

## **MY STATEMENT**

Honorable members of the Court,  
Distinguished delegates,

I speak to you today not only as a representative of Bonaire, in the Dutch Caribbean —  
but as a voice from a place where history still echoes...  
and where justice has too long been delayed.

On Bonaire, many of our people still live with the weight of being treated not as full citizens,  
but as colonial subjects —  
as second-class members within the Kingdom of the Netherlands to which we rightfully belong.

This is not a perception born of imagination.  
It is the lived consequence of a long and painful history —  
of slavery...  
of exploitation...  
of structural inequality.

A history that was never fully reckoned with —  
and that still shapes the contours of our present.

So when we speak out, let no one mistake it for rebellion.  
It is a call.  
A call for recognition.

A call for dignity.  
A call for justice.

And that call has never been more urgent than now —  
as the climate crisis reaches our shores.

Bonaire is a small island.  
But we are not naïve.  
We see the tides rising.  
We watch our coasts eroding.  
We witness our coral reefs turning pale and lifeless.  
We feel our freshwater growing scarce,  
Suffocating temperatures.

And with every passing season...  
we feel our livelihoods —  
our very existence —  
growing more fragile.

We did not create this crisis.  
Our contribution to global emissions is negligible.  
Yet we find ourselves on the frontlines —  
with the fewest resources,  
and far too often,  
with the least attention.

If the Kingdom to which we belong were truly equal —  
If the global community were truly just —

then climate justice would not be something we must beg for.  
It would be a given.  
It would be a duty.  
It would be now.

Support for climate adaptation.  
For mitigation.  
For sustainable development.

These are not favors.  
They are obligations.  
They are long overdue.

Bonaire does not ask for pity.  
We ask for partnership.  
We ask for policy — rooted not just in the language of equality,  
but in the practice of it.

Until that promise becomes real —  
Until resilience, dignity, and opportunity  
are felt as fully on our shores as anywhere else in the Kingdom —  
we will continue to speak truth.

Not to divide —  
but to heal.  
Not to accuse —  
but to be heard.  
Not to dwell in the past —  
but to protect a future  
where no island in the world stands alone.

Thank you.