

Hon. Chairpersons and Members of Parliament of the four countries within the Kingdom.

It is truly an honor to be able to address you here today in my capacity of Chairperson and delegation leader of the Parliament of Sint Maarten.

Just a few months ago we met on Curaçao for the Interparliamentary Kingdom Consultation (IPKO) of January. Due to the recent elections of both Curaçao and Sint Maarten in September 2016, it was decided that no “Agreements list” would be established and signed. Nevertheless we had interesting discussions on a number of topics such as health care, education, economic opportunities and climate change and very insightful work visits.

In the meantime both Curaçao and the Netherlands had elections in recent months resulting in a new constellation of the delegations. Therefore this IPKO will be characterized by getting to know each other (better) and determining how relevant topics will be dealt with moving forward. I hope that we can further deliberate on (some of) the topics that we discussed in January that are of interest to all the people of the Kingdom with the aim to come to tangible results and solutions.

One such topic is the Dispute regulation (Geschillenregeling). Since the introduction of article 12a in the Kingdom Charter in 2010, this topic has been discussed in the IPKO on multiple occasions. There is currently a draft Dispute regulation at the Kingdom Council of State for advice. This draft however is not in line with the criteria as set

forth by the IPKO back in 2015. I hope that through dialogue this week we can ask the Dutch delegation to instruct the Kingdom Government to reconsider the content of this draft and bring it more in line with the wishes of the IPKO.

Another important topic on the IPKO agenda is the right of initiative for the Parliaments of Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten. This right entails that each of these three parliaments will have the right to initiate Kingdom laws. All three parliaments are in favor for such a right to be introduced as soon as possible and I hope that the Kingdom Government takes up this initiative post haste in order to substantially decrease the democratic deficit within the Kingdom.

Aforementioned topics, Dispute regulation and right of initiative for the Parliaments of Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten, of course fit in the bigger picture which will be highlighted in the topic Ideal Kingdom 2040. Under this topic we will together set the parameters for what our Kingdom should look like in the next 23 years. Naturally items like rule of law, equality of the Kingdom partners, cooperation and human rights are the main ingredients for this Kingdom. But not unimportant is also the fostering, strengthening and maintaining of the relationships between the Kingdom partners. This is only possible if there is openness, dialogue and trust. I hope that the bricks for all three can be laid and continue to be laid during this IPKO and beyond.

I thank you for your attention wish you all a pleasant and fruitful IPKO.

Sarah A. Wescot-Williams

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