



Government of the Netherlands

## Saba Package Agreement 2023 - 2027

### PARTIES:

- A. The Public Entity Saba, pursuant to article 173, paragraph 2, of the Wet Openbare Lichamen Bonaire, Sint Eustatius en Saba, hereby represented by Mr. Bruce Zagers, Commissioner of the Executive Council of Saba (hereinafter referred to PES);

And

- B. The State of the Netherlands, hereby represented by Ms. Alexandra C. van Huffelen, the State Secretary for the Interior and Kingdom Relations and Digitalisation (hereinafter referred to as the State or as the Dutch government);

### WHEREAS:

- The country of the Netherlands Antilles was dismantled on October 10, 2010, after which constitutionally, the island of Saba forms part of The Kingdom of The Netherlands as a Public Entity;
- Since then, the PES and the State have invested and cooperated towards the further administrative, social and economic development of the island of Saba, resulting in remarkable progress in the provision of essential services to the community of Saba;
- As a part of this joint cooperation, both parties invested in and worked hard to execute the focal points as mentioned in the previous iterations of the Saba Package and hereby choose to continue the cooperation under the auspices of a new agreement;
- Parties share the ambition to take a step forward together every day to ensure that the inhabitants of Saba feel a noticeable positive change in their lives. For achieving this ambition, it has become necessary that priorities, goals and results are jointly formulated and pursued;
- This Agreement contains jointly formulated priorities, goals and results. Parties commit themselves to the implementation of these agreements and will adopt a 'hands-on mentality' in solving problems together and issues standing in the way of the realization of these goals.
- This Agreement emphasizes good governance and the implementation power and organizational capacity (*uitvoeringskracht*) of the Public Entity Saba as the two cornerstones on which the continued cooperation between Parties must be built. The long-term goal of these twin pillars is to ensure that the PES becomes a robust and durable government apparatus, capable of delivering services to all its citizens and complying with its statutory tasks.
- Previously made agreements between parties, including current projects, remain unaffected.

HEREBY AGREE:

1. Priorities and results
  - a. Parties dedicate themselves to realising the results included in this Agreement;
  - b. It is acknowledged that the priorities as mentioned in this document are shared amongst and agreed upon by the Dutch State and the Executive Council of Saba;
  
2. Working method:
  - a. Parties commit themselves to the working arrangements as specified in the Agreement;
  - b. Parties will create a working group with civil servants from BZK and PES for the general coordination and implementation of the Agreement;
  - c. When several Dutch government ministries are involved in aspects of this Agreement, the Directorate-General for Kingdom Relations is tasked with the coordinating role;
  - d. Solution-oriented collaboration is always key where the PES wants to achieve results together with the Central Government. This principle is emphasised, and this practical cooperation between key figures from both the PES and the Central Government is the 'backbone' of this agreement;
  - e. The Executive Council of the PES drafts, in consultation with the Island Council, annual execution agenda's for the implementation of the Agreement. In addition to its adoption in the CN steering group, the executive agenda requires the approval of the State Secretary for the Interior and Kingdom Relations and the Executive Council of the PES;
  - f. The executive agenda that will be drafted each year is an integral part of this Agreement. The aforementioned agenda exists alongside the *Public Entity Saba Organizational Development Plan 2023 – 2030* (Appendix I);
  - g. The Island Secretary of Saba and the Director of Caribbean Netherlands (BZK/DGKR) will periodically discuss the progress and bottlenecks of the Agreement as set forth in this document. The PES will draft a report detailing the progress of the agreement every 6 months;
  - h. The Caribbean Netherlands director (BZK/DGKR) shares said report with the CN Steering Group for discussion;
  - i. The Executive Council will discuss the report with the Island Council within six (6) weeks after sending the report to the Caribbean Netherlands director (BZK/DGKR);
  - j. Twice per year, the report on the implementation of the Agreement will be discussed in a meeting between the State Secretary of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and the Executive Council of Saba;
  - k. Regarding the implementation of this Agreement and its continuity, there is - in line with the current working method - frequent and operational contact between the PES and BZK/DGKR of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations.
  
3. Preconditions:
  - a. The parties undertake to realise this Agreement in close mutual cooperation and to tackle and solve recurring issues. The methods used for this are:
    - i. Coordination: BZK/DGKR helps from the coordinating function to arrive at pragmatic solutions and to play a mediating role where necessary and possible;
    - ii. Escalation: Escalating within the responsible ministry; submitting to VC PES-BZK for discussion or decision-making; ministers' consultation.
  - b. In the event of bottlenecks in the implementation of the agreement, the parties hereby commit to solve these in a pragmatic and solution-oriented manner. Where topics in the fields of other departments are concerned, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) acts as coordinator.
  - c. When a bottleneck is submitted to the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, the Parties aim to have a final decision within six (6) weeks. Bottlenecks are also identified in the regular progress report and discussed in the subsequent consultation.
  
4. Financing:
  - a. With regard to the increase of the Free Allowance: As of 2022, the free allowance was structurally increased. This is an important step towards bringing the free allowance more in line with the costs associated with the performance of the island tasks. The increase in the free allowance is necessary for the adequate execution of the island tasks (in particular, the more structural funding of matters that are now financed incidentally).

- b. Furthermore, with the coalition agreement, structural funding has been allocated to support the Caribbean Netherlands in, among others, making life more affordable and income support for those in need<sup>1</sup>.
- c. Lastly, in terms of structural funding, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations has made extra funding available for *uitvoeringskracht* (execution and implementation power) of the Public Entity Saba.
- d. This structural funding has already been allocated in the multiannual budget of the Public Entity Saba.

Table Structural Funding Public Entity Saba (already added to Free Allowance)

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027 e.v.
<b>Increase Free Allowance</b>	\$ 1.486.564	\$ 1.880.448	\$ 2.565.084	\$ 2.469.504	\$ 2.373.688
<b>Priorities coalition agreement</b>	\$ 708.000	\$ 708.000	\$ 708.000	\$ 708.000	\$ 708.000
<b>Uitvoeringskracht (structureel)</b>	\$ 787.060	\$ 787.060	\$ 787.060	\$ 787.060	\$ 787.060

- e. The current state of the Free Allowance and its (in)adequacy with regards to financing the execution of the island tasks has been recently evaluated by Ideeversa. The report has been shared with the Second Chamber on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The public entities have been asked for a formal reaction;
- f. Additional financial means are provided for to meet the agreements within the Saba Package. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations invests from its own budget for the implementation of the agreements and organisational development of the Public Entities. The following amounts are available for the execution of this Agreement:
  - i. First tranche of the *Public Entity Saba Organizational Development Plan 2023 – 2030* (Organization Transition and Funding Needs): USD 1.759.523,14. This incidental funding will be realized through the reallocation of remaining funds from expired Special Allowances.
  - ii. Strengthening execution power: EUR 0.71 million. This incidental budget is intended for strengthening the administrative and executive power of the PES in due accordance with the *Public Entity Saba Organizational Development Plan 2023 – 2030* and the staffing plan. This budget funds the implementation of this plan.
  - iii. The two tranches will be bundled into a single Special Allowance.

Table Incidental Funding Public Entity Saba

	2023	2024	2025
<b>Special Allowance: Organizational development and capacity<sup>2</sup></b>	\$ 837.955,55	\$ 1.672.254,84	To be determined, based on expenditures in 2024.
<b>Digitalization</b>	€ 500.000 <sup>3</sup> + special grant for digital inclusion	€ 300.000 <sup>4</sup> + special grant for BSN implementation and other projects	To be determined.
<b>PES Additional Capacity Housing</b>		\$ 204.000	\$ 204.000

<sup>1</sup> Kamerstukken 2021-2022, 35 925 IV, Nr. 69.

<sup>2</sup> The term of this special allowance is 2023 – 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Added to the Free Allowance of the PES.

<sup>4</sup> The funding from digitalization is a combination of contributions to the Free Allowance and Special Allowances.

As agreed and signed in duplicate at \_\_\_\_Saba \_\_\_\_\_ on \_ 15 november 2023 \_\_\_\_\_

The State of the Netherlands,

The Public Entity Saba,

.....  
Ms A. van Huffelen  
*State Secretary for Kingdom Relations  
and Digitalisation*

.....  
Mr B. Zagers  
Commissioner of the Executive Council  
of Saba

## Table of Contents

.....	1
<b>Saba Package Agreement 2023 - 2027</b> .....	1
<b>Theme 1: Development of community welfare and well-being</b> .....	6
1.1. Community development plan and Poverty alleviation, lowering cost of living .....	6
1.1.1. Community Development Plan for Welfare and Well-being .....	6
1.1.2. Implementation of the social minimum.....	7
1.2. Multidisciplinary Substance Abuse Taskforce .....	7
1.3. Community Center and School Campus Initiative (Regional Deal) .....	7
1.4. Follow-up on the apology for the slavery past .....	8
<b>Theme 2: Economic and Spatial Development</b> .....	8
2.1. Economic Development .....	8
2.1.1 A Strategic Plan for Economic Development.....	9
2.1.2. Improved access to funding .....	9
2.1.3. Continuation of the Taskforce Bottlenecks for Economic Development .....	10
2.1.4. Promoting entrepreneurship and business development services .....	11
2.1.5. Costs of Doing Business Investigation and Reduction Strategies .....	11
2.1.6. Digitalization of organizations and services .....	11
2.2. Development of infrastructure, connectivity, spatial planning and water management.....	12
2.2.1. Housing and Spatial Development .....	12
2.2.2. Harbor Development.....	13
2.2.3. Connectivity.....	14
<b>Theme 3: Climate, nature and sustainability</b> .....	15
3.1. Climate Plan .....	15
3.2. Accelerated transition towards renewable energy - Completion of the second solar park project ..	15
3.3. Development of a future-proof island .....	16
<b>Theme 4: Good Governance</b> 17	
4.1 Good governance within and between the Executive Council and Island Council .....	17
4.2. Improving the execution power and performance of the organization .....	17
4.2.1. Learning and Development Program (LDP) for civil servants of the PES .....	18
4.2.2. Strengthening Capacity in Policy and Project Management .....	18
4.2.3. Providing opportunities for the youth of Saba .....	18
4.3. Digitalization to strengthen and professionalize government services .....	19
4.4. Licensing, supervision and enforcement (vergunningen, toezicht en handhaving) .....	20
4.5. Renovation of the government administration building .....	20
4.6. Robust and future-proof Crisis Management .....	20

## Theme 1: Development of community welfare and well-being

Achieving an improved quality of life and elevating living standards on Saba necessitates a holistic and integrated approach. Adjustments in crucial areas such as the social minimum, minimum wage, pensions, and other welfare benefits are needed. It is also imperative to address the cost aspect of this equation. Striking the right balance is key. The implementation of a social minimum directly impacts the capacity of employers to sustain fair wages without resorting to price hikes. Efforts to make essential utilities like electricity and water more affordable are commendable, but attention must also extend to telecom, internet services, connectivity, and shipping costs

### 1.1. Community development plan and Poverty alleviation, lowering cost of living

#### 1.1.1. Community Development Plan for Welfare and Well-being

1 in 3 inhabitants in the Caribbean Netherlands lives in poverty<sup>5</sup>. The recent report of the Commission Social Minimum Caribbean Netherlands describes this problem and the solutions in detail. The context of Saba<sup>6</sup> shows that people in poverty often have several problems (*multiproblematiek*) and need support in various areas, for example working, housing, debt problems, social support, welfare, parenting support, child support and more. The expertise of various professionals is needed to be able to work on solutions. Unfortunately, the Public Entity Saba and related social organizations currently fall short of adequately addressing the multifaceted challenges within the community of the island. Achieving an improved quality of life for this target group and elevating the living standards on Saba necessitates a holistic and integrated approach, not only on the island of Saba, but also in terms of the cooperation between the different ministries of the Dutch government in The Hague.

#### Agreement

- The Public Entity Saba (PES) will develop a multiannual policy and implementation plan to address the multifaceted challenges of the community of Saba. The ministries of BZK, VWS, SZW and OCW will collaborate to support PES in drafting this plan and ensuring an integrated approach, which is necessary to address the multifaceted challenges of the community of Saba. All parties (PES, BZK, SZW, VWS, OCW and RCN, hereinafter: parties) commit themselves to the drafting of this community development plan in Q1 and Q2 of 2024. Parties furthermore commit themselves to the implementation of this plan starting in the second half of 2024.
- This multiannual policy and implementation plan (*Community development plan 2024 – 2027*) will bundle and coordinate more effectively the different financial streams from the Dutch government and improve the quality of execution of tasks in the areas of social welfare, social support, youth care, domestic violence and child abuse, the youth +13 program, collective prevention (*collectieve preventie*), education and equal opportunities in education. This will be realized through a structural cooperation method (*samenwerkingsverband*) with regular meetings to monitor the execution and solve potential bottlenecks in a timely fashion.
- An important step in achieving an integrated approach will be the creation and implementation of a single point of service provision (*één loket*) for services for community development, along with a concomitant back-office system for the collection, storage and exchange of relevant data concerning the target group and citizen-clients. The overarching goal of this single point of service provision and ancillary back-office support, is to reduce bureaucracy and improve the quality and speed of services.
- Working through *één-loket* entails intensified cooperation between the organizations on Saba that are responsible for the provision of services, namely: the PES, the Saba Reach Foundation and the SZW unit of Rijkdienst Caribisch Nederland (RCN). This intensified cooperation includes, but is not limited to hosting joint speaking hours (*sprekuren*), sharing office space and more.
- Parties also envision the PES working with a single application-system for the handling of client-files.
- Furthermore, there will be periodic meetings between the OLS and the Dutch ministries involved to support collaboration and to monitor progress together. In addition to this, the Island Secretary of the

<sup>5</sup> Commissie Sociaal Minimum Caribisch Nederland. *Een waardig bestaan: Een sociaal minimum dat voorziet in toenemend perspectief op zelfredzaamheid*. October 6 2023. Page 76.

<sup>6</sup> This also applies to Bonaire and Sint-Eustatius.

PES and the relevant Heads of Unit and/or Directors<sup>7</sup> of BZK, SZW, VWS and OCW will meet to discuss and solve bottlenecks in the implementation of this plan when this is deemed necessary.

- BZK will provide temporary capacity through the VNG-Exchange Facility (VNG-uitwisselingsnetwork) to aid the PES in the drafting of this plan.
- All parties commit themselves to ensuring the capacity required in the drafting and future implementation of the plan, as well as the capacity required for the periodic multidisciplinary meetings between parties.
- All of the above will ensure a more task-oriented (as opposed to compartmentalized) approach.

### **1.1.2. Implementation of the social minimum**

The final report of the Committee Social Minimum Caribbean Netherlands was published on October 9 2023. The Commission provides with this report recommendations on a social minimum for the Caribbean Netherlands. Furthermore, the Commission advises and reports on the trade-offs and side-effects in identifying and achieving a social minimum. The Dutch government is committed to the implementation of the social minimum in the Caribbean Netherlands and will consult the PES and remaining Public Entities concerning the way that the implementation will be worked out.

A specific agreement that is made in this regard concerns public transportation. Public transportation on Saba is limited to a single bus-line and the school bus for children and teenagers. Starting with 2024, the Dutch government will make €150.000 structurally available for the improvement of public transportation on Saba. The PES pledges to make a plan on how these structural means can be invested for the improvement of public transportation on the island.

### **1.2. Multidisciplinary Substance Abuse Taskforce**

Substance abuse is a notable public health issue on Saba, with concerns about the misuse of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis affecting the well-being of residents. The island grapples with limited resources for addiction treatment and prevention programs. The ambition of the PES centers around a concerted effort to reduce substance abuse and associated health risks and challenges. To this end, the following agreement has been made.

#### **Agreement**

- The Department of Public Health of the PES will establish in Q2 of 2024 a multi-disciplinary task force, with the ambition to include the following stakeholders: The Saba Cares Foundation (Healthcare), Body Mind and Spirit Foundation, the Department of Community Development Department, Korps Polities Caribische Nederland (KPCN), the Department of Public Safety, Mental Health Caribbean.
- The taskforce will collaboratively develop a comprehensive action plan to address substance abuse issues, with the goals of reducing alcohol and tobacco consumption rates, and altering the use of tobacco in public areas. The plan will encompass solutions and relative actions pertaining to the sale and use of alcohol and tobacco products, as well as address the need for treatment and prevention programs. The plan will be finalized by the end of 2024.
- The implementation of the plan will commence in 2025.
- The Ministry of VWS commits to providing assistance in an advisory role or a *klankbord* to the taskforce during the development of the action plan.

### **1.3. Community Center and School Campus Initiative (Regional Deal)**

Within the broader framework of the Master Plan for the school area, a key focus area is the development of a new campus for the secondary school. The Public Entity Saba envisions a new campus that can also serve as a hub for community development, recreational activities and cultural education. This emphasis underscores the importance of providing a modern and adaptable educational facility, including a gym, that not only caters to the evolving needs of education but also fosters community development. This ambitious goal underscores the role of the school as a cornerstone of the community. Furthermore, the Master Plan includes provisions for EC2 office space, recognizing the importance of administrative and support facilities to complement the educational aspect, enhancing the overall functioning of the educational system. Included is also an auditorium that would serve the community in enhancing culture and arts performances as well as accommodating educational needs.

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<sup>7</sup> It is the discretion of each ministry to decide whether the participation of the respective Head of Unit or Director is required.

## Agreement and expected results in 2024

- The Ministry of OCW and the PES jointly carry the responsibility for the funding of new school buildings. However, the community development and cultural education component does not fall within this scope. With due consideration for the aforementioned: PES, BZK and OCW commit themselves to the drafting of an application for the *Regiodeal* for the funding of the new campus and specifically the component of the campus that falls beyond the scope of the (financial) obligations of OCW towards school buildings. A working group will be established in Q1 2024 to work on the application. The funding application will be finalized by 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024. PES, BZK and OCW commit capacity to work and collaborate on this application. The funding of the Regiodeal will bolster the realization of this school campus-community center at St. Johns.
- The Ministry of VWS will also provide a financial contribution for the gym (*sportzaal*) and the availability of recreational activities, which shall be a part of this new community center initiative.
- Achieving this vision requires a multi-faceted and multi-phased approach. Financing for expertise in school building project management within OLS is essential for efficient execution.
- NB. The PES has applied for a Regional Deal in 2023. If this application is successful, the above agreement shall be considered null and void.
- PES and OCW will also be working together on the phased realization of the schoolbuildings according to the 'convenant onderwijshuisvesting'. By 2024, the expected outcome is the initiation of the design and tender phase for the Technical School, marking significant progress in realizing the broader vision outlined in the Master Plan. Integral to the master plan is ensuring BES code compliance for the Sacred Heart School, reflecting the commitment to adhering to relevant regulations and standards, thereby ensuring the safety and quality of educational facilities.

### 1.4. Follow-up on the apology for the slavery past

The Dutch Government and the Public Entity Saba are committed to following up the commitments that were made with the governments apology for the slavery past. Essential to this is that Saba, represented by descendants, civil society organizations and the PES, is in the lead about the time, pace and content of the follow-up. In the past months several steps have been taken by the Saba Emancipation Day Committee, which also attended the Caribbean Catshuis-session on St Maarten on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 2023.

#### Agreement:

The PES and BZK commit themselves to the following agreements:

- The Saba Emancipation Day Committee, together with the PES, will draw up an agenda of how Saba wants to follow up on the apology.
- This agenda will involve commitments made to Saba on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 2022, the different policy measures that were announced in the letter of the Dutch Cabinet sent out with the apology and other plans that have been made since December last year. For example, the establishment of a monument, making available DNA-research, organizing Oral History Projects and creating and publishing education material on the history of slavery on Saba.
- The Ministry of BZK will give a subsidy to the Committee to aid the process of drawing up the agenda. This process could for example include community outreach, involving experts or awareness raising.
- If any other assistance is required by Saba, the ministry of BZK can provide this by mutual agreement.

## Theme 2: Economic and Spatial Development

The Public Entity Saba and the Dutch government are committed to the continuous economic and spatial development of Saba. This commitment is grounded in three core areas. Firstly, enhancing the overall business climate by reducing the cost of living and doing business while concurrently promoting economic diversification and championing sustainable practices among other initiatives. Secondly, facilitating an environment that nurtures entrepreneurship by optimizing resource allocation to support local businesses and entrepreneurs. Lastly, the continuous refinement and expansion of the infrastructure and further spatial development of the island.

### 2.1. Economic Development

Achieving sustainable economic development in the Dutch Caribbean is an important goal of the Dutch government and the Public Entity Saba. Although stimulating economic development is a task of the Public



Entity Saba (PES), the Dutch government has a role to play in facilitating the development of a Saba economic strategy and contributing to the future economic vitality of the Saba. The Dutch government has therefore made 30 million euros available for projects in the Dutch Caribbean for Saba, Bonaire and Sint Eustatius to bolster economic development. Parties want to ensure that the islands and their citizens can benefit from economic growth, in particular to tackle poverty and to improve the purchasing power of citizens. Parties envision a future built on the basis of sustainable sources of income. For that reason, the Dutch government and the PES are committed to working together on diversifying the economy and improving the earning capacity of Saba in the long term, which will make the economy of the island more resilient to external shocks.

The key tasks in this approach are:

- Developing and executing a strategic plan for economic development (2.1.1.)
- Improved access to funding (2.1.2.)
- Removal of bottlenecks to economic development (2.1.3.)
- Promoting entrepreneurship and supporting businesses (2.1.4.)
- Cost of doing business investigation (2.1.5.)

### **2.1.1 A Strategic Plan for Economic Development**

Parties commit themselves to jointly drafting a Strategic Economic Development plan through close cooperation via a PES-BZK-EZK working group. The plan will be tailored to Saba's unique context and potential. The goal of the strategic plan: ensure sustainable economic growth and a robust earning capacity ('verdienvermogen') on Saba.

#### **Agreement and expected results in 2024**

- In Q1 of 2024, a PES-BZK-EZK working group will be formed and tasked with drafting a roadmap for the formulation of the Strategic Economic Development Plan of Saba. To this end, PES will appoint 1 FTE for economic development by Q1 2024 at the latest.
- The roadmap will include, but it is not limited to:
  - Conducting an initial economic assessment to identify realistic avenues for diversification and growth within the small-island context of the economy (Q1 and Q2 2024).
  - Continued attention and effort to remove 'bottlenecks' to economic development.
  - Facilitating stakeholder consultations to gather valuable insights and perspectives (Q1 or Q2 2024).
  - Creating a draft of the comprehensive plan, ready for presentation and approval by the Executive Council and Island Council (Q2 or Q3 2024).
- The Tourism Master Plan of the PES will be an integral part of the strategic economic development plan. The research that was carried out for the plan suggests that Saba should pursue niche marketing that centers on the following lifestyle characteristics of the Saba visitor: the authentic experiencer, (cares about sustainability, culture and the local experience), the active experiencer (wants to be active and outside, diving and hiking, focus on mindful living), the nostalgic experiencer (visiting friends and family). The first two profiles are supported by the American and Dutch markets while the third profile may be acquired from other Dutch Caribbean islands. The economic development plan will further explore how these markets can be tapped.
- BZK and EZK commit themselves to providing assistance for the drafting of this economic development strategy.
- The implementation of the plan will commence in Q2 or at the latest Q3 of 2024.
- An important pillar of this economic development strategy is how the Public Entity Saba can make optimal use of the existing funds of the Dutch government (2.1.2.).

### **2.1.2. Improved access to funding**

It is challenging for entrepreneurs on Saba to finance investments. The Dutch government therefore commits itself to improved access to funding for entrepreneurs and for further economic development.

#### **Agreement and expected results in 2024**

- The National Growth Fund, the Climate Fund and the guarantee schemes (BMKB guarantee scheme and the Corporate Financing Guarantee) are open to the Public Entities. The Dutch government has made 30 million euros available for projects in the Dutch Caribbean for Saba, Bonaire and Sint Eustatius.

- These funds will be utilized for the implementation of the strategic economic development plan. The ministry of BZK will provide, when requested, assistance to the PES for the drafting of the funding applications.

### 2.1.3. Continuation of the Taskforce Bottlenecks for Economic Development

In 2022, the establishment of a high-level task force marked a pivotal moment in the joint efforts of the PES and the Dutch government to address Saba's economic challenges and removing 'bottlenecks' to economic development. This work will be continued in 2024.

#### Agreement and expected results in 2024

- **Continuation of the Taskforce:** The Dutch Government and the PES continue to commit themselves to solving pressing issues and 'bottlenecks' standing in the way of Saba's further economic development. These issues include: banking and enhanced notarial services, undivided properties, the cost of doing business, the movement of people and goods and introduction of the BSN number. The Taskforce will remain the driving force behind the solving of the mentioned issues. It is abundantly clear that progress hinges on the involvement of stakeholders beyond the task force's control. The Dutch government and the PES commit themselves to continued and intensified interaction with these stakeholders to find appropriate solutions for these pressing issues.
- **Implementation of Short-Term Solutions for Improved Banking Services:** The ministry of Finance and the ministry of BZK have tasked the director of Qredits with the exploration of options and opportunities to expand the availability of banking services on Saba. PES, BZK and the ministry of Finance commit themselves to further actions based on the outcomes of this exploration.
- **Continuity notarial services on Saba and Sint-Eustatius:** As of July 1 2023 and for the first time in years, a permanent notary has been appointed for Saba and Sint-Eustatius. Work is being continued on clearing existing backlogs. The Dutch Ministry of Justice has also taken steps to ensure the continuity of notarial services in case of absence. The Dutch government is committed to ensuring continued notarial services on both islands.
- **Implementation of approach to resolve the issue of undivided properties:** One of the pressing issues and 'bottlenecks' standing in the way of Saba's further economic development is the issue of the undivided properties on the island. In the past year, PES and the Taskforce have been discussing the approach to resolve the issue of the undivided properties. To that end, experts have been consulted to help establishing an approach or policy on resolving this issue. This includes, where necessary, the notary. PES commits to start implementing the aforementioned approach by executing a (first phase) pilot/test trail in 2024, as follows:
  - PES shall request the Court of First Instance of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba to appoint an expert (i.e. the Land Registry) to execute a preliminary examination (*voorlopige plaatsopneming*), regarding, in any case, 'the Bottom' and the site on which the new harbor will be developed;
  - If necessary in the public interest, including the economic development of the island, PES shall initiate or facilitate a proceeding pursuant to article 3:200a of the BES Civil Code (*BW BES*).
- **Initiation of a Digital Land Registry Project:** To streamline processes and improve efficiency, Parties commit themselves to launch a project for the development of a digital land registry.
- **Double taxation:** There has long been discussion about the supposed double taxation of goods to Saba via Sint Maarten. The Dutch State Secretary for Taxation is still in contact with the Minister of Finance of Sint Maarten to see if the BBO on exports can be abolished. This is, however, an autonomous responsibility of the country of Sint Maarten itself and the introduction of a general export exemption is complicated from a technical and practical point of view and has a significant budgetary impact on Sint Maarten. The government is also prepared to look at whether costs can be reduced in other ways, either by direct imports or by importing via an export entrepreneur on Sint Maarten.
- **Exploration of Intensifying Customs Cooperations:** The Dutch Ministry of Finance intends to explore with the Countries (Aruba, Curaçao and Sint-Maarten) and Public Entities of the Kingdom the desirability and possibilities for more far-reaching customs cooperation.
- **Improved digital infrastructure of local government:** In the coming years, the Dutch ministries of BZK and EZK will work with the Public Entity Saba to improve the digital foundation of the local government ('basis op orde'). For businesses, this will ultimately result in better service provision from the government and less bureaucracy. For more specific agreements on this topic, please consult 2.1.6.

- **Connectivity:** The Dutch government recognizes that connectivity is a pre-requisite for the further economic development and diversification of Saba. Agreements concerning connectivity have been worked out in paragraph 2.1.4.

#### **2.1.4. Promoting entrepreneurship and business development services**

A pivotal aspect of advancing economic growth on Saba involves bolstering the island's business ecosystem and providing essential resources for entrepreneurs.

##### **Agreement and expected results in 2024**

- Business development services. The PES commits itself to collaborating with Qredits to appoint a Business Development Manager by Q1 2024. The business manager needs to meet the requirements of both organizations.
- The business development manager will be tasked with providing essential support to aspiring and established entrepreneurs, encompassing strategic guidance, financial advice, marketing strategies, and more. The overarching aim of these tasks is to enhance knowledge and expertise in business development within the private sector on the island. This service will be sustained until Saba can make use of a fully functioning Chamber of Commerce capable of independently providing similar support.

#### **2.1.5. Costs of Doing Business Investigation and Reduction Strategies**

The PES and the Dutch government commit themselves to understanding and mitigating the costs of doing business and the drivers behind the rising costs, specifically when it comes to importing goods or services from abroad. This is an important economic challenge for the island, which also has a negative effect on consumers. The lack of clarity surrounding these drivers necessitates thorough research to discern the specific areas where cost escalations occur. The PES requests the Dutch government to conduct an investigation into the steps within the chain of importing goods, tracking the steps and costs associated with each step. This includes, but is not limited to: supplier selection, supplier prices, import license(s), transportation and logistics<sup>8</sup>, payment of customs duties and taxes, customs clearance and distribution. This research will serve as the cornerstone for implementing structural solutions aimed at reducing the overall cost of doing business.

##### **Agreement**

The Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate (EZK) and the PES will examine the possibilities for this investigation. The ambitions for this investigation are as follows:

- Identify Key Cost Drivers: Gain insights into the primary cost drivers that significantly impact the cost of living and doing business on Saba.
- Rate of Cost Increase and Exploring Cost-Reduction Opportunities: Comprehend the rate at which costs are escalating and the underlying reasons driving these increases. Based on this, explore various opportunities and strategies that have the potential to lower the costs.
- An independent investigation will be carried out with the explicit goal of identifying key cost drivers, rates of cost increases and possible cost-reduction opportunities.
- Action Plan Development: Based on the outcomes and recommendations of the independent investigation, the PES will draft in cooperation with relevant ministries a comprehensive action plan designed to lower the cost of doing business.

#### **2.1.6. Digitalization of organizations and services**

Digitalization of organizations and services is a big opportunity for Saba. First and foremost to facilitate the Saban population and businesses. Digitalization has a noticeable impact on the level of the quality of services, care and education. It also contributes to economic development.

The PES aims for affordable and reliable digital infrastructure, making the island more accessible and attractive for inhabitants, tourists, researchers, businesses, and digital nomads. Saba wants to build a digital infrastructure that is comparable to the European Netherlands, both in prices and in quality. The PES is aware that the circumstances will always be more challenging on Saba. Nonetheless, the PES will drive the further development and find tailored solutions. Given current developments and nearly completed explorative studies

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<sup>8</sup> Arrangements for the transportation of goods from the supplier to the destination. This includes selecting a shipping method (air, sea, land), coordinating with freight forwarders, and managing logistics.

on the digital infrastructure and possibilities to substantiate a higher level of telecommunication services for the society and business, it is clear this precondition needs continued attention. Aiming for available and affordable services in a sustainable economic way.

The PES will invite citizens and companies to join in the digital transition. For example, so that digital banking becomes more widely accessible. But also so that more digital activity arises from the island towards the rest of the world. Therefore, people need to not only have access to the internet but also build the skills that fit the digital age. And if someone encounters challenges, a help and support structure must be available to help them move forward, with special attention to those in vulnerable socio-economic positions. Providing social safety internet and computer access in an emancipating way, therefore is of importance as well.

### **Agreements and expected results:**

- 1.** The PES and the Dutch government are committed to improving the internet quality and access on Saba. The following agreements are made in this regard:
  - a. The Dutch government will continue the end-user subsidy of \$35 per household, thus reducing costs for society.
  - b. The Dutch government and PES will determine how the telecom network can be improved, based on the research on digital infrastructure, and in conjunction with a strategic vision that the PES commits itself to developing on SATEL.
  - c. The PES commits itself to evaluating how it manages its shareholding in SATEL, with the purpose of increasing social value and creating a better strategic partnership. BZK/DGDOO will support the PES in this process by aiding the analysis, facilitating access to knowledge and experts, and help finding pathways to the mentioned goals.
  - d. The PES and the Dutch government commit themselves to providing 'social safety net' internet access in public places in an emancipating way, for example in the library and through public WiFi (public roam), in line with the Work Agenda Value Driven Digitalization.
- 2.** The PES and the Dutch government are committed to enabling digital inclusion.
  - a. The PES and the Dutch government will improve digital skills and digital awareness of the citizens of Saba through exploration and setting up of effective collaboration and societal support with partners. A dedicated education and training program on digital awareness will be established. The Plan of Action for a digital inclusion program will be continued.
  - b. The PES and the Dutch government will improve access to devices for people by reissuance of PES and/or Dutch government devices to society. This specifically concerns people who are normally less likely to have access to devices.
- 3.** For the above agreements, the Dutch government (BZK/DGDOO) commits itself to providing €500.000 to the PES through the Free Allowance with the digitalization budget 2023 and a Special Allowance for Digital Inclusion (amount to be determined).

### **2.2. Development of infrastructure, connectivity, spatial planning and water management**

Saba seeks continued support for the development of key infrastructure projects where there are still financial gaps, such as the new harbor, the expanded administration building, the new high school complex, housing and the lack of opportunities for home ownership and the public swimming pool.

#### **2.2.1. Housing and Spatial Development**

Improving living standards and combating poverty is the Cabinet's main goal for the Caribbean Netherlands<sup>9</sup>. This is a major task and requires the commitment of both the Central Government and the Public Entities. The Caribbean Netherlands Social Minimum Committee recommends the additional construction of social housing and the expansion of the subsidizing of rent as important tools for combating poverty and improving living standards<sup>10</sup>. This advice supports the measures included in the joint Policy Agenda Housing and Spatial Planning for the Caribbean Netherlands<sup>11</sup>. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations/Social Housing and Spatial Planning, the Public Entity Saba and related partners have signed a Letter of Intent. This Letter of Intent provides a first practical interpretation of the advice of The Caribbean Netherlands Social Minimum Committee in the area of housing, constitutes a tailor-made implementation of the Policy Agenda Housing and

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<sup>9</sup> Kamerstukken II, 2021/22, 35925-IV, No 42.

<sup>10</sup> Commissie Sociaal Minimum Caribisch Nederland. *Een waardig bestaan: Een sociaal minimum dat voorziet in toenemend perspectief op zelfredzaamheid*. October 6 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Policy agenda Housing and Spatial Planning for the Caribbean Netherlands. 26 January 2023.

Spatial Planning for the Caribbean Netherlands for Saba and complements the Saba Package Agreement 2023-2027.

### **Agreement:**

- The PES commits itself to drafting a Spatial Development Plan for Saba in line with the Spatial Development Programme Caribbean Netherlands and the Wet Grondslagen ruimtelijke ontwikkelingsplanning Bonaire, Sint-Eustatius en Saba (Wgro BES). The plan will be finalized by Q4 2025 at the latest. The expected result of this plan is the creation of more stable and predictable conditions for investment and development, by promoting prudent use of land and natural resources.
- The PES and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations/Social Housing and Spatial Planning (the Ministry) commit themselves to the agreements made in the *Letter of Intent Housing and Spatial Planning Saba*. These include the following:
  - Construction of affordable housing, both social housing (huurwoningen) and affordable owner-occupied housing (koopwoningen). Approximately 50 homes will be realized by 2030. The PES commits itself to making suitable plots of land available for this ambition, whereas the Ministry contributes to subsidizing the unprofitable top<sup>12</sup> and, if necessary, the purchasing of suitable plots.
  - The PES commits itself to improving the regulation of the social housing market through establishing the relevant ordinances as mentioned in the Letter of Intent. The PES commits itself to establishing the relevant ordinances by Q4 2024 at the latest.
  - To create a more viable social rental sector, the PES commits itself to the sale of all social housing units owned by the PES to Bazalt Wonen, whereas the Ministry commits itself to facilitating this sale.
  - Saba has a strong tradition of building one's own home, but preparatory construction works are very expensive and usually cannot be part of the mortgage. In order to improve the affordability of self-building a home, the PES commits itself to utilizing the financial gains from the sale of social housing units to establish an island scheme, in order to support Sabans in building their own home.
- The Ministry will provide the PES with USD 408.000 for 2023-2025, to strengthen the capacity of the PES to execute the aforementioned tasks.

### **2.2.2. Harbor Development**

The Black Rocks Harbor project started in 2017 after hurricanes Irma and Maria caused serious damage to Fort Bay Harbor. Funding was provided by the Dutch government to create a new harbor that is hurricane-resistant, future-proof and offers the potential for increasing economic activities. Building a self-sufficient and future-proof harbor is a complex and multifaceted task that requires a holistic approach and involves various considerations related to sustainability, technology, and resilience. It also demands ongoing monitoring and adaptation to remain relevant and effective in a rapidly changing world.

The harbor plays a vital role in sustaining the island's livelihood and ensuring its connection to the outside world. Serving as a lifeline, it acts as the primary gateway for the importation of essential goods, food, and medicinal supplies that are crucial for the well-being of the island's inhabitants. The harbor is also vital for the further economic development of the island and the earning capacity ('verdienvermogen') of Saba. Without the harbor, the island would struggle to meet its daily needs. The cargo vessels carrying these goods keep the island's economy afloat.

In addition to its role as a lifeline, the harbor is a hub of connectivity and accessibility for the island's residents. The presence of the harbor opens up opportunities for more affordable travel options, connecting the island's population to neighboring regions and countries. This accessibility has a far-reaching impact, facilitating tourism, trade, and cultural exchange. It allows Sabans to explore new horizons, while also providing the opportunity to utilize services that are not readily available on the island such as banking, dental and other medical services.

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<sup>12</sup> The term "unprofitable top" (onrendabele top) refers to the difference between the actual costs of constructing housing and the maximum revenue achievable through renting or selling these homes at affordable rates. In other words, it represents the amount that is not financially viable for developers and investors to invest in the construction of this type of housing without additional support from national and/or local government. In the case of this agreement, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations agrees to bridge this financial gap in the instances where it may occur.

The harbor's multifaceted role as an economic lifeline, a conduit for essential resources, and a center of connectivity makes it a cornerstone of the island's identity and prosperity, while also being a symbol of resilience and adaptability. These factors all contribute to the importance of the project.

### **Agreement and expected results in 2024**

- The PES is dedicated to building a self-sufficient and future-proof harbor facilities that balances economic growth with environmental sustainability and resilience to changing conditions.
- As the permit has been received from Rijkswaterstaat, the project will be advertised for 6 weeks and placed on tender at the end of 2023. It is expected that the tender process will take approximately 6 months, after which the negotiations will begin. Therefore, completed tender procedure and awarding of the contract for the construction of Black Rocks Harbor will occur by the end of 2024.
- There is a budgetary gap of approximately USD 15 million, in order to complete the full scope of the project. Because of this, the project will be tendered in packages. The goal is to have a completed harbor, which includes marina facilities and a harbor building to house the border control authorities and harbor staff. With these facilities, the opportunity is created for the harbor to produce revenue and become self-sustainable. The project will also be most efficient, both in time and cost, if the full scope can be included at once. Having to remobilize and complete other phases in the future, will drastically increase the budgetary needs of the project. The tendering procedure will determine the exact budgetary gap.
- Bridging the budgetary gap is a crucial task for the success of this project and requires a strategic approach and careful consideration of available resources.
- To achieve this goal successfully, it is imperative to tap into various funding sources, and in this context, there are significant opportunities through the National Growth Funds (NGF) and European Union (EU) funding mechanisms. The ministry of BZK will provide technical and proposal writing assistance in order to make the most efficient use of the funding mechanisms available.

### **2.2.3. Connectivity**

**The Ambition:** Public transportation on the island and connectivity to and from the island are tasks of the Public Entity Saba (PES). Crossing borders and navigating the Caribbean Sea for this connectivity makes Saba (and the other Public Entities of the Dutch Caribbean) unique within The Netherlands. Therefore, the Dutch government has an important role in facilitating affordable and accessible means of transportation. The Dutch government is responsible for the practical coordination of the border control and customs and therefore facilitating the movement of people and goods to and from our islands.

Parties aim to provide reliable transportation options that are also accessible. Currently, individuals with low incomes face significant barriers when leaving the island due to the high costs of transportation. This not only poses financial challenges but also health-related and social burdens, also in relation to the availability of certain goods. The availability of affordable and dependable airline services and the continued ferry service are essential to make Saba more accessible, which is vital for the economic growth of the island and tourism.

### **Agreements and expected results in 2024:**

The Dutch government and the PES commit themselves to the realization of the following goals:

#### Sea Travel (Ferry Service)

- The Dutch government commits itself to the continued financial support of the Ferry Service in 2024 and 2025. In 2024, the Steering Group Ferry Pilot will formulate a plan, policy framework and vision to ensure the long-term viability of the ferry service. This work will be completed by Q4 2024 at the latest.
- Optimization of Service and Processes: The Dutch government and the PES commit themselves to optimizing the ferry service and related processes (e.g. opening hours, waiting time, customs services, border patrol services). This will lead to a higher quality of transportation for people and goods.
- Support for RVO Study Findings: The Dutch government and the PES commit themselves to supporting the findings of RVO studies and implementing their recommendations related to the Ferry Service and the cost of shipping.

#### Air travel

On 13 June, the Dutch Minister of Infrastructure (IenW) shared with the House of Representatives a progress



of the exploration of the public service obligation (PSO) for flights from Saba and Sint Eustatius. The letter<sup>13</sup> indicates that the Chamber will be informed of the progress before the end of this year. The Chamber will then be informed about the discussions with relevant parties about whether and if so, how a PSO proposal can be concretely designed. The various stakeholders are also explicitly asked to what extent they can financially support the possible establishment of a PSO. It should be noted that decision-making on a possible financial contribution from the Dutch government is a decision that shall be left to the new House of Representatives.

#### Long-term vision on connectivity

To ensure the long-term viability of connectivity, sea travel and air travel must be considered in unison and with the Public Entity of Sint Eustatius. The Dutch government and the PES commit themselves to formulating a long-term vision for sustainable and viable connectivity. The plan for the connectivity by air will be finalized by Q4 2024.

### **Theme 3: Climate, nature and sustainability**

Saba and the Dutch Government will work towards initiatives that will make Saba better prepared for the impacts of climate change. Although rising sea levels are expected to have less of an impact, measures to improve hurricane preparedness and the readiness for lengthy droughts followed by flooding, are of vital importance. This will call for improved infrastructure to be better protected from erosion and attention to homes and buildings that may not be considered hurricane proof. The PES will be supported by the Dutch government in its efforts to become more self-sustainable. This support is necessary on a ministerial level, the RVO, and through funding sources such as the NEPP, Nationaal Groeifonds (NGF) and relevant funds of the European Union (EU). Food security, nature conservation, improved waste management and the development of more renewable energy sources will also be prioritized.

#### **3.1. Climate Plan**

In November 2023, the Dutch government will publish its formal response on the report written by Mr. E.H.T.M. (Ed) Nijpels on the need to adopt additional measures to combat climate change in the Dutch Caribbean. Effective climate policy entails measures related to both climate mitigation and adaptation. Parties identify combating climate change through mitigation and adaptation as one of its key priorities.

#### **Agreements and expected results in 2024**

- PES, BZK, EZK and IenW commit themselves to drafting a climate plan for Saba. BZK, IenW and EZK will assist the PES in this process by offering and financing expertise and technical assistance.
- The PES commits itself to realizing participation and cooperation in the drafting of this climate plan. BZK, EZK and IenW consider public involvement and engagement a key part of this process. PES, BZK, EZK and IenW commit themselves to setting up a working group for the drafting of this climate plan, which will include a variety of measures to combat climate change, including mitigation and adaptation measures for the years ahead. The plan will also address erosion and the need for implementing erosion control measures. The working group will conduct its work from Q1 to Q3 of 2024. The PES commits, at the least, 1 FTE for the climate and sustainable energy ambitions of the island.
- The parties aim to finalize this plan in 2024. The measures will be based on sound scientific evidence. It may, therefore, also be necessary to conduct additional research into the current environmental state of the island.
- Parallel to this, Saba will contribute to the realization of agreements made during the Climate Conference and Energy Conference (CCEC) on Aruba in May 2023, concerning a climate agenda for the Dutch Caribbean region.

#### **3.2. Accelerated transition towards renewable energy - Completion of the second solar park project**

The PES and the Dutch government commit themselves to accelerating Saba's transition to renewable energy sources. This transition not only reduces to reduce the carbon footprint, but also aims to make energy more affordable for all residents. Key to this ambition is the completion of the second solar park project, ensuring a reliable and sustainable energy supply for Saba, while also considering the financial sustainability of this investment.

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<sup>13</sup> Kamerstukken 2022-2023, 31 936, Nr. 1082

**The Ambition:** Increase Saba's renewable energy share from 40% to approximately 89% by implementing a comprehensive energy infrastructure, including a 4MW PV Solar Park, 0.5 MW Wind Energy, and 14MW Battery Energy Storage Systems. These initiatives will be aimed at:

- Reduce Energy Rates: Implementing renewable energy solutions to decrease energy costs, making it more affordable for all consumers.
- Ensure Reliability: Establish a reliable and sustainable energy supply, enhancing our energy resilience.

**Expected Results in 2024:** Procurement of Battery Storage Systems: The procurement process for Battery Storage Systems will be initiated, with the publication of a tender/RFP for construction. Simultaneously, construction of the solar park project will commence.

### 3.3. Development of a future-proof island

The Public Entity Saba (PES) has a core objective: enhancing self-sufficiency to meet basic needs on the island, while at the same time promoting sustainability and biodiversity restoration in order to safeguard ecosystem services and economic potential for future generations. Various vulnerabilities to achieving a higher level of self-sufficiency have been identified, such as Saba's food, fuel, and water supply. These vulnerabilities have been highlighted during recent crises, notably Hurricane Irma and the COVID-19 pandemic exposed. Heavy reliance on imports for these necessities also raises sustainability concerns. Additionally, concerns about the state and resilience of the island's nature and environment have stressed the importance of protecting local biodiversity, especially in the light of increasing environmental pressure due to climate change.

The Public Entity Saba has taken significant steps to address self-sufficiency challenges such as with the installation of a solar power park and plans for expanding solar and wind energy to cover 90% of electricity needs and the establishment of a drinking water bottling plant.

In addition to this, the Nature and Environment Policy Plan 2020 – 2030 (NEPP) was established in 2020 to provide an integrated framework for managing the natural environment in the Caribbean Netherlands. Its main goal is to ensure responsible and sustainable natural resource use on Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba by safeguarding ecological processes, addressing pressures, and restoring vulnerable systems. The NEPP comprises four strategic goals, including reversing coral reef degradation, conserving unique habitats and species, promoting sustainable land and water use, and creating local conditions for sustainable nature policy.

As part of the NEPP, the Public Entity has started several projects over the past years. A goat control program was initiated to remove free roaming goats from the island and reduce the pressure on erosion. Over the past 2.5 years, almost 5,000 goats were removed. This has had a tremendous impact on the local vegetation, which is recovering at a rapid rate. A targeted reforestation program was started in 2022, aiming to steer vegetation recovery towards the restoration of indigenous vegetation cover on the island and further reduction of erosion in sensitive areas on the island. Part of the program will focus on increasing food availability by planting fruit trees.

The vast reduction of free roaming goats has furthermore enabled a broader stimulation of local food production. Separate from the NEPP-financed projects, the Public Entity started pilot projects to increase local food production by promoting backyard farming and animal husbandry. Over 40 households on the island have successfully made use of this program. Additionally, as part of the NEPP, a hydroponics farm is being installed, which intends to provide a continuous supply of high demand crops on the island. The aim is to work together with other farms on the island to align production and to expand the sales market by establishing a reliable and competitive farmers' market on the island. To ensure that low income households have access to fresh produce as well, the Public Entity aims to set up a food bank.

#### **Agreement:**

- The PES commits itself to future initiatives in the field of nature and sustainability, which will focus on coral restoration, waste management, waste water management, rain water management, invasive species control and a further promotion of local food production. Actions are necessary in these fields in order to further reduce the impact of environmental stressors, restore the island's marine and land biodiversity sustainably and reduce the island's dependency on imports.
- The Public Entity and the Dutch government will discuss in 2024 the assistance required for taking the necessary next steps in reaching the nature and environmental goals outlined above.



## Theme 4: Good Governance

The ministry of BZK and the Public Entity Saba commit themselves to further strengthening the administrative and executive power of the island, as well as the quality of public governance.

The Public Entity Saba, established in 2010, has made remarkable progress in providing essential services to the community. Through the establishment of various departments, the organization has built dedicated teams that are committed to serving the island. Despite these achievements, the Public Entity Saba faces ongoing challenges related to administrative and executive power.

The Public Entity Saba is dedicated to becoming a robust organization in which all personnel can optimally commit themselves to serving the community of Saba. To achieve this, the Public Entity Saba commits itself to expanding its capacity and fostering the further development and professionalization of the organization. This ambition will be pursued through the *Public Entity Saba Organizational Development Plan 2023 – 2030* and the tracks outlined in this plan (Appendix I).

### 4.1 Good governance within and between the Executive Council and Island Council

The Executive Council commits to the continued improvement of the interplay between the two governing bodies, with due respect and consideration for their respective roles and obligations. The ministry of BZK commits itself to supporting this continued improvement with financial and technical assistance.

#### Agreements and expected results in 2024

- **Action Plan to promote Good Governance:** The ongoing enhancement of collaboration between the Executive Council and the Island Council plays a crucial role in fostering good governance. Both councils are dedicated to continually improving this collaboration by collectively devising and implementing an action plan which will outline respective roles, procedural rules and obligations, communication processes and mechanisms which will enhance collaboration. The action plan will be drafted in Q1 2024. Implementation of the action plan will commence in Q2 of 2024.
- **Improving the information provision to the Island Council and the Public:** The Action Plan Good Governance will include a plan, outlining the structured processes which are or will be in place for dissemination of information to the Island Council and the public of Saba, as well as how these processes can be improved further (in compliance with legislation<sup>14</sup>). The PES furthermore commits itself to the publication of decisions of the Executive Council within 2 weeks on the website of the Public Entity. External expertise will be utilized to facilitate the development of this plan. The funding for this support will be shared between the Ministry of BZK and the Public Entity Saba. The plan will be drafted in Q1 2024. Implementation of the plan will commence in Q2 of 2024.
- **Continued professionalization of the Registrar's Office:** BZK pledges financial assistance in 2024 for the continued professionalization of the Registrar's Office of the Island Council.
- **Local Audit Chamber (Rekenkamer):** The Local Audit Chamber is an important institute for improving validity and effective governance on the island. The PES commits itself to establishing a local audit chamber in 2024 and by Q4 2024 at the latest, if a solution is found for the challenge of finding an objective party. The ministry of BZK will provide assistance with the formation of the chamber.
- **Juridisch Loket:** In 2022 and 2023, the PES has participated in a working group (headed by the Dutch Ministry of Justice) focused on the establishment of an accessible facility for legal aid for citizens in the Caribbean part of the Netherlands and, embedded in this facility, an independent antidiscrimination provision. In a next stage further effort is needed to develop a plan for the actual implementation of this facility. The PES commits itself to continued involvement in 2024 in this working group for the realization of this facility and cooperation during the realization process (for instance by providing the necessary contacts and the necessary information).

### 4.2. Improving the execution power and performance of the organization

A structural and stronger education platform, as well as additional capacity, is needed to contribute to the improvement of the execution power and performance of the organization for better public service and robust public finances. This education platform will provide civil servants, workers in government owned companies,

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<sup>14</sup> Article 72 of the Wet op de openbare lichamen Bonaire, Sint-Eustatius and Saba (WolBES) and articles 2, 6 and 8 of the Bekendmakingswet BES/Disclosure Wet BES.

workers in government subsidized organizations as well as Executive and Island Council members, the opportunity for personal development and growth.

#### **Agreement:**

- The education platform ('learning and development program'), as well as the capacity needs, have been outlined in the *Public Entity Saba Organizational Development Plan 2023 – 2030* (Appendix I). The PES commits itself to the implementation of this plan, whereas the Dutch government commits itself to financially supporting the PES in order to implement this plan.

#### **4.2.1. Learning and Development Program (LDP) for civil servants of the PES**

The PES commits itself to the development and implementation of an integrated general Learning and Development Program (LDP) for civil servants of the Public Entity Saba. The objectives of the LDP extends to strengthening the capacity of the Project and Policy Bureau, upskilling the workforce, and fostering personal and professional develop among all employees, as well as members of the Executive Council and the Island Council.

#### **Agreements:**

- **Inventory of training and development needs.** The Public Entity Saba will draft in Q4 of 2023 an inventory of the different types of trainings the civil servants of the PES require. On the basis of this inventory, the PES will draft in Q1 of 2024 an *Overview and Calendar* for training needs. The training needs will be ranked in terms of priority. Trainings that are most vital to the strengthening of the execution power of the Public Entity take precedence.
- **Implementation of trainings from Q1 2024 onwards.** The trainings will be implemented on the basis of aforementioned by Q1 of 2024 and onwards. BZK will provide financial assistance for the implementation of trainings that are vital to the strengthening of the execution power. RCN will provide operational and logistical assistance in the delivery of certain trainings.
- **Intensified cooperation RCN and Public Entities in the area of learning and development:** The cooperation between the RCN and the PES in the area of training and development will be intensified, with the eye on benefits of scale that are attainable when trainings are organized for civil servants of multiple Public Entities at the same time. The PES will participate and co-deliberate in the creation of a *Dutch Caribbean Academy* (CN-academie) for civil servants of the Public Entities and the RCN. The PES commits itself to utilizing the CN-academie for its training needs, while maintaining the autonomy to implement its own learning and development program.
- **Learning and Development Program (LDP) implementation in 2024:** The LDP will be implemented in 2024. The trainings will be evaluated and these separate evaluations will be bundled into a general evaluation of the LDP by Q4 of 2024.
- **Exchange Program:** An exchange program will be introduced enabling PES-civil servants to gain work experience in the European Netherlands and other Caribbean islands within government organizations.

#### **4.2.2. Strengthening Capacity in Policy and Project Management**

The PES commits itself to enhancing capacity in the policy and project management. The Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom will provide for the strengthening of this capacity.

#### **Agreements:**

- **Training in successful funding applications and requests:** The policy officers of the Policy and Projects Bureau will follow a training to gain expertise in the area of funding applications. BZK will provide the technical and financial assistance to realize this training(s). To guarantee expertise in funding applications, this training should be followed-up with a 'train-the-trainer' initiative. The express goal of this is ensuring that policy officers of the Policy and Projects Bureau will be able to train their colleagues in the future, reducing dependence on external trainings.
- **Technical support for funds** (NGF, Regio Deal, SDE++, Garantieregelingen, EU funds): BZK will provide the PES with technical support and assistance to ensure the PES can successfully make use of different funding opportunities in the European part of The Netherlands and Brussels.

#### **4.2.3. Providing opportunities for the youth of Saba**

The PES and the Dutch government commits itself to investing in the younger generation of Saba by offering opportunities for career exploration within PES.

**Agreement:**

The PES commits itself to drafting a Summer Job/Internship Program for 2024 by Q2 2024. This program will provide young people and Saba students with valuable experiences, nurturing their personal and professional growth. The program will be carried out in the summer of 2024. In total, there is space for 15-25 students.

**4.3. Digitalization to strengthen and professionalize government services**

Digitalization is a means to strengthen and professionalize government services. On Saba, both the local government and the national government, are working towards a robust, adaptable, and well-functioning system of digital government, ensuring that the island can effectively respond to the many challenges it faces.

This will be achieved by, among others, investing in digital (business) applications for the work of the local government, as well as enabling *generic digital infrastructure* (GDI), basic registrations and the adoption of burgerservicnummer (BSN) and DigiD in the future, in line with the Work Agenda Value Driven Digitalization of the State and the Digitalization agenda of the Public Entity.

Furthermore, attention should be given to organize and realize a cyber secure organization as well as building towards a sustainable IT-organization. Concerning the latter, PES aspires collaboration with the other Public Entities on similar challenges, having access to and sharing capacity, knowledge and expertise, lowering the financial impact and ultimately optimizing efficiency.

**Agreements and expected results:**

The PES and the Dutch government are committed to operationalizing the needed steps and implementing the following action lines to build and expand digital (public) services.

1. The PES and the Dutch government are committed to strengthening the IT-infrastructure of the PES and establishing a cyber secure organization. To this end, the ministry of BZK will provide financial support. The PES will realize an improved and adequate IT-sourcing (strategy) by 2025. Base registrations and steps towards standards will be initiated in 2024. Cyber security standards (including steps towards BIO compliance) will be adopted by 2025. The PES, with the help and facilitation of BZK/DGDOO, will also explore collaboration with the Public Entities of Bonaire and Sint-Eustatius for shared services in the domain of government digitalization and ICT.
2. The PES and the Dutch government are committed to strengthening the capacity and executive power of the PES in the realm of digitalization.
  - a. The Dutch government will provide financing for the acquisition of 4 FTE in the ICT-domain. The following 4 functions are deemed necessary: digitalization of processes, projects and vendor management (1 FTE), information management (2 FTE) and cybersecurity and privacy (1 FTE).
  - b. The PES will develop a strategy with different policy options, in order to establish what is the best option to structurally guarantee sufficient ICT-knowledge and capacity for the tasks of the PES in the area of digitalization. Collaboration with other public entities is one of the pathways that will be explored, BZK will facilitate and help (also financially) to develop this line of thinking.
  - c. The PES is committed to professionalizing and optimizing some of the operational business processes of the organization, including (1) information and documentation management, (2) procurement, application management and (3) digitizing several workflows and administrative decision-making. It is also looking in possible joint efforts on the main processes throughout the organization (e.g. finance, HRM).
  - d. The website of the PES will be renewed in collaboration with BZK and other Public Entities.
  - e. The PES will improve the physical counter functionality of government agencies on Saba.
3. For the above agreements, the Dutch government (BZK/DGDOO) commits itself to providing €500.000 to the PES through the Free Allowance with the digitalization budget 2023, €300.000 in 2024, and additional funding to cover the costs associated with the realization of the aforementioned agreements and goals in the area of digitalization.
4. The PES commits itself to the digitization of the historical census records and the strengthening of the Civil Registry Office and the Dutch government (BZK/DGDOO) commits itself to financing this initiative through a Special Allowance or through direct procurement (in-kind). The PES commits itself to the following actions:
  - a. The historic Civil registry and census records will be scanned, digitally restored, indexed and imported in PIVA. This will be realized in 2024.

- b. Historic Census records that are legally accessible to the general public will be made digitally available.
- c. Paper records will be transferred from the Census to the appropriate archives. This will be realized by 2025.

#### 4.4. Licensing, supervision and enforcement (vergunningen, toezicht en handhaving)

The ILT (Inspectie Leefomgeving en Transport) published a report on licensing, supervision and enforcement this year. The Public Entity Saba (PES), BZK and the Ministry of Infrastructure (IenW) commit themselves to realizing sufficient supervision and enforcement on Saba, with due consideration for the recommendations of the ILT in their report<sup>15</sup>.

#### Agreements and expected results in 2024:

- The Public Entity Saba commits itself to implementing recommendations stemming from the ILT-report, as well as, more generally, strengthening the licensing, supervision and enforcement capability of the Public Entity. Concrete actions for 2024 to be determined.
- The Dutch government and the PES commit themselves to the necessary investments for execution capacity of the implementation of the actions and a durable system of licensing, supervision and enforcement.

#### 4.5. Renovation of the government administration building

The renovation and expansion of the government administration building represents the commitment of PES to adapt and accommodate the evolving needs of the organization and its constituents. This project has become imperative in light of our organization's substantial growth, which will be contributed to by the upcoming legislative changes in the Wet op de openbare lichamen Bonaire, Sint-Eustatius en Saba (WoLBES) and Wet Financiën Bonaire, Sint-Eustatius en Saba (FinBES) set to take effect in 2027. This legislation will introduce the need for additional council members (both Island Council and Executive Council) and their accompanying staff requirements. The revamped facility will provide the required space and resources to support the efficient functioning of our administrative processes and ensure that the PES can effectively serve the community of Saba, while adhering to the forthcoming legislative adjustments.

#### Agreement for 2024

- In Q1 of 2024, PES will formulate a comprehensive plan for the renovation of the government administration building, while considering the division of work in light of the upcoming changes in legislation, specifically the WoLBES and the FinBES.
- The exact financial contribution from BZK will be determined in consultation with BZK. The point of departure for the financial contribution is the scope of the expansion work necessitated by the legislative changes. The aim of this contribution is ensuring that the modernization and upgrades align with the evolving legal framework.

#### 4.6. Robust and future-proof Crisis Management

The Dutch government is working on a multi-year national crisis management agenda that also applies to the Caribbean Netherlands. This agenda sets the course for a period of six years and will guide the ambitions and efforts of the parties involved in the field of crisis management. In addition to the relevant action lines from the *Veiligheidsstrategie*<sup>16</sup> and current strengthening steps from the *Contourennota*<sup>17</sup>, the agenda also brings together important insights and (ongoing) initiatives from, amongst others, the Caribbean Netherlands.

To make the crisis management system in the Caribbean Netherlands more robust and future-proof, it will be further strengthened at a more tactical and operational level. To this end the Dutch Ministry of Justice (JenV), the Public Entity Saba and other crisis partners are jointly implementing -prioritized- the recommendations as made in the report of Crisisplan "*Naar een versterkte crisissamenwerking met de Caribische (ei)landen*"<sup>18</sup>, the report of the Inspection of Justice and Security "*Stand van zaken rampenbestrijding in Caribisch Nederland 2022*"<sup>19</sup> and the recommendations resulting from the evaluation of the BES Safety Act/*Veiligheidswet BES*<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Tweede Kamer, vergaderjaar 2022-2023, 22343-359, d.d. 13 juni 2023.

<sup>16</sup> Kamerstukken II 2022/23, 30821, nr. 178

<sup>17</sup> Kamerstukken II 2022/23, 29517, nr. 225.

<sup>18</sup> [www.crisisplan.nl/2023/09/04/onderzoek-naar-boveneilandelijke-samenwerking-met-caribisch-nederland](http://www.crisisplan.nl/2023/09/04/onderzoek-naar-boveneilandelijke-samenwerking-met-caribisch-nederland)

<sup>19</sup> Kamerstukken II, 2022/23, 26965, nr.218

<sup>20</sup> Kamerstukken II 2022/23, 31568, nr. 228

### **Agreement and Expected Results in 2024:**

- Due to the proposed elimination of the position of *Rijkvertegenwoordiger* his tasks in the field of crisis management will be assigned to the Dutch Minister of Justice and Security or will be cancelled. In consultation with the Public Entities and other crisis partners involved, agreements will be made in 2024 about cross-island coordination of requests for help and assistance.
- The Dutch government and the Public Entity Saba strive more joint cross-island exercises, with the remaining Public Entities and also Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten. To this end a joint exercise and training calendar has been drawn up for 2024. The Dutch ministries of JenV and BZK will make resources available for this.
- The Public Entity Saba will provide input regarding the possible consequences of the legislative program for strengthening crisis management in the European Netherlands for the BES Safety Act. The Dutch Ministry of JenV will provide the PES with support for the drafting of this input.
- In collaboration with an external party – which will be financed by the Dutch government - the Public Entity Saba will make in Q1/Q2 2024 an inventory and analysis of the capacities required for a robust crisis management system. The output of the inventory will form the basis for actions to make the crisis management system of the PES more robust. The actions will be discussed and determined at a later stage. In the long term, this also offers the opportunity for Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten to use this methodology for their crisis organizations, if they deem this desirable.