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Prime Minister William Marlin clarifies the position of Sint Maarten

PHILIPSBURG - Prime Minister William Marlin said on Sunday afternoon following a phone call from Minister Ronald Plasterk, that it is not right for the Dutch government to hold the people of Sint Maarten hostage over the issue of establishing an Integrity Chamber controlled by the Dutch and reports to the Dutch. If that is not accepted Minister Plasterk said then there will be no aid from the Netherlands.

In the present draft legislation currently being advised on by the Council of Advice, the board of the Integrity Chamber will consist of three persons, each nominated by the Courts of First Instance, by the General Audit Chamber and by the Ombudsman. That is unacceptable by the Dutch government according to Minister Plasterk as they do not trust the local institutions. Marlin pointed out that there are NO reasons not to trust the local authorities and that position by the Dutch is NOT fair and acceptable.

According to Minister Plasterk the Dutch is concerned that large sums of money will attract criminals and Integrity breeches. This also didn't make sense according to Prime Minister Marlin as his government has indicated from the onset that the Dutch government does not need to transfer hundreds of millions of dollars or euros to Sint Maarten. The Dutch government not only has the possibility, but is encouraged to set the conditions under which the different projects will be funded. The Sint Maarten Government is also encouraging the Dutch Government to have the Dutch Audit Chamber carry out an audit on the money trail for every Euro they spent. As far as Prime Minister Marlin is concerned the Fund is not established as soon as possible.

Prime Minister Marlin further pointed out that no amount is even mentioned and what part of it would be grant and what part loan. The Dutch Minister of Kingdom Relations replied to that saying that no amount will be made known unless Sint Maarten accepts the two conditions. Marlin said his government is willing and prepared to talk about the Fund, the conditions and the mechanisms to ensure that the monies are all spent in accordance with proper rules of transparency and accountability. For Minister Plasterk none of this would take place unless the Sint Maarten government accepts his two conditions.

This is unfair and not right, according to the Sint Maarten Prime Minister and he hopes that the Dutch government would agree to negotiate fair and square. Prime Minister Marlin said the European Union is also willing to provide aid to Sint Maarten and they have their rules of transparency and accountability which will be enforced. The Dutch government can do the same, actually this was done after Hurricane Luis in 1995. During that period, Marlin said he was Commissioner of Housing and the system worked well.

Prime Minister Marlin said he wants to make it clear again that the conditions set by the Netherlands have nothing to do with providing aid. The impression is wrongfully being created by the Government in The Hague that Sint Maarten is against establishing an Integrity Chamber. Many in Sint Maarten are therefore asking the question what it is the Sint Maarten Government has to hide or what is it the government is afraid of.

Prime Minister Marlin has pointed out to Minister Plasterk once again that his Government has already taken the initiative to prepare the draft legislation to establish the Integrity Chamber and that the draft has been sent to the Council of Advice via the Governor ever since September. Minister Plasterk is aware this and knows that because of the hurricanes the government of Sint Maarten is unable to reach the deadline of October 31st.

There are several who are trying to misuse this situation for their own political agendas. Sint Maarten is a young, 7 years old country in the Kingdom of the Netherlands and we have a Constitution that we all, Ministers and Members of Parliament, have taken an oath to uphold and defend, stated Prime Minister Marlin. He furthermore stated that during a press briefing scheduled for Monday, October 23 at 11 am, he together with the Minister of Justice will further elaborate on the stance his government has taken.

Photo caption –

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