

Intervention 1ère vice-présidente

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Since 1648, the island of Saint Martin has been divided into two parts and has been placed under different national sovereignties.

You are probably wondering why I choose to recall something that everyone on this island knows, native or not.

I recall this reality because we have become so familiar with it that we have lost sight of its importance.

This is precisely why we are here today, commemorating the signing of the Treaty of Concordia. We want to reactivate the importance of this day and revive in every one of us a reality that holds within itself the singularity and the challenges, as persons living on Saint Martin, are confronted with politically, administratively, economically, socially and culturally every day.

We are not here because we were looking for another opportunity to celebrate. NO.

We are here to remind ourselves that this long-standing division has never impaired the peaceful living together of the French and Dutch community.

It has never impaired the harmony that so uniquely characterizes us for hundreds of years and most interestingly, it has not impaired the general principles contained within the Franco/Dutch Partition Treaty.

But the world has changed considerably since 1648. It continues to change rapidly today, and the fast changes have shaking our traditional foundations and balances. So much so, that neither Saint Martin nor Sint Maarten can continue to live according to principles and virtues that were laid down in 1648.

When reality change, the ways in which we handle those issues must also change.

The Treaty of Concordia was a brilliant idea at a time when wars were the main process that led to agreements.

What made it brilliant was that it was a **formal** arrangement that was primarily a **friendly** arrangement, an **alliance** between two communities and it determined the **common** rules for **joint** use of the goods of the land.

Many changes have taken place since 1648. The northern side has become a Collectivité d'Outre Mer (an Overseas Community of France) since 2007 and the southern side has become a country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands since 2010.

On one hand, the principles that governed the Treaty of 1648 are still intact and the people of both sides are still strongly attached to these principles. On the other hand, the cooperation between the two sides is more than ever necessary to face the struggles of this era.

It is therefore the time to set a body in charge of the cooperation between Saint-Martin and Sint Maarten, that will make possible the joint management and the finding of joint solutions to common issues. A “people’s United Congress” that would renew the 1648 agreement and confer on it the legal legitimacy that it lacks.

Our young people have expressed themselves on this matter and consider it a vital element for a better tomorrow and they are the tomorrow in question. Therefore, this true cooperation between both sides of this island imposes itself as a duty.

People are attached to both sides of the island. Which represents the crib where their families were born, their heritage, the space that provides the conditions for their becoming and the becoming of their children.

Two are better than one, they say.

Whether it is about administering the territory,

Town planning,

Protecting the environment

Providing potable water

Treating waste

Garbage collection

Fitting out the coastline

Using marine resources

managing traffic, land, air and sea transport

Providing energy/electricity
Economic development
Tourism
Social welfare
Health care
Culture
Education and on-going training

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The list is not complete, but managing the aspects that I have listed, is probably easier if done jointly than done separately.

I am not talking about government officials coming together on an occasion like today. I am not even talking about civil servants occasionally meeting to attempt to jointly address common concerns.

As we read again the words of the Treaty of Concordia, I wish for us to ask ourselves whether we are still capable of mobilizing for a good cause. Do we, as a people still have what it takes to bet on our ability to build a different future?

I will leave you with these thoughts.

Do enjoy this day!

Happy commemoration!

Long live Saint Martin/ Sint Maarten!