also took place. Greenland was elected Chair and Aruba was elected Vice-Chair of the Ministerial conference.



The delegation, consisting of Ms. Nikima Hickinson, Minister Plenipotentiary Mr. Rene Violenus and Ms. Carol Voges

The Executive Committee members for the coming year were also elected, with the EU representative for Curaçao being elected President and Sint Maarten's EU representative being elected to the position of Vice-President. The remaining members of the executive committee are Aruba, Greenland and Wallis et Futuna. The positions of Treasurer and Secretary will be filled at the first meeting held by the Executive Committee in December. The Ministerial Conference was updated on the status of various EU funded programs, such as Archipel.eu, the GO program and the Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean Regional programs under the 11th EDF, whereby Sint Maarten as the Regional Authorizing Officer (RAO) presented the update for the Caribbean program during a workshop held on November 19th, 2022.



The Minister Plenipotentiary with the Deputy Head of OCT Unit, Catherine Metdepenningen

## **SXM SIGNS MULTIANNUAL INDICATIVE PROGRAM**

On Tuesday November 22, 2022 the Honourable Minister Plenipotentiary, Mr. Rene Violenus signed the Multiannual Indicative programme (MIP) for the programming period 2021 to 2027 on behalf of the Honorable Prime Minister, Mrs. Silveria Jacobs at the 19th EU-OCT Forum held in Noumea, New Caledonia.

An amount of 7.7 million euros has been allocated for Sint Maarten's program. The focus area of the MIP is Sustainable and Resilient Energy.

# KINGDOM AFFAIRS

## Prinsjesdag

The Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten, Mr. Rene Violenus, attended Prinsjesdag in The Hague, The Netherlands on Tuesday the 20th of September. Prinsjesdag, also known as Prince's Day, marks the opening of the Dutch parliament and is a significant event in the Dutch political calendar.

The day began with a ceremonial parade, followed by a speech from King Willem-Alexander outlining the Dutch government's plans for the coming year. Mr. Violenus was among the dignitaries and political figures in attendance at the event, which included members of the Dutch Royal family, ministers, and representatives of the Dutch parliament.

## Roundtable meeting "Sustainability"

The Dutch Second Chamber of parliament held roundtable discussions on sustainability, with a focus on the Caribbean. The Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten, Rene Violenus, was among the invited speakers, along with the Ministers Plenipotentiary of Curaçao and Aruba. They discussed the islands' policies and best practices concerning sustainability, highlighting the unique challenges and opportunities faced by the islands in this regard. The Ministers Plenipotentiary of the Caribbean islands also shared their perspectives on how the Netherlands can support the islands in achieving their sustainability goals. The roundtable discussions provided a valuable platform for the islands to share their experiences and to collaborate on finding solutions to the complex challenges of sustainability in the Caribbean region.

## InterExpo

The Minister Plenipotentiary, the Deputy Minister Plenipotentiary, along with senior staff members of the Cabinet and several MP's from Sint Maarten, attended the InterExpo congress in The Hague. This congress brought together business leaders, government officials, and experts from various fields to discuss and explore the theme "Equality within the Kingdom of the Netherlands". The Sint Maarten delegation participated in a variety of bilateral meetings and networking events.

## Session at Catshuis about the Dutch slavery past

Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the Netherlands invited various politicians and stakeholders to consult on potential apologies for the country's past with slavery. Sessions were held at the Catshuis, the official residence of the Prime Minister in The Hague. Among the attendees was the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten, Rene Violenus. The discussions focused on addressing the historical injustices and legacies of slavery and exploring ways for the Netherlands to take responsibility and make amends.

The consultations were a part of the Dutch government's efforts to address the country's role in the transatlantic slave trade and its impact on the Caribbean islands, including Sint Maarten. The Minister Plenipotentiary and other stakeholders had the opportunity to voice their perspectives and concerns during these discussions.



Minister Plenipotentiary Violenus at the Catshuis with some of the invitees, among them Dr. Karwan Fatah-Black, Dagmar Oudshoorn (Amnesty International), Jerry Afriyie (activist, Kick Out Zwarte Piet) and Linda Nooitmeer (Stichting NiNsee)



# EDUCATION

## Arrival of students

On August 8, 2022, Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten, Rene Violenus and his staff welcomed a group of 26 students from Sint Maarten as they arrived at Schiphol Airport to begin their studies at various universities. The students will commence their tertiary studies in various fields including law, business and medicine. They will be studying at some of the top universities in the Netherlands, including the Technical University of Delft, Erasmus University Rotterdam and the University of Amsterdam.



Students at Schiphol Airport (c) The Daily Herald



Denzel Richardson and the Minister Plenipotentiary address the new students at the DSF workshop.

## Workshop DSF with Denzel Richardson

In its usual collaboration with the Guidance Counselors of Dienst Studie Financiering (DSF), the Cabinet made its meeting facilities available for a motivational workshop where baseball player Denzel Richardson addressed the students on becoming committed to overcoming adversity, to facing their fears head on, being their best self and to engage in confident and positive self-talk.

# CULTURE & REPRESENTATION

## Nationale Herdenking Slavernijverleden

On July 1, 2022, the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten, 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. The commemoration is an important event that serves as a reminder of the atrocities of the past and the ongoing work that must be done to address this legacy. The Minister Plenipotentiary's attendance is a symbol of Sint Maarten's commitment to remembering and addressing the past, and to working towards a more just and equitable future for all.



On behalf of St. Maarten, Minister Plenipotentiary Violenus laid a wreath at the Slavery Remembrance Day monument

## Kingdom Day at The Hague University

The Hague University of Applied Sciences held an event in honor of Kingdom Day. The theme of the event was "Education, learning and growing together within the Kingdom."

Several speeches were given, highlighting best practices in the area of education within the Kingdom. During the event, Minister Rene Violenus held a speech highlighting a number of exemplary programs on Sint Maarten.

These included the Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education (BAE) program offered by USM, the transdisciplinary research program 'Islanders at the Helm' and the adult literacy program.



Minister Violenus speaking at The Hague University

## St. Maarten Day

The Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten organized an official reception to celebrate Sint Maarten Day on November 11th. The reception was held at the Cabinet's offices in The Hague and brought together a diverse group of people, including government officials, business leaders, and community members. The event featured speeches by the Minister Plenipotentiary and other dignitaries. The reception was a celebration of the island's unique culture and history, and an opportunity for the Sint Maarteners in the Netherlands to come together and celebrate our national day.



Mrs. Maria Van der Sluijs-Plantz (member Council of State), Mr. Rogelio Voges (Foreign Relations), H.E. Mr. Rene Violenus (Minister Plenipotentiary of St. Maarten), and H.E. Mr. Jose Eduardo Malaya (Ambassador of the Philippines)



Minister Plenipotentiary of Curaçao Mr. Carlson Manuel giving a congratulatory speech



Minister Plenipotentiary of Aruba Mr. Juan Thijsen giving a congratulatory speech



Ambassador of Canada Ms. Lisa Helfand and Deputy Minister Plenipotentiary Mr. Richard Panneflekk

## St. Maarten Day Basketball Tournament

The Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten organized a basketball tournament to celebrate the island's National day. The tournament was held at Sporthal Overbosch in The Hague and featured 10 teams from various communities in the Netherlands. The tournament was open to all ages and skill levels and was a great way to bring the people together to celebrate the island's National day. The tournament received much positive feedback from participants and spectators alike. The games were intense and exciting, with the final match being a closely contested affair. "The Hague Ballers", a team mainly consisting of local players, won the tournament.



The winning team, The Hague Ballers



Showtime, the team that made 2nd place



The Monstars, who came in 3rd place

## Farewell reception Governor Eugene Holiday

The Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten organized a farewell reception for the outgoing Governor of Sint Maarten, Drs. Eugene B. Holiday, on Thursday the 22nd of September. The reception was held at the Cabinet's office in The Hague, the Netherlands and was attended by various Sint Maarteners, including business leaders, community members, and government officials.

During the reception, Governor Holiday reflected on his time in office and thanked the people of Sint Maarten for their support. He also highlighted the accomplishments of his tenure. The guests in attendance also took the opportunity to thank the Governor for his service and wish him well in his future endeavors. The Governor left those in attendance with a burning and relevant question: "How can you contribute to our country's development?"

The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations also organized a farewell reception for the outgoing Governor, where he received the royal decoration of the rank of the Commander in the Order of Orange-Nassau. Recipients of this decoration, which is not often awarded, must have distinguished themselves by outstanding or extremely important work or have rendered service of international or even global importance.



Outgoing Governor Drs. Eugene B. Holiday and the Minister Plenipotentiary, Rene Violenus

## @The Cabinet After 5: Seizing Opportunity Through Collaboration

The Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten organized a networking event called "@The Cabinet After 5" at its offices. The event, focused on the theme of "Seizing Opportunities through Collaboration," brought together several key persons from the business and government sectors to discuss ways of fostering collaboration and identifying new opportunities for growth.

Among the invited speakers were Bernise Stoffer from the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) and Hamza Kacha from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate. Their presentations focused on upcoming opportunities to enhance sustainable business and economic development on Sint Maarten, whereby the presentation by RVO highlighted the findings and recommendations of the recently completed 2 year long business matchmaking project.



Hamza Kacha of Economic Affairs and Climate (EZK)

The Cabinet also made use of this opportunity to present its foreign outreach policy which is currently being developed. This policy will serve as an instrument to ensure that the Cabinet gets the most out of its presence as the representation of Sint Maarten in The Hague.

The event was also livestreamed on the Cabinet's Facebook page to allow for participation from those who could not attend in person. The event was a great success, providing an opportunity for participants to connect, share insights and explore potential partnerships.



Bernise Stoffer of the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO)

## Acceptance of Office Governor Baly

The Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten attended the events for the acceptance of office by the incoming Governor of Sint Maarten, Ajamu Baly. These events on the 10th of October began with a church ceremony at 9 AM and were followed by the official acceptance of office in Philipsburg at 11 AM. The ceremony was attended by dignitaries, government officials and members of the community, who came together to witness this significant moment in Sint Maarten's history. The Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten, along with the community, welcomed the incoming Governor and looks forward to working with him to continue to drive the development and progress of Sint Maarten.

## FRED Expo

Towards the end of October 2022, the Minister Plenipotentiary was invited to attend Flinx Recruitment Expo Dutch Caribbean, or most commonly called FRED. Alongside Stichting Overheidsaccountantsbureau (SOAB), an accounting bureau that works for the broader government, government related institutions, subsidized institutions and foundations, Minister Violenus was able to showcase and discuss with interested visitors several of the critical vacancies within the Government of Sint Maarten.

FRED has as its primary goal the stimulation of (r)emigration of students and professionals in the Netherlands to the Dutch Caribbean. FRED has become an annual event and meeting point. It was created as a recruitment event for students, professionals and for jobseekers in the Netherlands and employers in the Dutch Caribbean to connect.



Ms. Candia Joseph of SOAB and Minister Plenipotentiary Violenus at the FRED Expo

## VROMI Job mixer

While the Minister of VROMI, Egbert J. Doran, was in the Netherlands in December for a work visit, a job mixer was organized at the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary. The event aimed to recruit Sint Maarteners with relevant specializations to return home and work for the Ministry of VROMI.

The job mixer was a chance for Sint Maarteners to learn about job opportunities on the island and to network with the Minister and other government officials. The mixer was a clear indication of the Government's commitment to investing in the island's human capital and creating job opportunities for the youth of Sint Maarten.



## 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:

### Proof of deregistration

A Dutch national born in St. Maarten traveled to the Netherlands, with the intention to settle. The person deregistered at the Civil Registry Department and took their child with them. For non-specified reasons, they did not get through with finding housing or even registering at a municipality in the west of the country. The person contacted the Cabinet to inquire about the process of registering again on island. In this specific case they did not get through with registering in the Netherlands, and could not produce a proof of deregistration from their local municipality office. The Consular Department contacted the municipality to get in writing that the person and their child were never registered in their municipality, so they could travel back home and register in Sint Maarten again.

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