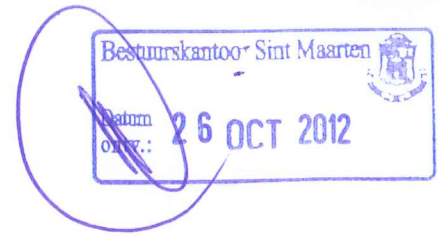




Sociaal Economische Raad
Social Economic Council



To the Hon. Prime Minister of Sint Maarten
Mrs. S.A. Wescot-Williams
Philipsburg
Sint Maarten

Philipsburg, October 25, 2012

Our reference: SER /12/GR/082

Re: Letter of advice regarding the establishment of a National Library for country Sint Maarten

Honorable Prime Minister,

Recently the Social Economic Council (SER) received a letter from member Mr. W. Reed (WICSU/PSU) with a request to change the name of the library and convert it into "The National Library of Sint Maarten", that is for the protection of the library and also to make it the official library of country Sint Maarten.

The member proposal was brought to the attention of the board during the board meeting of Thursday, October 11, 2012. The secretary elaborated on the matter where after information on the topic was shared with the board. The board agreed to support Mr. Reeds proposal, the board decision is documented in the resolution list dated October 11, 2012. Furthermore, the board stressed the necessity to adapt and improve the Library's infrastructure and building to be able to successfully carry the additional responsibilities and execute the additional tasks. The board expressed a clear feeling that the present accommodation of the Philipsburg Jubilee Library is insufficient for its current tasks, and certainly a new or renovated building would be necessary to successfully carry the National Library tasks. During the board meeting of October 25, 2012 Mr. Reed elaborated further on his proposal, where after the board unanimously supported his motion.

The SER is of the opinion that the establishment of a National Library is of crucial importance for the further development of the country and its people. The Philipsburg Jubilee Library which at the moment mainly functions as a public library will develop into the National Library of St Maarten. In the English speaking Caribbean it is already common practice that public libraries perform National functions. Apart from being public libraries they also act as the national libraries of their countries. Within the boundaries of our own kingdom the Biblioteca Nacional Aruba (National Library of Aruba) is a good example of a library performing this dual function.

The general mission and tasks of a National Library can be summarized under three headings:

1. Collection and preservation
2. Access
3. Cooperation



Sociaal Economische Raad
Social Economic Council

1. Collection and preservation

The most important task of a National Library is to collect, preferably via a legal deposit, the national imprint, both in print and electronic format. National heritage in the form of manuscripts, archival materials, photographs and audiovisual documents are also collected by some National Libraries. Foreign publications about the country should be part of the collection of the National Library as well. For St Maarten this would mean that all written materials published in St Maarten, all materials written about St Maarten as well as written materials written by St Maarteners living abroad would be collected by the National Library. This national collection has to be preserved by the national library under the best possible conditions.

2. Access

Apart from maintaining the national collection the National Library also has to make sure that the general public has access to the materials of this collection. The materials should not only be accessible for visitors of the library but people should be able both to consult material in collections and to obtain specific items however distant they may be. In practice this means that the catalogue of the National Library should be placed on the internet. Documents with historical value and other relevant documents should be digitized and made available through the internet as well.

3. Cooperation

Cooperation is defined as cooperation on a national as well as as on an international level. Cooperation on the national level in St Maarten would mean that the National Library cooperates with and provides assistance to the University library, the National archives as well as the school libraries on the island. On the international level it would be of the utmost importance to cooperate with libraries in the Caribbean as well as libraries in the Netherlands and the US.

SER advice

The SER advises:

- to officially designate the Philipsburg Jubilee Library as the National Library of Sint Maarten;
- to ensure that the annual subsidy granted to the PJJ will be increased in such a way as to sufficiently make the transition to National Library and to sufficiently fund existing and additional tasks of the National Library;
- to make the realization of new and fitting accommodation of the PJJ/National Library an urgent policy priority.

Should you require any additional information after reading the above, please feel free to contact us at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully,

R.A. Richardson
Chairman

G. Richardson
Secretary-general