

To: WICSU-PSU
Attn: WICSU-PSU President Ms. Sharon Cangieter
Ferret Building 152B Backstreet
Philipsburg, Sint Maarten

Philipsburg, 24 OCT 2025

DIV: 25-16646/D

Subject: Response to the WICSU-PSU letter dated October 9, 2025 regarding the legal position of the Staff of the Fire Department

Dear Ms. Cangieter,

I acknowledge receipt of your correspondence dated October 9, 2025, regarding my letter of October 3, 2025 with subject *Proposal of Fire Department WICSU*. I would like to respond as follows.

The Government of Sint Maarten, agreed to start negotiations with the WICSU-PSU concerning the legal position of the staff of the Fire Department, based on the presented draft covenant. However, at the start of the negotiation meeting on September 26, 2025, the negotiating team of Government was unexpectedly presented with a request from the WICSU-PSU for Government to provide a commitment letter on three (3) points referenced in the document *Proposal Fire Department WICSU*.

Despite this unexpected development, I agreed to review the document to determine whether a commitment letter could be provided. In reviewing the document, I noted that the third point, stated, among others, that *"In order for 1 and 2 to be formalized the function book must be revisited immediately as was agreed upon to ensure function, function description, and related salaries reflect the actual qualifications of the St Maarten Fire Department."*

Since we already agreed in previous meetings that the function book will be revisited, I have no objection to confirming this agreement. Therefore, in my letter of October 3, 2025, I

explicitly confirmed the Government's commitment to this process by agreeing "*to initiate a revisit of the current function book as requested*".

My letter did not specify a timeline as the formalization of points 1 and 2 depend on the outcome of the revisitation of the function book, as clearly indicated in the referenced document.

With this commitment, I was under the impression that we can now begin negotiations on the draft covenant. However, the content of your October 9 letter suggests that the union is seeking preliminary (written) negotiation on matters outside of the draft covenant. In the meantime, the Government's negotiating team remains prepared and available to begin negotiations on the draft covenant.

I must, however, also express my concern regarding this change in approach, as it diverges from the mutual understanding previously established between the parties. Firstly, your stance on the function book in the correspondence of October 9 differs from the third point mentioned in the document *Proposal of Fire Department WICSU*.

Furthermore, your letter conveys the impression that Government does not recognize the seriousness of the outstanding concerns of the Fire Department staff. This is certainly not the case and stands in contrast to the commitment demonstrated by Government through ongoing dialogue, multiple meetings and the clear steps already taken to advance these discussions in good faith such as the fact that Government has already agreed to begin negotiations on the draft covenant.

Additionally, your request to establish a clear work procedure for the negotiation team is a procedural matter that can be efficiently addressed within the meetings of the negotiation teams.

Despite these concerns, I again reaffirm the Government's commitment to constructive dialogue and to advancing this process collaboratively. Accordingly, I can confirm the following,

1. In line with point 1, and on recommendations of the Fire Chief, I have already instructed the department of P&O, together with the management of the Fire

Department, to begin the placement of staff in accordance with the newly established function book. Through this placement process, members of the Fire Department staff will be able to make use of the "claim process" as regulated in the general placement policy, should they believe they are entitled to retroactive payments.

2. The aforementioned process will also address the request in point 2 in the document *"Proposal of Fire Department WICSU"*.
3. As acknowledged in your letter dated October 9, 2025, there is an existing agreement within the CCSU framework to revisit the function book within three (3) years, further confirming that this issue is formally recognized and will be addressed.

In conclusion, I wish to once again emphasize that the welfare, professional advancement, and fair treatment of the staff of the Fire Department remain a priority and that my foremost intent is to ensure equitable outcomes for all staff within a framework of transparency and due process.

I trust this letter provides sufficient clarity and reaffirms the Government's firm yet open position.

Respectfully,

Dr. Luc Mercelina
Prime Minister Sint Maarten

The image shows a handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be 'Dr. Luc Mercelina', written over a circular official seal. The seal contains the text 'Prime Minister' at the top and 'Sint Maarten' at the bottom, with a central emblem. The signature is written in a fluid, cursive style.

To: Ms. Sharon Cangieter
President of the WICSU-PSU
Via e-mail

Philipsburg, November 5, 2025

DIV: 16646/F

Subject: Your letter dated November 3, Refnr. SCVC/WB1125/860a, titled Ongoing crisis within the Fire and Ambulance Department

Dear Ms. Cangieter,

I hereby respond to your letter dated November 3, 2025 sent by email on November 4, 2025.

I must express my concern and disappointment with the content of your correspondence, particularly given the efforts that have been made to move this process forward.

After reviewing the process and communication regarding the current matters at the Fire Department, I must conclude that I have made every reasonable effort and have been very clear in my correspondence, inclusive of my letter dated October 24 2025, to accommodate the requests of the union. Despite this, there has been no meaningful progress.

In light of this, I wish to once again clarify the current position and outline the steps being taken to move forward:

1. **Commitment Letter:** In my letter of October 24, 2025, I clearly addressed the matters referenced in the draft commitment letter attached to your correspondence received November 4, 2025. Therefore, there is no justification for the signing of an additional commitment letter on this subject.
2. **Placement Process:** Consistent with my letter dated October 24, 2025, the placement process will proceed and will begin shortly. A national decree establishing the placement and objection committees is currently being finalized. The Department of P&O will shortly brief all relevant staff on the procedures and will provide support throughout the process.

3. **Retroactive Payment:** I will reiterate that the placement process will also include a claim process for those members eligible for retroactive payments as stated in my letter dated October 24, 2025.
4. **Function Book:** Your letter of October 9, 2025 acknowledged the existing agreement within the CCSU framework to revisit the function book within three years. My correspondence of October 24, 2025, acknowledged confirmation of this existing agreement as it is already formally recognized and as such will be addressed.

In view of the above and the demonstrable continued commitment of Government to address the needs of the Fire Department, there is no need for the continuation of the go-slow action. As such, I strongly urge the union to immediately instruct its members to cease the go-slow action.

I also propose that we promptly agree on a date to continue formal negotiations on the draft covenant so that we can continue to address the outstanding issues and operational needs of the Fire Department in a structured, transparent and results-oriented manner.

I trust this clarifies Government's position.

Sincerely,

Dr. Luc F.E. Mercedina
Prime Minister of Sint Maarten/ Minister of General Affairs



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