



Minister Ursell Arends:

Statement about climate and energy plans on Aruba towards 2050

Aruba has extensive plans to deal with both climate and energy needs and you will hear all about them in the days ahead during the “Caribbean Climate & Energy Conference”.

I do wish to point out one critical factor that is essential to the success of all these plans. It is captured in a single word : “**awareness**”.

I am not talking about “awareness” in the traditional sense. As islanders we know that the climate is changing, we see it, we feel it and we live it.

Our people really do not need to be convinced that climate change is here.

On energy, our people already know that man-made energy is expensive and not sustainable.

Our people know that there is a need for cleaner energy.

I am talking about a different type of awareness.

I am talking about “awareness” on the question of WHO can bring about the change.

If the public believes that climate issues are to be solved by governments, then our plans are doomed to fail.

If governments believe that they can handle this alone, then progress will be slow and failure a likely result.

Thus, I think that all our plans to deal with climate and energy issues require a good dose of self-awareness.

Governments must accept their limitations, foremost among them financial limitations including large national debts that is rampant in most small economies. Most of us have very limited fiscal space to accommodate the large investments that are required.

Similarly, the private sector must let go of the traditional view that climate is an issue to be solved by governments and paid for by governments.

We all have a role to play and we must work together, joint public and private initiatives must be central to our plans. We cannot simply repackage debt-products, present them to governments and call that a solution.

As a final thought, I want to quote Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations who in 2015 reminded us that :

“Climate change knows no national border”.

True words.

But the good secretary referred to “national” borders.
I propose a minor adjustment to that famous catchline.

For the sake of “awareness” lets agree to delete the word “national” from that phrase. Because climate change knows no border, period. Neither national nor domestic.

For Aruba the key to climate and clean energy initiatives rests in our capacity to bring about the awareness that success demands cooperation between the domestic public and the private sectors.

Regarding where do we see possibilities for further cooperation?

For further cooperation among us, in attending Our Ocean conference in Panama a few months ago, one of the key takeaways was that we cannot talk about climate without talking about the health of our ocean.

We are busy expanding our current 4-area marine park to island-round. But I do not believe it's enough if we are to reach the 30x30 mandate, nor will it be enough to strengthen our resilience and nature's capabilities to absorb shocks from climate change. I strongly believe that we should, at the very minimum, be talking about an ABC marine protected area, whereby we can use marine spatial planning as a tool to manage our waters responsibly and collaboratively.

And if we look at the location of Sint Maarten, Saba and Statia, as a Kingdom, maybe we should be advocating and aiming for a Caribbean-wide MPA. This could give us the opportunity to better manage the region, pull our resources, and likely be an opening to attract funding as well for due and responsible management of our natural marine resources as well as economic activity.