

Mr Jaap de Hoop Scheffer  
Chairman of the Advisory Council  
on International Affairs  
P.O. Box 20061  
2500 EB The Hague

*Date* 23 April 2019

*Re* Request for advice on developments related to security policy in the Caribbean

Dear Mr De Hoop Scheffer,

The Minister of Defence joins me, in my capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs, in requesting the AIV's advice on the following matter.

The threat situation in the Caribbean is evolving. In the future this situation will probably be determined in large part by the direct and indirect effects of developments in a number of areas: (1) geopolitics and regional politics, (2) cross-border crime (particularly drugs crime) and (3) climate change.

The repercussions of current geopolitical developments are also being felt in Latin America and the Caribbean. China and Russia are increasingly taking an interest in this region, which continues to be marked by ideological differences and different spheres of influence. The relationship of the United States to this region is not always clear-cut, due to political and ideological differences.

A number of countries are grappling with internal instability, erosion of the democratic system, economic setbacks and declining respect for the rule of law. The political and economic situation in Venezuela and its *spillover* effects on the Caribbean part of the Kingdom are an example of the impact that political developments can have on the Kingdom. The geopolitical dynamic, in combination with regional political developments, could have long-term repercussions for security policy in the Caribbean.

In addition to regional political developments and geopolitical dynamics, the region is also dealing with international drug trafficking, which poses a threat to public order and regional stability, with direct consequences for security in the Netherlands and the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom. The diversification of activities undertaken by international criminal organisations, with for example an increase in arms and fuel smuggling, indications of ties to terrorist activities (*foreign terrorist fighters*) and the presence of certain *safe havens* for criminal activities, change the threat situation, which is not limited to the region and can also have ramifications for Europe and elsewhere.

The impact of climate change could also be significant. It is likely that changing weather patterns and natural disasters will play a growing role in shaping the regional threat situation, particularly in terms of migration flows and the internal political and economic stability of the island states.

Security policy in the Caribbean region must be implemented within the framework of the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Charter specifies that the Kingdom is responsible for foreign relations and for protecting the territory of the Caribbean part of the

Kingdom, which falls outside the scope of the founding treaties of both NATO and the EU. Aruba, Curaçao and St Maarten are autonomous in most other policy areas.

A number of key questions arise in this context:

1. What impact do developments related to security policy in the Caribbean have on the current and future threat situation for the region? What factors and developments are likely to play a role in these changes over the next 10 years, and who are the key players?<sup>1</sup> To what extent can the Kingdom itself influence these developments?
2. Given these actual and possible developments over the next 10 years, what will the consequences be for foreign relations and the security of the Kingdom in general and the autonomous countries within the Kingdom in particular? How effectively can the Kingdom respond to these developments in the Caribbean and ensuing risks to the Kingdom, both in Europe and the Caribbean region? How can the Kingdom prepare to deal with this evolving threat situation, and what is needed to do so?
3. What opportunities exist for the Kingdom to benefit from international cooperation in the Caribbean region? In what ways and in what areas can international cooperation on real and current threats in the Caribbean region be enhanced? Are there best practices used by other countries in the Caribbean region that the Kingdom could benefit from adopting?

This request for advice is provided for in the work programme for 2018-2020. I look forward to taking note of your advice on the issues at hand.

Yours sincerely,

Stef Blok  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

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<sup>1</sup> 'Key players' refers both to the broad spectrum of state actors (e.g. the US, Russia, China, Mexico and Venezuela) and to non-state actors (e.g. criminal organisations).