



> Return address

To the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the States General  
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**DG of Public  
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**Our reference**  
2024-000033535149398

Date June 14, 2024  
Subject Letter on follow-up to apology for slavery past

### Introduction

In his speech of 19 December 2022, Prime Minister Mark Rutte spoke about making progress together: "By talking and listening to each other, with the sole aim of being honest about the past and promoting recovery in the present day. It should be a comma, not a full stop." An important part of this comma is the establishment of an independent Remembrance Committee charged with fleshing out and organising a grand, respectful remembrance ceremony, in addition to social initiative schemes. With this letter, we wish to inform your Chamber of the Chairperson of and the Assignment to the Remembrance Committee on the History of Slavery in formation, as well as the publication of the grant scheme for social initiatives in the European Netherlands and the Caribbean part of the Kingdom on July 1. On April 22<sup>1</sup>, your Chamber was apprised by letter of the follow-up process to the apologies for the Kingdom's history of slavery.

### The Remembrance Committee in formation

In establishing this Committee, we have worked closely with descendants and other stakeholders from across the Kingdom, including NiNsee, and Suriname, organising Catshuis sessions to take soundings on how a remembrance committee could be set up and the profile of its members and chair. In addition, we held individual discussions on this subject with descendants and experts from across the Kingdom and Suriname and organised dialogue sessions in European Netherlands in cooperation with the research firm TrueTalk. A key conclusion is that there is no single mode of remembrance, and different people have different needs. On the one hand, people need the opportunity to structure remembrance in line with their own history, society and culture. On the other hand, there is a need for a remembrance ceremony that everyone can identify with. Interviewees also highlighted that joint remembrance can raise awareness of the past throughout society.

Based on this input, a number of principles were formulated and tested a second time with descendants and other stakeholders, revealing strong support for the following principles:

- Equal representation of the various communities in the Kingdom on the Remembrance Committee should be guaranteed.
- A seat on the Committee will also be reserved for Suriname, should Suriname wish to participate.

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<sup>1</sup>[House letter dated April 22, 2024 on the follow-up process to the apologies for the Kingdom's history of slavery](#)

- Throughout the Kingdom, there are various important dates other than July 1 with great relevance in relation to the history of slavery, such as the commemoration of the uprising led by Tula on August 17, 1795 in Curaçao and the commemoration of Maroon ancestors on October 10. Although we all value those other dates, July 1 should be the date of the National Remembrance Day, as it was on this date that Dutch slavery worldwide was officially abolished.
- The Remembrance Committee will also engage with these other dates associated with our history of slavery and encourages all cultures of remembrance throughout the Kingdom.
- The Remembrance Committee is also tasked with raising awareness of the history of slavery and its modern-day ramifications, as well as promoting further research on this topic.
- Members on the Committee should be knowledgeable about the Kingdom's history of slavery and cultures of commemoration and have support within the various communities.
- For the chair, administrative experience and the ability to reach across communities as well as society as a whole is of great importance.

#### *Assignment*

Based on these principles, we are establishing a foundation by the name of the Slavery History Remembrance Committee (Herdenkingscomité Slavernijverleden). The June 14 Council of Ministers approved the appointment of **xx** as chair of this committee in formation. The Committee is given the following assignment:

- Responsibility for organising the National Remembrance ceremony on July 1 throughout the Kingdom, revolving primarily around the remembrance of the transatlantic slave trade with attention to the meaning of remembrance, the inclusion of all communities (including as a minimum Afro-Surinamese, Afro-Caribbean, Maroon and Indigenous communities) and connection within the Kingdom and with Suriname, at Suriname's discretion.
- Responsibility for raising social awareness about the history of slavery and its repercussions in the present throughout the Kingdom.
- Encouraging research on the history of slavery.
- Facilitating and supporting the development of other memorials, commemorations and celebrations that are relevant to the remembrance of the history of slavery within the Kingdom.
- Consulting with Suriname on its participation in the Slavery Remembrance Committee.
- Exploring with the communities involved whether the scope of the remembrance ceremony should be broadened, either geographically or thematically.
- Exploring with civil society partners the possibility of making July 1 a day off and public holiday in the Kingdom.

Discussions have been held with NiNsee about the future Remembrance Committee. NiNsee has an extensive track record of pursuing recognition of the history of slavery and has worked hard to make the Slavery Remembrance Ceremony on July 1 in the Oosterpark what it is today. NiNsee's expertise, experience and network are indispensable to the Remembrance Committee in

formation, and NiNsee will therefore organise the national remembrance day on July 1 on behalf of the Remembrance Committee in at least 2025, 2026 and 2027. The Remembrance Committee will liaise with NiNsee and the communities involved to shape collaboration between all partners in the following years. NiNsee will also be given the chance nominate a candidate for one of the seats on the Remembrance Committee for the History of Slavery currently in formation. Finally, the Committee and the NiNsee board will explore ways for NiNsee to contribute to raising awareness of the Transatlantic slave trade with its knowledge. This role should supplement the work done by the Remembrance Committee in promoting research and the similar knowledge provider role of the National Slavery Museum.

#### *Composition and nomination*

The Committee has up to ten members, selected principally on the basis of geographical representation. Its members will come from different parts of the Kingdom and a seat is available for Suriname, should Suriname wish to participate. The committee consists of:

- Two members from the European Netherlands: preferably one from the Caribbean and one from the Surinamese diaspora.
- In view of its long-standing commitment to the recognition of the history of slavery and its ample expertise and network, the bylaws will state that one of these members may be nominated by NiNsee.
- A member from Aruba.
- A member from Bonaire.
- A member from Curaçao.
- A member from Saba.
- A member from St. Eustatius.
- A member from St. Maarten.
- A member from Suriname, at Suriname's discretion.
- A member without a direct link to the history of slavery to represent the Kingdom's society at large and who is eager to help the Committee achieve its goals.

In addition to geographic representation, Committee members are knowledgeable of the history of slavery, remembrance culture, colonial history, research, education, communication, finance and fundraising, and culture and are represented on the Committee in all recognised languages within the Kingdom. All members serve on the Committee with a free mandate.

Upon establishment of the Committee, members will be appointed by the Cabinet, with members from the Caribbean part of the Kingdom to be nominated by the local governments of Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, St. Eustatius and St. Maarten. If Suriname wishes to have a seat on the Committee, its member will be nominated by the Surinamese government. Committee members are appointed for a period of three years and may be reappointed no more than once. The Bylaws provide for a Nominating Advisory Committee, which will be responsible for nominating suitable candidates to the Committee in the future. The Committee appoints new members nominated by the Nominating Advisory Committee, with the Minister of the Interior appointing the chair upon nomination by the Committee.

The Committee is supported by a working organisation with staff in both the European Netherlands and the Caribbean part of the Kingdom, in order to reinforce cooperation and promote the exchange of the different cultures of remembrance.

#### *Process*

The deed of incorporation of the Slavery History Remembrance Committee has been prepared on the basis of the above. The goal is for the Remembrance Committee in formation to be operational no later than autumn 2024. The Slavery History Remembrance Committee in formation and the affiliated organisation will have an annual budget of €8 million.

#### **Grant scheme for community initiatives**

On July 1, 2024, the subsidy schemes for social initiatives for the European Netherlands and the Caribbean part of the Kingdom will be published in the Government Gazette, with the express qualification that they will enter into force at a later date. The period between these two dates will be used to organise information sessions for applicants. In addition, information on the advisory committee, application periods and entry into force will be worked up during this period, following discussions with the potential scheme administrators and descendants and other stakeholders. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Affairs is currently in talks with a potential administrator.

A report of the results of the online public participation process has been published for each scheme on the official website and is also included in the explanatory documentation of the schemes.<sup>2</sup>

A grant policy framework for social initiatives is being prepared for Suriname, the discussions about which are progressing at their own pace. Suriname's intention to establish a platform for descendants and other stakeholders will enable Suriname and the Netherlands to engage in fruitful dialogue. This platform will be established by the president of Suriname.

#### **In conclusion**

In this final month of the Slavery History Remembrance Year, we are taking important steps together in the process of raising awareness about the Kingdom's history of slavery. Together with descendants and other stakeholders, we have laid important building blocks for a shared future. We are very grateful to all those who have spent the last years, and indeed decades, to recognise and raise awareness of this past. In doing so, we trust to have contributed to inscribing the open pages before us with words of dialogue, recognition and healing.

The Secretary of State for Digitalisation and Kingdom Relations,

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<sup>2</sup> [Overheid.nl | Online Public Participation for the Slavery History Grant Scheme on social initiatives in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom \(internetconsultatie.nl\)](#)  
[Overheid.nl | Online Public Participation for the Slavery History Grant Scheme on social initiatives in the European Netherlands \(internetconsultatie.nl\)](#).

**DG of Public  
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Alexandra C. van Huffelen

the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations,

Hugo de Jonge

the Minister of Foreign Affairs,

Hanke Bruins Slot

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the Minister of Education, Culture and Science,

Robert Dijkgraaf

the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment,

C.E.G. van Gennip

the Minister of Legal Protection,

F.M. Weerwind

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the secretary of State for Health, Welfare and Sport,

Maarten van Ooijen