



**SINT EUSTATIUS
CARIBISCH NEDERLAND**

To: Island Council of St. Eustatius

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Our number: 1387/GEZ.

St. Eustatius, May 13th , 2026

Subject: Reflection on Island Council meeting of May 7th, 2026

Honorable Members of the Island Council,

As Island Governor of St. Eustatius, and in my constitutional role within the public administration of our island, I consider it important from time to time to reflect together on the standards, values and institutional responsibilities that accompany public office. Following the recent May 7th public meeting of the Island Council, I have felt compelled, respectfully and carefully, to share several reflections with your Council regarding the tone and conduct displayed during portions of the deliberations.

At the outset, I wish to emphasize that the democratic process must always leave room for strong opinions, political disagreement, criticism and passionate debate. The Island Council forms the heart of local democracy, and members of the Council must be able to speak openly and freely on matters affecting the people of St. Eustatius. Freedom of expression and democratic representation are fundamental pillars of our constitutional order.

At the same time, public office carries with it solemn responsibilities. Members of the Island Council do not merely occupy political positions; they serve as representatives of the people and as guardians of the integrity and dignity of democratic governance.

In that regard, it is important to recall the oath and declaration that members of the Island Council are required to take pursuant to article 15 of the Wet openbare lichamen Bonaire, Sint Eustatius en Saba (WolBES). Article 15 WolBES provides as follows:



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"1. Alvorens hun functie te kunnen uitoefenen, leggen de leden van de eilandsraad, in de vergadering, in handen van de voorzitter, de volgende eed (verklaring en belofte) af:

'Ik zweer (verklaar) dat ik, om tot lid van de eilandsraad benoemd te worden, rechtstreeks noch middellijk, onder welke naam of welk voorwendsel ook, enige gift of gunst heb gegeven of beloofd.

Ik zweer (verklaar en beloof) dat ik, om iets in dit ambt te doen of te laten, rechtstreeks noch middellijk enig geschenk of enige belofte heb aangenomen of zal aannemen.

Ik zweer (beloof) trouw aan de Koning, aan de Grondwet en aan de wetten.

Ik zweer (beloof) dat ik de plichten die mij als lid van de eilandsraad zijn opgelegd, naar eer en geweten zal vervullen.

Zo waarlijk helpe mij God almachtig! (Dat verklaar en beloof ik!)."

This oath is not a ceremonial formality. It reflects the constitutional expectation that elected representatives exercise their office with integrity, dignity, respect for democratic institutions, and awareness of the exemplary role they hold within society.

The constitutional framework applicable within the Kingdom of the Netherlands equally requires that public discourse remains anchored in the protection of the rights and dignity of others. Freedom of expression is a cornerstone of democracy, but constitutional freedoms coexist with constitutional responsibilities.

In this respect, reference may be made to article 7 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which protects freedom of expression, and to article 1 of the Constitution, which protects equal treatment.



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Article 1: Equal treatment and discrimination prohibition

“All persons in the Netherlands shall be treated equally in equal circumstances. Discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief, political opinion, race, sex, disability, sexual orientation or on any other grounds whatsoever shall not be permitted.”

These constitutional principles are not abstract ideals. They form the ethical and legal foundation upon which public administration and democratic debate must rest. Within a democratic society there is, of course, room for disagreement, criticism and even sharp political confrontation. However, there remains a clear distinction between robust democratic debate on the one hand, and conduct or expressions that undermine the dignity of persons, institutions or the respectful character of public governance on the other.

After reflection on the May 7th, public meeting of the Island Council, I must candidly express that I experienced certain aspects of the conduct and manner of expression displayed during the proceedings as deeply concerning and inconsistent with the level of decorum and mutual respect that ought to characterize the deliberations of the highest representative body of St. Eustatius.

The people of St. Eustatius, including our youth, observe the conduct of their elected representatives closely. The tone set within the Council chamber inevitably influences the broader public discourse within our community. Public office therefore requires restraint, professionalism, and awareness that words spoken in the Council chamber carry institutional weight far beyond the political moment itself. I wish to stress that this reflection is not intended as a political response, nor as an attempt to limit democratic debate or criticism. To the contrary, it is offered in the spirit of institutional reflection and constitutional responsibility. Healthy democracy flourishes where there is space for differing opinions, but it flourishes best where those differences are expressed with civility, respect, and recognition of the dignity of all persons.



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As Island Governor, I remain fully committed to supporting the democratic process and to working constructively with all members of the Island Council, irrespective of political background or viewpoint. It is my sincere hope that future deliberations of the Island Council may continue in a manner that reflects the seriousness of the offices held, the constitutional values we are all sworn to uphold, and the example we wish to set for the people of St. Eustatius.

Our island is strongest when democratic disagreement is accompanied by mutual respect. Even in moments of tension, we must continue to demonstrate that public leadership can be exercised with dignity, wisdom and care for the community we collectively serve.

I thank the members of the Island Council for taking the time to reflect on these observations.

With esteem and respect,

Sincerely,



Ms. M.A.U. Francis
Island Governor of St. Eustatius

Cc:
Executive Council of St. Eustatius
Island Secretary
Island Registrar