

REACH

A photograph of a middle-aged Black man with a grey beard, wearing a dark blue pinstriped suit, a white shirt, and a red tie. He is sitting in an office chair, leaning forward with his hands clasped. In the background, there is a desk with a computer mouse and a flag of the Netherlands Antilles (blue and yellow diagonal stripes) on a pole. The office has a light-colored wall and a window.

Curacao's New Economy Post Covid-19

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COLOPHON

REACH

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REACH OUT

Trade in time of Corona!



2020, a year that for Curaçao started out with certain challenges, but that at the same time were surpassed by positive expectations, in less than a few days turned into the beginning of an era that no economic model can project. Who would have expected that the world economy would be transformed by a virus?

Today the world is still battling the war against this invisible enemy. A moving target that consistently seems to be two steps ahead. We are now in the 5th month of the new year and three months after COVID-19 has been officially declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. There is still no clue how to fight this global war and what the world will be like when this crisis is over. One thing is certain, this crisis and its aftermath will have significant impact on international trade and how we do business locally.

At the publishing date of this edition of REACH, Curaçao's government is working together with representatives of the local business sector and the unions to develop a National Export Strategy with the support of the International Trade Centre. This development together with the recent admission of Curaçao as an observer to the World Trade Organization, creates the ideal

circumstance to realize the plan to design a more resilient economy, the Curaçao New Economy Post Covid-19. Curaçao's New Economy Post Covid-19 will be based on more diversification and empowerment of the identified growth sectors. The success of this plan depends on the cooperation of all stakeholders and trust in the economy. Both local, -new and existing- and foreign investors will be approached with an attractive investment package to grow the economy.

In that sense it is to be applauded that the famous local businesswomen Jachmin Pinedo shows her confidence and continues her plan to invest in Curaçao. Development in the medicinal Cannabis industry creates opportunities for local agriculture and pharmaceutical sector. The creative, technology and IT sector offer other interesting business possibilities.

These topics were discussed during the third edition of the National Export Awareness Week. Due to the COVID crisis, this year the event was completely virtual, to give everyone the opportunity to take part. This year's edition included several interesting webinars and presentations. REACH invites all interested parties to check out the recordings on www.minegoshi.org

Minister Steven Martina retakes the Helm



One year and three months ago, Mr. Martina made the decision to temporarily relinquish his elected position as the Minister of Economic Development, due to professional and private reasons.

During his absence from public office, Mr. Martina remained continuously engaged and working towards refining his vision for the advancement of a better economy for the people of Curaçao. Armed with his sound vision and robust economic plan, Mr. Steven Martina is fully energized and stands ready, willing and able to retake the helm as the Minister of Economic Development.

The unwelcomed arrival of COVID-19 has decimated all economies globally, leaving all countries no other choice but to “Improvise, Adapt and Overcome”, Mr. Martina’s vision calls for the diligent handling and creation of a new economic model for Curaçao, “The New Economy Post COVID-19”, which contains various strategies and ideas that Mr. Martina will implement, resulting in clear guidance towards the road to economic recovery.

One such step is to view the economic policy as an interrelated part of the monetary and fiscal policy of Curaçao. Mr. Martina started this program of economic recovery at the beginning of his stewardship as Minister of Economic Development in 2017, which showed very

promising results throughout 2019 under the steadfast and firm leadership of Minister Giselle McWilliam. All these economic gains and achievements were destroyed within six weeks, pushing our country and people back to “economic ground zero”.

“We as a people, must redesign our economic platform” says Minister Martina, success of The New Economy Post COVID-19 must include all citizens and residents of Curaçao banding together as one,...one coalition, the coalition of the willing, working towards and for the betterment, stabilization and full economic recovery of Curaçao.

This Herculean task is only achievable by unification of the public and private sectors, contributing their part to this plan. Executed collectively, we will “Overcome” this ungodly pandemic with a much healthier, economically stable and investment enriched country.

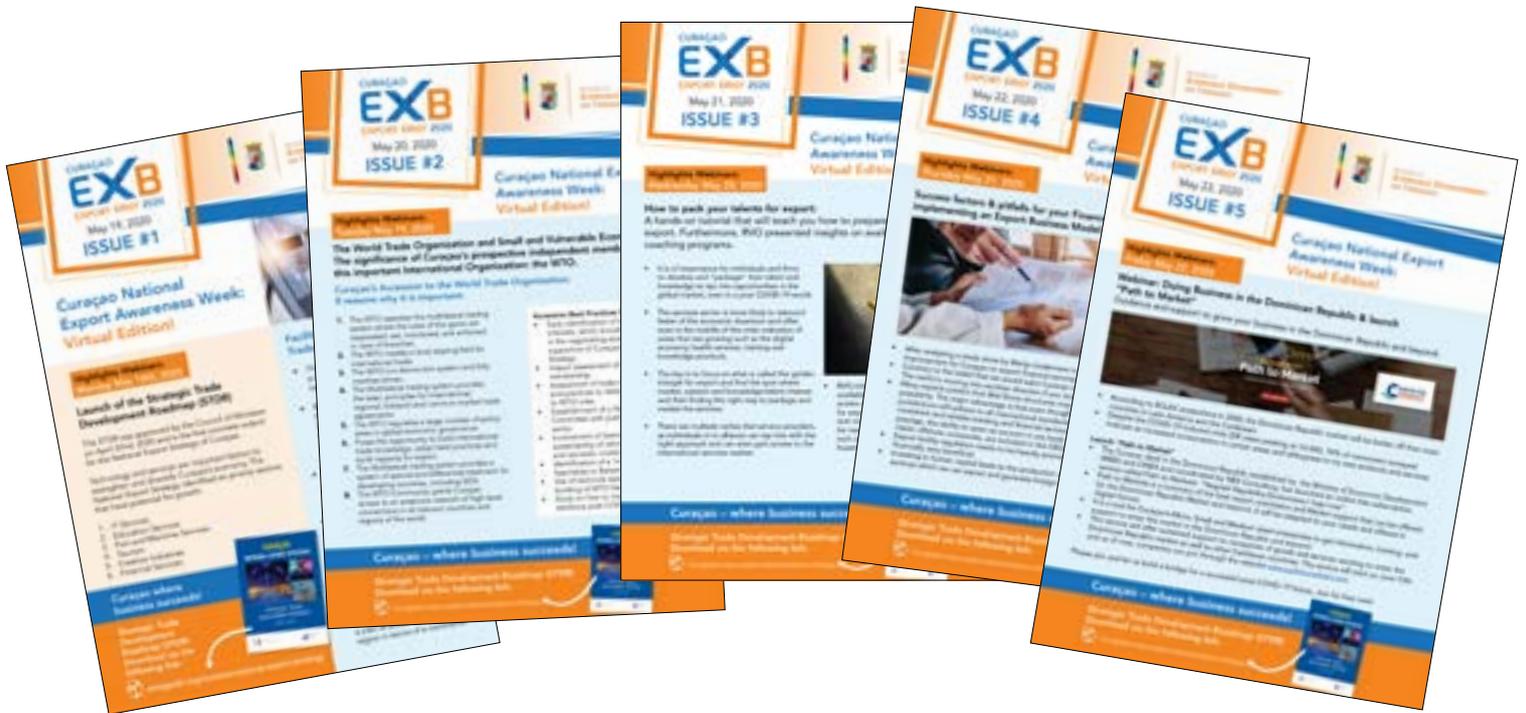
Minister Martina is a firm believer in the principles of Servant Leadership and quotes his father Don Martina, who was Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles in the 80’s and 90’s.

“Don Martina”

“The talents that a country creates should give back from their part to help the advancement of the country. If we do not give from ourselves to help the progress of our country, who will do it for us? Who will do it for us, if we don’t have the courage and the ability to do certain sacrifices to help our country forward?”

Minister Steven Martina enters the arena with several concrete ideas which will dovetail seamlessly with the ongoing developments already in motion. Once blended, will create the synergy for a solid foundation upon which Minister Martina’s economic recovery plan will be realized. Curaçao’s New Economy Post Covid-19 plan will thrive on the pillars of Investments & Export.

Curaçao's National Export Awareness Week 2020 great success



Daily highlights of the seminar can be found on minegoshi.org/export

Curaçao's National Export Awareness week was once again a great success with several informative presentations and interesting discussions. This year's seminar was dedicated to the Export of Services and due to the COVID-19 effects was organized completely virtual. The virtual set-up did not hurt the outcome of the event in the least. After weeks of lock-down all the participants had become quite accustomed to this aspect of the new normal. The response was overwhelming and by making use of live streaming on Facebook and placing the videos on the seminar's Facebook Page, everyone can review the video's if they missed the presentation.

The seminar gave several ideas and proposals to help design the island's new economic normal, the Curaçao New Economy Post Covid-19. The most important message that came out of the seminar was that all stakeholders have to join forces and embrace technology to give content to our new economic strategy.

CURAÇAO – WHERE BUSINESS SUCCEEDS!

STRATEGIC TRADE Development Roadmap (STDR)
Download via the following link:



minegoshi.org/curaçao-national-export-strategy



Building resilience and reengineering our economy



The spread of the coronavirus disease is developing into one of the largest health and economic crises of the last 100 years. The strong confinement measures taken by governments around the world, including Curaçao, are critical to protect public health and human life, but these measures have also placed immense strain on domestic and international commerce.

For small island developing countries, like Curaçao, the strain is even greater. Highly dependent on tourism for foreign exchange earnings, and highly dependent on imports to purchase essential products like food, medical supplies and other goods, Curaçao is facing its greatest economic challenge in living memory.

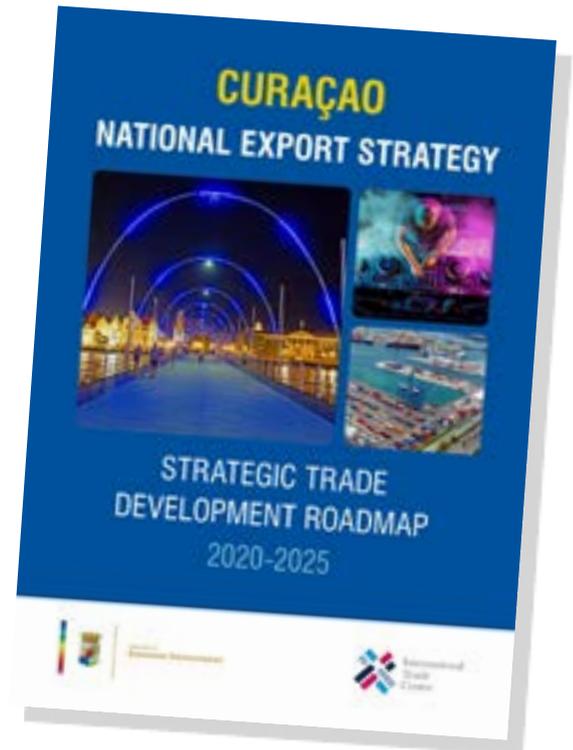
As a small island and a developing state in the Caribbean, the island like many small islands worldwide faces specific challenges and is especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change and financial turbulence – and now the Covid -19 Pandemic and related crisis. So we need to take several risks into account with respect to vulnerability when planning for sustainable development and resilience. Resilience however is defined as the ability

to counter shocks and their ability to withstand shocks. Coronavirus came as a shock which we still cannot measure, we do not know when it will stop or how it will end, there is no best practice, it is a matter of learning by doing and start preparing for the future even though we don't know when is the future, while at the same time dealing with economic downturn.

We have to accept that everything has changed. We need to get accustomed to a new normal. While vulnerability is inherent to small islands, strategies can be put in place to mitigate the risk of being harmed by external shocks, by increasing their resilience. To move from a position of vulnerability and dependence to one of resilience, small island economies must explore new areas of economic development and, in some cases, diversification.

Sound policies focused on broadening the “options” for small island economies should be designed to exploit the inter-linkages between sectors like agriculture, tourism, ICT, finance etc. Therefore managing Curacao's transition from a dependent economy to a resilient one requires both strong managerial and political capacities.

A technology driven Strategic Trade Development Roadmap for Curaçao!



Last April, the Council of Ministers of Curaçao approved a Strategic Trade Development Roadmap as part of a National Export Strategy. Curaçao engaged with an International Organization, The International Trade Center, a UN technical Agency, to facilitate and give technical assistance in realizing an export strategy for Curaçao.

International trade has always been at the heart of Curaçao's economy. The country's languages, identity and cultural heritage have all been heavily influenced by its linkages to the global economy. Moreover, the success of the country's export sectors enabled Curaçao to develop into one of the more prosperous nations in the Caribbean.

Nevertheless, Curaçao's economy is at a crossroads. Two of its three economic pillars – oil refining and financial services – have declined rapidly over the past two decades. Consequently, economic performance has stagnated, and per capita incomes are falling. Up-and-coming sectors such as professional services and tourism, meanwhile, have struggled to compensate. Now the third most important sector, Tourism has come to a halt due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Curaçao is running a large current account deficit. This deficit is driven by a large trade in goods deficit and is only partially offset by

the positive trade in services balance. In order to pay for its imports and maintain its standard of living, Curaçao must grow both existing and new sectors of the economy to generate foreign exchange earnings.

Despite these challenges, Curaçao is not starting from scratch. It has a developed education system and hosts many skilled professionals. Before Corona, we used to have strong air and sea connections to the region and beyond. It is an attractive location for foreign investment, and benefits from a strong and stable regulatory framework. It also has an autonomous government, capable of charting a new and ambitious path for the island.

Most importantly, Curaçao has potential.

The Strategic Trade and Development Roadmap (STDR) provides a blueprint to leverage this inherent potential into sustainable economic growth. The STDR lays down the overarching rationale and strategic framework for the National Export Strategy (NES).

The roadmap prioritizes those sectors that have the highest potential to generate decent jobs and foreign exchange earnings. It also identifies key trade support functions that need strengthening if exports are to grow.



Exports are at the heart of Curaçao's economic well-being. As such, Curaçao's future is tied to the success of its export industries. A strong all-of-country commitment to supporting the NES and implementing its recommendations will help Curaçao become a country where business succeeds.

As such, Curaçao's future development strategy has to be predicated on proactive, sensible, and practical measures that seek to respond to these global challenges while simultaneously exploiting the opportunities they present. So, we need to go from vulnerabilities to opportunities. Curaçao's priority sectors are mostly services based.

They leverage high-quality human capital and take advantage of digital technologies to serve customers, whether these customers are in Curaçao or abroad. Businesses in these sectors are better able to adapt to changing working and international market conditions, such as demand shifts or stay-at-home measures. The NES also places a strong emphasis on strengthening business support institutions (BSOs). In times of economic crisis, businesses turn to BSOs to help them adapt and survive. Better communication, alignment and coordination of activities among Curaçao's BSOs would improve resilience. The NES is a critical development project for Curaçao. The challenges the country faces as a result of the coronavirus outbreak are, for the most part, a magnification of existing weaknesses. As such, the NES

is well-placed to tackle these weaknesses head on and outline a path for a diversified and resilient Curaçao.

How will the impact of COVID-19 affect Curaçao's National Export Strategy (NES)?

The Strategic Trade Development Roadmap (STDR) is an assessment of the challenges and opportunities facing the country, and presents a vision for the future of the country. It identifies a lack of economic diversification and resilience as two central weaknesses – the same weaknesses that are reducing Curaçao's ability to respond to the crisis today. Therefore, the STDR is a comprehensive vision to improve diversification and to build resilience. How does the STDR propose to do this?

At the heart of Curaçao's NES is technology. Technology, in particular digital tools, should strengthen and link all of Curaçao's economic activities. To diversify the country, the NES identifies six priority sectors that have high growth and foreign exchange earnings potential. These sectors are reinforced by four trade support functions, which will benefit all firms and exporters within the economy.

Crucially, the entire framework is underpinned by the concept of "e-government for business". In practice, this means transitioning government services to online platforms as far as is practicable. To diversify the country, the National Export Strategy identifies six priority sectors that have the potential for high growth, adding value to exports and foreign exchange earnings.

WTO General Council agrees to welcome Curaçao as new observer.



Among all the troubling news related to the COVID-19 crisis, it's encouraging to know that positive advances are also taking place. After a long process, Curaçao was admitted as an observer to the World Trade Organization WTO. The observer status is the preparation stage before becoming an independent member state. On March 3, Curaçao's representatives addressed the General Council of the WTO Secretariat, including all the members and observing governments to express their gratitude.

The WTO-accession statement of Curaçao was presented by Mr. Caryl Monte, Chief Negotiator for the WTO-accession and president of the Permanent Commission for International Trade and Foreign Economic Relations of the Government of Curaçao. This was a historic moment for Curaçao, which has been long in the making. In his statement to the General Council after WTO members accepted Curaçao as a new observer, Monte underlined the long commitment

to the multilateral trading system of Curaçao and its predecessor, the Netherlands Antilles (NA). The NA were participants in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its multilateral negotiating rounds.

"We believe in, and will actively support, the role of the WTO in organizing and nurturing effective global economic governance, especially where it concerns the interests of small island developing states within the WTO," Mr Monte said.

He explained that the fundamental aspiration is to directly take part in the global trade dialogue and seek mutual economic progress by connecting to other trading partners, especially in the Caribbean region. This should be based on a transparent set of multilateral and plurilateral trading and other commercial rules, administered on the basis of equality and irrespective of the size of the member country.



WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo congratulated Curaçao on the members' acceptance of its application and welcomed it to this room. "I wish Curaçao the best for a swift and successful accession process. I can also assure you that you can count on the Secretariat's full support to make this a reality as soon as possible", Azevêdo said.

The request for separate WTO membership was fully supported by the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Curaçao has been part of the original membership of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to GATT, and subsequently WTO. "With the request for membership as a separate customs union, Curaçao underlines its commitments to the WTO," said the Dutch representative at the General Council. The Kingdom consists of the four countries, Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten, and the Netherlands.

This was the first time Curaçao formally addressed the General Council as an acceding separate customs territory. At the start of the WTO in 1995, Curaçao had regretfully missed the boat that would have converted its GATT-membership in an original (Article XI) membership on the basis of its status as a separate customs' territory. However, as Monte indicated, its desire to join the WTO was formally revived in 1998,

when the Government of the NA decided that the island should become a full member of the WTO as an independent customs' territory.

The NA constitutionally ceased to exist on October 10, 2010 but left a legacy of great commitment to international trade for its successors, among which the autonomous country and separate customs territory of Curaçao. "Our predecessors in the Netherlands Antilles have been a participant to GATT and all its multilateral negotiation rounds, at least since 1949. This means that we have a history of solid and deep commitment towards multilateralism and international organizations since the initial postwar period of international cooperation on global economic governance".

In this respect, the aspiration is to directly take part in the global trade dialogue and seek mutual economic progress by connecting to other trading partners, especially in the region.

This will be based on a transparent set of trading and other commercial rules, administered on the basis of equality, and irrespective of the size of the member countries.



The multilateral trading system and the WTO assists in bringing Curaçao's trade and other commercial policies, systems and practices, further in line with the global environment for import, export, investment and trade facilitation. This will help to attract much-needed foreign investments. That's why, although small in comparison to others Curaçao is highly motivated to be directly involved in the rule making and reform of the WTO.

While the WTO faces different important challenges, and alternatives for reform of the multilateral trading system are being discussed, there is still significant support for its work. According to Curaçao the WTO is still the world's best bet in avoiding disrupting international trade wars. "Therefore, even though there is apparently no single path to address its main challenges, we urge WTO members to continue to exercise solidarity and try their best in protecting the present multilateral trading system from major interruptions and the frustrations that exist on both sides of the aisle" says Monte.

He thanked the Permanent Representative and the Government of the Netherlands for facilitating the transmission of Curaçao's request. He finished by showing appreciation for the WTO cooperation and decision to set up the Working Party on the Accession of Curaçao.

The island commits to complete the required procedures in the accession process as soon as possible. It is already largely in compliance with the main requirements through its shared membership with the other countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The island looks forward to favorable reactions from other members of the Working Group.

The Leeward island of Curaçao, situated in the southern part of the Caribbean Sea about 55 kilometers off the coast of Venezuela has a separate customs territory within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. All WTO members have joined the system as a result of negotiations. Membership thus means a balance of rights and obligations. They enjoy the privileges that other member-countries give to them and the security that the trading rules offer. In return, they had to make commitments to open their markets and to abide by the rules — those commitments were the result of the membership (or "accession") negotiations. Countries negotiating membership, such as Curaçao are WTO observers.

[Click](#) to see the statement and [click here](#) to see the moment of admittance.



This is a direction that Curaçao had already envisioned, in the Smart Nation concept. It is also the basic precept of the National Export Strategy (NES) that the government, with the assistance of the International Trade Centre, has engaged in. Curaçao has yet to exploit the potential that its good technological infrastructure provides. The NES identified a number of sectors that can grow, or be initiated, by using technology. These include sectors such as financial services, port & maritime services, creative industries, education services, tourism and indeed, information and communications technology services. A lot needs to be done at the policy, institutional and enterprise levels. The NES demands a leading role by the government in providing improved and extended e-services to businesses and citizens. The aim is to achieve efficiency, to make it easy for businesses to do

become more competitive, and to make Curaçao more attractive to investors. Both public and private institutions should be focussed to help businesses succeed. This is achievable through improved assistance throughout the companies' lifecycles. Enterprises need to gear up by making more informed international marketing decisions and continuously keep innovating and improving their goods and services. During the past years, Curaçao has developed many strategies. Many of these were only partially implemented, or not implemented at all.

However, the government is now determined to introduce the NES, – the country has no choice. Change will take time, but results will be seen. And the next time Curaçao has to face a global adversity, it will find the island and its economy more prepared, more resilient.

Historic presentation of Curaçao at the World Trade Organization

The presentation at WTO General Council



Curaçao's journey to become an independent member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) started from the establishment of the organization in 1995. In the last three years this desire got more support and, in her quest, to improve economic opportunities for Curaçao, the former Minister of Economic Development Mrs. Giselle Mc William presented a petition for an independent membership during WTO's General Council meeting last December.

In her presentation, the Minister clarified Curaçao's interest in becoming an independent member. It was the first time that a minister of Curaçao gave such a presentation for the General Council. Membership of WTO, the world organization that regulates international

trade, provides several trade benefits for the island. Besides that, it also creates the passage for Curaçao to realize trade agreements with other countries, especially in the region.

There are very few multilateral organizations like the WTO, with the power to influence international trade. The fact that Curaçao as a small Caribbean island has expressed its interest to become a member has an important strategic value for the WTO. During her presentation for the 'General Council' of the WTO, Minister Mc William indicated that Curaçao being a small island in development like St Lucia, the Dominican Republic, and Barbados will continue to take the necessary steps to realize its ambition to integrate economically in the region.

This membership is expected to increase the export of the island, which is an important step to achieve economic growth. The Minister specified that although Curaçao is small, it should have the tools to defend its interests the same way as its kingdom partner located in Europe. The Minister explained that at this moment the European Union (EU) attends the interest of the Netherlands in the WTO. As Curaçao does not form part of the EU, in many cases its interests are different.

A benefit of an independent membership is its effect on the regional economic integration efforts of the island. Curaçao's integration in regional economic developments can be possible only if it becomes an independent member of the WTO. The international trade legislation is attended on this platform and all the countries in the region handle and trade according to this legal framework. The island has already started negotiations with Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Trinidad & Tobago for that matter.

The expression of interest of Curaçao to become an independent member of the WTO shows the relevance of this organization. The WTO has two types of requirements for membership. The country should be completely independent or have a separate customs territory. Curaçao's access to an independent membership is unique because it's the first time in the history of the WTO that a country applies as a separate customs territory.

Access to the WTO also means that Curaçao has to structure its trade legislation, policies, quality controls, and information transparency. It must create competitive markets for its companies and investors and improve its services. These are some of the benefits that admission to the WTO will bring about.

WTO gives technical support to governments of countries who apply for membership. In Curaçao, the Ministry of Economic Development (MEO) has already started the process to develop a National Export Strategy (NES) with the support of the International Trade Center (a subsidiary of the WTO and the United Nations).



This will help to prepare the island to enter the international commercial arena as this requires all participating countries to adhere to the WTO trading conditions and regulations which will improve Curaçao's exports. This is crucial to push the economy of the island forward. The NES is the vehicle to realize this.

During the December meeting in Geneva, the EU asked for more time to study the petition and the United States asked for some details to be able to enhance their support. Trinidad & Tobago and Uruguay immediately gave their support. Curaçao's delegation at the WTO meeting thanked these countries for their support.

After the meeting, the Curaçao delegation approached the advisors of the USA and the EU to clarify the queries that they had regarding Curaçao's application.

By February 2020 all the consultations with the countries of interest were ready so that the application of Curaçao to become an independent member was placed on the agenda and was accepted in the General Council of the WTO of March 2020.

Building Economic Resilience

THE NEW ECONOMY POST COVID-19



Just like the rest of the world, Curaçao also had to come up with a post COVID plan to face the serious repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis. With tourism, one of its main economic pillars paralyzed, uncertainties about the future of the oil refinery, stagnation in the trading relation with Venezuela and troubling public finances, the island has to be bold in its approach to turn the negative trend. Curaçao 2.0 will be a version of the economy build on economic resilience.

The effects of the global health crisis are immense for the island. The tourism sector, one of Curaçao's main contributors to the economy, received a hard blow while other economic sectors came to a standstill during the quarantine. These effects came on top of the critical economic trend and the troubling public finances of the last years. These developments do not add to an encouraging outlook. In view of the magnitude of these challenges, the Ministry of Economic Development (MEO) decided to take this moment to design Curaçao's New Economy Post Covid-19.

An economic plan based on economic resilience.

The economic challenges are not uncommon for the small island developing states in the Caribbean. Tourism, one of the most lucrative industries in Curaçao affects many segments of the economy, that directly or indirectly depend on a thriving tourism market. Public finance, already in the red, is expected to continue deteriorating as government spending for the support of enterprises and workers increases, while its income through taxation and duties decreases. Countries all over face similar situations. However, many of these countries have reserves and more diversified economies, making them more resilient in the face of this downturn. An important objective for Curaçao is thus to diversify its economy and reduce vulnerabilities. In countries that were better prepared, technology has come to the rescue. Not only was there no negative impact from the pandemic on the tech sector, it is actually thriving. People continue to work- and do their shopping online. They interact with each other and do their physical exercise with the aid of technology.

Laws are changing and investors are interested

Curaçao's Cannabis cultivation project



The proposal to start the possibility of Cannabis Cultivation projects in Curaçao is based on an integrated wellness and health approach. In this method, alternative healthcare including medicine based on herbs and other natural resources get special attention.

It also allows the establishment of projects of medicinal cannabis use and sales. Curaçao's Minister of Health, Nature & Environment, Mrs. Susanne Camelia - Römer is leading this challenging legal reform project that can create significant economic benefits for the island.

Last year, Curaçao's government was approached by investors who wanted to know its vision related to local cultivation of medicinal cannabis. Based on this request the cabinet of the Minister of Health made an extensive feasibility study to assess its viability, in light of the export possibilities. According to mr. Alvin Daal Director of this Cabinet, the first exploration showed that Curaçao

has several factors in its advantage for the cultivation of Cannabis. The island's medicine laws are properly structured, which creates an adequate legal framework for this purpose. Besides that, there are potential investors who see a viable possibility to move their production of Cannabis based medicine to Curaçao. These indications encouraged a further research.

Legal Cannabis production is on the rise

Cannabis for medicinal use is now being cultivated in several countries. Canada and the Netherlands among others, have liberalized its use for medical and recreation purposes. In the USA 33 states have legalized Cannabis for medical and in 10 cases also for recreational purposes. The same goes for Colombia, Mexico, Belgium, Spain and Uruguay. Some produce the raw material first and then the final product, in pills, oils, ointments and so on. According to the current proposal, in Curaçao Cannabis use will be legalized for medical purposes only.

According to Daal, Curaçao has a perfect climate for this project, with enough sunshine, more than 12 hours per day. Besides that, the island is located outside the hurricane belt. Other islands in the Caribbean have this advantage too. What gives Curaçao the edge he thinks, is the combination of the climatic advantages and the adequate legal framework. In that sense he refers to the laws that govern the medical system but also to the reliable banking legislation.

“Other Caribbean countries such as Jamaica, St. Vincent, St. Kitts and Puerto Rico have legalized the production and medical use of Cannabis. Even though these countries’ climate is similar to Curaçao, they have higher risks of being hit by a hurricane, damaging their crops or greenhouses. Besides that, their legal framework is often less suitable” says Daal.

Being part of the Dutch Kingdom can be considered another advantage. The Netherlands is known for tolerating cannabis, both medical and recreational. This gives it a reputation of a country where it will be possible to do business with Cannabis. Although local costs of doing business are higher in Curaçao, the research showed that the advantages outweigh these. The majority of the companies that have expressed their interest in starting Cannabis production in Curaçao, give these arguments as the most important reasons to consider their establishment.

Minister Camelia-Römer is cautious

Minister Camelia-Römer explains that the government will not impose limitations to the number of permits that can be granted. “As long as there is land available, the permits can be obtained. At the moment there are enough possibilities”. According to an economic impact study of the Ministry of Economic Development, this sector can create between 700 and 1.000 jobs, in the cultivation and processing. The Minister is a bit cautious about these figures, but even if the outcome is lower than projected, the impact will be significant. Another advantage of developing this industry in Curaçao is its spin off on the development of agriculture.

“The skills of modern farming technology that this project will bring about, can also be used for the development of green houses for profitable local cultivation of crops that are now imported”, says the minister.

Cannabis production in the Caribbean

The Caribbean has introduced adaptations to its legislation since 2015 to be able to make use of this industry. The general warning for Caribbean countries according to a report of the CARICOM is to ensure that development of this industry is premised on innovation and not unduly rely on the provision of raw products for industrialized countries. This advice is not a surprise given the historical examples of persistent poverty that occurred with the cultivation of sugar, banana, cocoa and other Caribbean crops and raw products.

With this measure CARICOM wants to avoid the typical practice of multinationals producing and exporting the raw material from the islands, while the higher added value activities take place in the industrialized countries and thus take away the Caribbean’s chance of making a higher profit. In those cases, the islands are left out of most of the technical knowledge and profits. In the report from its Regional Commission on Marijuana 2018, ‘Waiting to exhale – safeguarding our future through responsible socio-legal policy on marijuana’, CARICOM recommends the Caribbean countries to introduce legislation that forces the multinationals to share their knowledge with the producing country.

According to Daal, the new legal structure in Curaçao takes this into account. The permits are granted to local investors, or international companies with a local partner. This agrees with the laws of the World Health Organization (WHO) on the production of herbal based medicine. The license owner is required to train its staff to be able to handle the production. This starts from the moment the seeds are imported. The staff should be able to do all the work. From the start of the production process, till the end.



Technology driven production

The cultivation and production will take place in hygienic and safe environments as is mandatory for the production of medicine. Besides cultivation of the crop, the medical cannabis production also includes extracting the oil, processing, packaging, storing etc. The companies are forced to train the local staff to meet the high standards of the WHO, as they will not get permits to hire workers from abroad.

The new companies can produce the final product locally, but they can also sell the semi-finished product. “The focus is on export, but the core of the production will take place in Curaçao”, says Daal. “At this level we are dealing with registered medicine. It might become a challenge to get enough locals with the necessary skill set. You need several pharmacists when producing at this scale”. He thinks that even though the export of final products is to be preferred, the profit that can be made on the export of semifinished products and oils should not be underestimated. There is no preference incentive for a company that decides to go further in the production process to produce and export the final product. The production of only final products might require so many specialist workers that it’s questionable if Curaçao’s workforce would be able to fill that demand. According to the analysis, the project

will produce around 700 direct jobs in the first year. The projection of these number of jobs is based on the plans that have been submitted by the 15 interested investor groups who are all required to work with a local partner. The new law is expected to be accepted by Parliament in the first quarter of 2020. The local producers can sell their products only to other pharmaceutical companies. Registered medicine can only be sold at local pharmacies.

Protection and security of the farms

The farms will all be located in a gated physical site, for safety reasons. There will be a lot of control on the production. Most Cannabis based medicine has a low level of TSC, which is the substance that creates the feeling of high. The production will thus not be attractive for recreational purposes as they do not have the level to make you go high. The local companies will produce prescription drugs, mostly to relieve pain but not to cure illness. The products have not been fully tested and all their possible uses are not yet known. The products are now being used for relief of epilepsy, asthma and as a pain reliever. Scientists are still researching their usefulness in the cure of cancer. The Caribbean countries conducted consultations with different community and stakeholder groups. In Curaçao there were open consultation sessions at the University of Curaçao and presentations for the

Chamber of Commerce. The promoters of the project gave presentations during a local wellness fair and there were consultations with the local drugs prevention and management organization and the Cannabis Bureau in the Netherlands.

The Ministry of Economic Development conducted a research and the local inspection of medicine and the Inspector General gave expert advice on the project.

An advantage of being part of the Dutch Kingdom is that they already have institutions with experience with medicinal cannabis. They have permitted recreational use for years. Being part of the Dutch Kingdom makes Curaçao a serious competitor in the Caribbean. "Those that are in the hurricane zone do not have a way to protect their green houses or outside cultivation against these storms."

"With the correct legal structure Curaçao will have an advantage that one will not find easily".

Time table

The new law is expected to come into effect in the first half of 2020. 15 companies have already submitted their license request. The screening and acceptance process will be meticulous. The potential investors are finalizing their business cases. An independent committee consisting of representatives of different ministries will review and approve the requests. The Minister of Health creates the framework but will not be involved in the acceptance process. The local national laboratory will also be involved in this process. "It's important to remember that this is a medicine. Each plant is coded. They are being harvested in a controlled manner and laboratory tested on quality. The packaging process is the same as any other prescription medicine", says the Minister. The cultivation and production of medical cannabis in Curaçao will take place in controlled environment under strict regulations and control. "It will not be possible for everyone to sow some plants in their garden and after harvesting bring them to a main silo for packaging and sale", says the Minister.

The companies have to comply to all the WHO requirements for the production of cannabis-based medicine and will be submitted to inspection by the Health Department. If local farmers have serious intent to enter this business, the government will create the possibility to help them set up a cooperation and get the proper training to develop the necessary skills to produce cannabis at the standard imposed by the WHO. All interested parties can get the information package with information about the necessary requirements. These entrepreneurs can get help with their farming, which can also become a big business as long as high quality requirements are included from the beginning.

The companies can start their operations, the moment that they receive the permit. The first production is expected by the end of 2020. The first jobs will take off in the preparation phase as the projects will need people to prepare the land. Besides that, the companies cannot wait until the green houses are ready to begin with training for the personnel. As soon as the companies begin to run, they will need more workers. Most will work on a contractual basis. Due to the character of the business, it will not be wise to work with temporary workers.

Why in Curaçao?

From the viewpoint of the investor, Curaçao is attractive for its adequate climate, outside the hurricane belt location, political stability and logistics possibilities. There is access to a skilled workforce that can be upgraded to work in this industry. The Cannabis projects will make use of technology driven agriculture. Every plant will have a bar code. Aside from the impact on technology and direct employment, the Cannabis industry also creates spin off activities that will spur employment in transportation logistics. An increase is expected in the people who work in shipping and handling. As the production of the medicine takes place locally, this can benefit the local pharmacies as the medicine is registered and available in Curaçao. Persons who live in countries where the sale of medicinal cannabis is not yet regulated, can come to Curaçao to buy it. If their disease is chronic such as epilepsy, they can even consider relocating to the island.

Adapting legislations to new views

Caribbean standpoint on cannabis use is changing



Caribbean countries are softening their views and laws on the cannabis plant. In recent years several have introduced policies that decriminalize simple possession and allow programs for medical cannabis. Support for the policy reform has to do with both medical and economic benefits.

Jamaica started the movement in 2015 when it passed a law that decriminalizes possession of up to about fifty-six grams (two ounces) of cannabis. It also allows home cultivation of up to five plants and established an agency to regulate medical use.

The Cayman Islands followed the next year and approved imports and sales of cannabis extracts. Bermuda then changed its Misuse of Drugs Act in 2017. With this it decriminalized the possession of less than seven grams. Antigua and Barbuda accepted home cultivation of up to four plants and decriminalized the possession of up to fifteen grams in 2018. It also eliminated convictions for

possession at or under these amounts and is looking to legalize production for medical and religious purposes.

The US Virgin Islands legalized medical cannabis use in 2018. In that same year St. Vincent and the Grenadines accepted the legal medical cannabis industry and began to issue licenses for commercial cultivation in July 2019. The Prime Minister of Dominica made a plea in November 2019 for the decriminalization of simple possession. The government of Saint Kitts and Nevis is moving forward legislation, which could amend the criminalization of cannabis, erase past convictions, and set up a regime for its medical use.

Trinidad & Tobago are debating a Cannabis Control Bill and a Dangerous Drugs (Amendment) Bill. This will regulate the consumption, production, and distribution of cannabis, while establishing the framework for the industry. Curaçao is now also pending Parliamentary debates and acceptance of legislation reform on cannabis.



Views and the legal framework on cannabis use are clearly changing in the Caribbean. Important questions are who will benefit from this development and how will it shape the lives of the Caribbean people.

The CARICOM view

In 2018 the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), a trade bloc and coalition of twenty Caribbean countries, published a report that offers reasons for reviewing the cannabis related laws. Four years before, in 2014, the CARICOM members created a commission to explore the possibility of cannabis policy reform. They were deeply concerned that thousands of young persons throughout the region had suffered incarceration for marijuana use. They also worried that the inconsistent application of the law had led to deep resentment and non-cooperation with law enforcement agencies. The report that the CARICOM Regional Commission on Marijuana, released in 2018 suggested more reasons for loosening up on cannabis. There was the chance for economic progress and jobs and there was a concern that without action, the region could be left behind because of fast-paced global trends toward law reform. There were other concerns as well. The

Commission had undertaken national consultations in the CARICOM countries to find out the views of the CARICOM public. Commission members and policymakers attended packed public meetings in nine countries throughout the region. During these meetings, stakeholders of all kinds spoke about more issues besides medical marijuana, namely of social justice, human rights, economics, regional authority and their right to health. Supporters of cannabis policy reform talk of health and economic development. They point out that patients need access to affordable medicine and argue that revenue from the medical cannabis industry can spur economic progress in the Caribbean. A properly regulated medicinal cannabis industry can give relief to those seeking alternatives to conventional medicine and become an economic driver attracting new income. The CARICOM Report states that prohibition is preventing the region from taking advantage of medical research and economic opportunities in this industry. It also impedes access to medicine that can heal more effectively and cheaply than traditional ones. Some advocates argue that domestic cultivation could generate employment for locals but warn for the danger of exploitation.

The CARICOM report advises member states to be aware of tensions between small local farmers and large enterprises, including foreign companies. According to this report, small, landless farmers must be included in the development of land lease and licensing strategies.

The Jamaican government has taken this advice by heart. To help raise communities out of poverty and promote sustainable development, it is working with unlicensed farmers to help them transition into the regulated market, rather than punishing them for growing underground weed. This program focuses on community groups. Aside from safeguarding the authority and future development interests, the Commission suggests that industry development in the Caribbean should be based on innovation and not unduly rely on the provision of raw products.

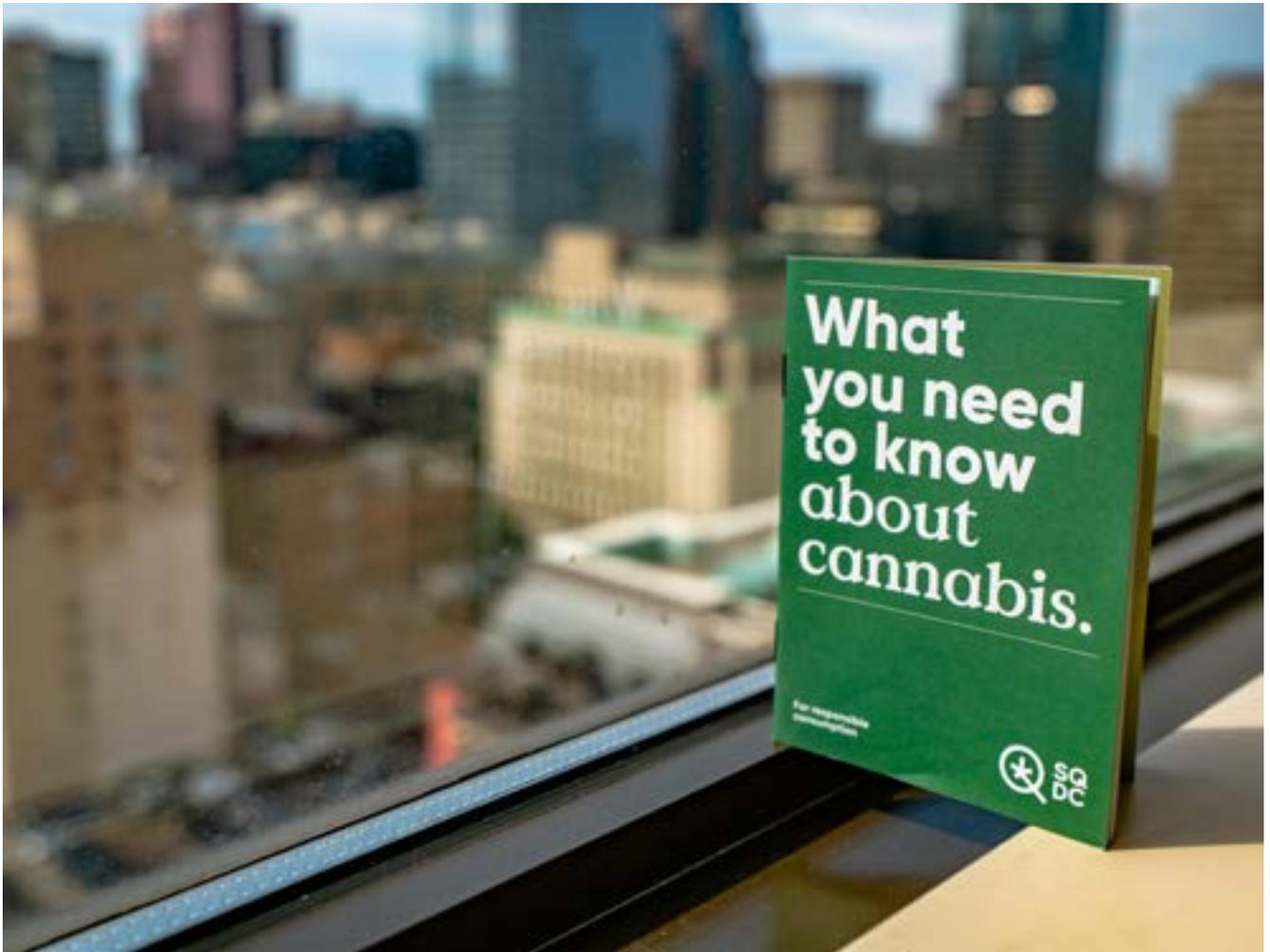
Such a concern is shared by nations throughout the Americas. In Colombia, lawmakers solidified the country's role in the global market by making a medical cannabis law that forces foreign companies to manufacture and innovate within its borders. With this, they ensured that Colombia would not be reduced to solely exporting the raw material. The CARICOM report suggests similar measures, warning that the 'liberalization and legal reform of marijuana cannot be undertaken in an ad hoc way, without a proper appreciation of the deep historical inequalities between CARICOM states, as a group of underdeveloped, often exploited nation-states, and companies from large, powerful nations interested in marijuana as an industry.'

The report states that while multinational corporations can provide significant capital investments, they have a tendency to limit the transfer of knowledge and technology in areas relating to production, processing, and research and development. Caribbean governments can make sure that policies encouraging such transfers are included in agreements with multinational corporations. Given the unique strains of cannabis in the region, the report encourages officials to craft legislation that offer protection of seeds and strains through intellectual

property mechanisms. According to the report, CARICOM must avoid the unequal patterns that were experienced in other trade arrangements and learn lessons from historical experiences with other crops and indigenous services. These include sugar, cocoa, bananas, offshore finance, even tourism. They existed within predatory relationships and too little returns for CARICOM peoples. The CARICOM concerns also account for the industry development in Curaçao.

Foreign investors

A large part of the foreign interest for this industry in the Caribbean is coming from Canada. Since the amendment of its laws in 2015, Jamaica has seen an influx of Canadian influence. In September 2018, Timeless Herbal Care became the first Jamaican company to legally export cannabis even though the cannabis Licensing Authority had not finalized its export-import framework. With the help of the Jamaican government, Timeless negotiated with Health Canada to export cannabis oil for an analysis of its chemical profile. The process involved acquiring an import permit from Health Canada, along with an export permit from Jamaica's Ministry of Health. The Canadian-based Jamaica Medical Cannabis Corporation Ltd. (JMCC) signed an agreement to invest \$2 million over a span of ten years, to catalog and preserve the island's native cannabis varieties. The farmers will not be compensated for providing their heritage strains and are expected to share them with Jamaica's National Foundation for the Development of Science and Technology. The JMCC has announced contracts to provide Jamaican cannabis to three Canadian limited partnerships, as well as letters of intent to supply seven more, all pending approval from Health Canada. Wiisag, a Canadian Indigenous cannabis company, last year announced a partnership with Jamaica's Westmoreland Hemp and Ganja Farmers Association. According to Wiisag it will offer funding, services, and management for the association's ten-acre pilot project to grow medical cannabis. Another company is Jacana, which has ties with the UK and Canada. Founded in 2017, the company has established a 100-acre farm in the largest parish in Jamaica.



This company focuses on medical markets in the beginning but might enter the adult-use market later on. Mota Ventures Corp, a Vancouver company which aims to become a low-cost producer and exporter of cannabis products globally, signed a letter of intent to acquire Jamaican cannabis grower and extractor Tropical Verde Coast Ltd. With this acquisition it will indirectly hold a 49% stake in Tropical Verde, which has license to produce cannabis for medicinal purposes in Jamaica. The Canadian Tree of Knowledge International Corp, which trades under the name TOKI, will be the first company to be cross-listed between the Canadian Securities Exchange (CSE) and the Jamaica Stock Exchange (JSE). TOKI, which already trades on the CSE, will be added to the JSE trading platform having passed all the regulatory hurdles for listing. It will become the first company to be cross listed on the Jamaica and Canada stock exchanges and the first medical

cannabis company to be listed on the JSE. With this move the company hopes to appeal to the Jamaican diaspora who may be looking for ways to invest in Jamaica. The company is expected to open its own medical cannabis clinic in Jamaica. In 2018, a group from Canada advised Antigua and Barbuda on draft legislation involving adult use and medical cannabis. The country's officials met with the group to learn about the steps required by the government to make possible the growing, harvesting, processing, and sale of medical cannabis. Bermuda's government is discussing possibilities with the Canadian Canopy Growth Corporation after it has announced that it will set up a regime for the domestic production of medical cannabis. Curaçao doesn't stay behind in this development. 15 international companies have already approached the Government with project proposals in the medicinal cannabis industry.

Interview with Jachmin Pinedo

Jachmin Pinedo, Curaçao's popular power woman inspires investors.

In 2019 Jachmin Pinedo, the popular local celebrity and businesswoman announced her newest multimillion investment project in Curaçao; the acquisition, remodeling and operating of Hotel Otrobanda. A hotel located at a prime spot in the city center and harbor area.

Under her direction, the hotel is expected to become a spectacular touristic investment and a catalyst for other investments in the 'other side' of the island's capital. Pinedo who started her business from scratch, shares her confidence in Curaçao's potential and explains the essence of her success. The new developments caused by the COVID-19 crisis did not affect her determination.

From the day the news spread that Pinedo was behind the acquisition of Hotel Otrobanda, this became an inspiration for local investors. People with properties in Otrobanda told her that they had their investment plans on hold due to the uncertain economic situation.

But the fact that she was going to develop the hotel, had motivated them to continue with their projects in the area. This made her realize the impact of her efforts and that she had actually created a trademark that people look up to. The expectation is that the new accomplishment will be comparable to her Radio and TV company and other business ventures. Even the former owner of the hotel felt relieved when he heard that Pinedo had become the new owner. He told her; you have made us proud with



your TV. We expect no less at Hotel Otrobanda. Pinedo's entrepreneurial spirit was triggered long before she started in the broadcasting business. She began working when she was 10 years of age, helping her mother in her business activities. She looks up to her mother who was an active self-made businesswoman in her days. Her business attitude served as Pinedo's model and created the standard that she sticks to until this day.

Pinedo was resolutely dedicated to the tasks given by her mother. When other kids were playing outside and having fun, being the oldest of the four kids, she often helped with her younger siblings. At the age of 18 she had her own business. At the core of her commercial success was her determination and seriousness. "I was very responsible in the way I attended my activities, like I still do in everything else". She later met her husband who has the same drive and together they develop their business activities.



Determination and dedication

Next to organizing events and selling clothing and jewelry, Pinedo started to present programs on a local radio station and soon had her own program on the local TV channel. She worked during 15 years at the local radio station Radio Korsou FM, before starting her own radio broadcasting company. During that time, she continued to organize events like parties, mothers' day celebrations and other shows. She can look back at successful events with both local and international artists, such as Nelson Ned and Pedro Fernandez.

One thing was sure, her events had to be special and stand out from the crowd. All her parties were a huge success. The customers expected that from her, and everybody would dress up to go to her shows. The parties were nice, the vibe was good, and the visitors had a good time. Consistency made Pinedo without a doubt a genuine influencer in Curaçao, which brings with it a lot of responsibility. "If I say that I am going to do something, I must keep my promise. My reputation is what makes me succeed. I have to cherish that".

The jewelry business grew from small scale mobile sales to the establishment of her jewelry store, GL Jewelry. After the Jewelry store, Pinedo opened her own Radio

transmission company, Radio Direct 107.1 FM. This was soon followed by a second channel Radio Direct 92.1 'Live'. She also ventured in real estate and bought Tesoro Plaza, the land and the building where the jewelry store and the radio station are located. The building also accommodates apartments and business units. The units on the ground level include a douche making them easy to transform in apartments in case the demand for stores, declines.

Have a back-up plan but take a decision!

Pinedo explains that in her business approach she always has a back-up plan. Her humble beginning thought her this. "When you take a step, it's between you and God and there's no way back. I take risks, but I also keep my feet firm on the ground". She is convinced that one cannot sit still because the economy is sloppy. "You must reinvent, change and do something else. No one will help you if they don't see that you are trying to help yourself".

When asked about the remark that she is considered a power woman, Pinedo makes clear that she is not an overnight success. "I am not a wonder woman. I always do my homework and contemplate my business ventures thoroughly. After having figured out the idea, I take the courage to create the plan and take the necessary actions. I have a lot of guts and don't let anything get



in my way. If I have made a proper business case and have concluded that it is a sound commercial activity, I go for it and so does my husband. His motto is, let's go for it, just cut the risks". The astute businesswoman doesn't let anyone upset her plans. "God will give you the strength when he sees that you want to succeed and that your intentions are good". Always remember to give back to your community. Pinedo explains how she deals with reactions from others. "People may project their fears upon you. It can be good to listen to their warnings though; they can help you to prevent mistakes. In life, we need people, but the final decision is always in your hands. Consider the threats but take a decision. That is the message that I always convey when I give a motivational speech". When she presented the idea of opening a TV station, people discouraged her. With the support of her husband, she used all the points that were presented to her as pitfalls, to develop precautions and decrease the risks. TV Direct has now been in the air for more than three years and is very successful.

24-hour TV

She started the TV channel on the 25th of August 2016 with only two local programs. She had boldly proclaimed that the TV would be airing 24 hours, but actually did not really know how to realize that, as she was then equipped

to make two programs, the news presentation and the morning show. This did not discourage her. After the official launching of the broadcasting on the 25th, she opened the following morning with the morning show *Mainta na TV Direct* with a lot of zest.

"I remember how I got up early, dressed up to come to the studio to show Curaçao its new Morning Show, with the certainty that this project was going to become a huge success". A live morning show, "with a lot of entertainment and a bit of news" was a longtime dream of the brave TV Director. She managed to fill in 24 hours due to good international relations and network. "When you do good, you will always get someone to help you" Pinedo explains. Years before she had assisted a Venezuelan TV company that wanted to outsource part of their operations. This created a friendship and they gave her a helping hand when she needed to fill in the programming that in the beginning consisted of mainly international programs. As time went by the company introduced more local productions and by now more than 80% of TV Directs' programming consists of local production.

Pinedo focuses on details. She was completely involved in the design and construction of the TV studio, including the decoration.



“I had an excellent understanding with the architect. I told him my plans and he created the studio according to my wishes”. The TV studio was already designed and ordered, when she saw a glass podium tv news studio. “I wanted that one, so I asked the supplier if he could import a similar model. But the price was too high”. Pinedo decided to ask the company abroad if they could design the podium for her. With the design she contacted a local producer who made the podium at one third of the cost.

From a micro business merchant on her way to becoming a local tycoon.

After opening the TV station, Pinedo was ready for her next venture. Being a person who likes to work with tourists, she always wanted to have a hotel. The same goes for her daughter who aspired a position in the management of a hotel after finishing her studies.

The opportunity to buy Otrobanda Hotel was thus almost like a sign. Pinedo heard about the sale of the hotel one week before the auction and could not realize the financing on time. But that auction did not materialize, and so she had the chance to bid in another occasion. For the second auction, Pinedo was all set, although it took another round for her to win the bid on August the 29th of 2019. According to Pinedo the announcement that her

company would invest in hotel Otrobanda was a relief for other businesses in the area.

“The sale created a constructive energy and the expectation that the project will have a positive impact on this part of the city. “It became the talk of the town and even the main topic on talk shows on competing radio stations. “The beauty is that they all applauded the plan. I am overwhelmed by these reactions and want to ask everyone to continue supporting this plan”.

People are also happy for the local investment as most of the local hotels are currently in hands of foreign investors. Hotel Otrobanda was sold for ± USD 7.1 mln. The remodeling requires another ± USD 4.9 mln. The financing comes from the local Banco di Caribe and the project is eligible for tax incentives. Pinedo’s daughter who has a master’s degree in management will take care of the daily operations and also forms part of the management team. The building is now being dismantled and will get a complete transformation and upgrading.

A USA company with experience in this field is developing the casino concept. The structure of the building is solid and does not need major improvements, but the casino has been stripped and will be enlarged. Pinedo has therefore acquired the adjacent ‘Jopi’ Building of which

the first floor will serve for the casino expansion. The remodeled hotel is expected to open before the end of this year. All the 45 rooms and restaurant will get a makeover. For this task she hired a well-known local architect David Bohorquez. The redesigned restaurant will consist of an air-conditioned and an open terrace area overlooking the harbor. One of the ideas is to replace the current canvas sunshade roof of the restaurant with a concrete one that will also serve as the floor of an upper deck. This surface can be used for parties and events.

This means a need for more parking spaces. Pinedo hopes that the government can help with that. Her company is currently renting a parking area with 60 parking spaces in front of the hotel for almost USD 8.000 a month from the Tauber Parking Area. Still, there is need for more parking possibilities. One thing Pinedo is certain of, the end result is going to be beautiful and Curaçao will be proud. This hotel is the closest to the quayside of the harbor and is one of the most picturesque locations on the island. It has a spectacular spot for taking pictures, with the Handelskade in the back. Hotel Otrobanda will become an attraction and the place where everyone wants to go.

Believe and invest in Curaçao

“I want to motivate our people to believe in ourselves and invest in this country”. Pinedo transmits an air of positive expectation and self-assurance. “People may want to leave the island, due to the economic and financial uncertainties. But I am not going anywhere. Our country has a lot of potential. As soon as you have a project and a reputation that creates trust, you must walk the talk and prove yourself”. She recaps that she had to work hard for her success and also had her ups and downs. “The point is that I get up every time and then I come back with more strength.

“I am human just like everybody else, but my determination and character make a difference. When I say that I am going to do something, you can count on it that it will happen. Or it must be because of a valid reason. For instance, a better solution”. She closes her ears for distractions and focusses on her goals. She enjoys working on her projects

and considers this very important. “If you do this against your will, you will be lost”. Pinedo works almost 24 hours a day. This does not stop during the weekends. “If you want to succeed, you must be willing to make the effort”.

Pinedo is known for her strong opinions in the news. She explains that she is not against anyone, but against certain policies. “It is not about the person, but about the topic”. She regularly gives suggestions for the development of the islands’ tourism. According to her Curaçao has a lot to offer tourist and good service is the key to keep them coming back. She also has some recommendations for business starters. “Don’t let people down. Especially if they believe in you. Fulfill your obligations.

Do not spend more than you have earned. If you turn over 10 guilden, you cannot take that amount as your income base without considering your costs. The company is yours, but the money is not. When you have fulfilled your obligations and paid the taxes, what is over is yours. And you have to live responsible”. Pinedo thinks that a lot of business failures have to do with this. The business itself is often ok, but the owners do not separate their private income from that of the company.

The Hotel Otrobanda project has also caught the attention of International investors, who are approaching her about this venture. According to her people from small countries, tend to think that they cannot succeed on their own. “As long as you believe in your country, you will attract more investors”. Pinedo considers herself a real patriot. In her business decisions she keeps the advancement of Curaçao in mind and thinks that her fellow citizens should also benefit from the project. She always surrounds herself by a team of people who support her. “When you find the right people to work with, take care of them and cherish them”.

“Believe in your country. Find out what you can do for your community. Stop looking at who helped you or not. If we as local investors can show that we have confidence in Curaçao, we will automatically attract foreign investors to our island”.

Arrival of new container handling cranes and start of waterfront development.

First phase of Master Plan St. Anna Bay



Santa Ana is the name of Curaçao's famous main port and not surprisingly, is also the name of the island's patron. Santa Anna Bay is at the strategic center of Curaçao's economy. This year marks the launching of an ambitious Master Plan for further development of the harbor including real estate projects and improvement of the container handling operations. Curaçao Port Authority (CPA) is in charge of that plan. The Master Plan prepared by CPA serves as an actionable strategic document guiding the realignment of the waterfront assets along St. Anna Bay. The Plan is the result of a series of interactions with relevant stakeholders in the community, downtown merchants, and the general public. Its main purpose is to put the waterfront to work for the social and economic benefit of the island.

The Master Plan covers four locations in the harbor area that are now under CPA administration. The first phase is implemented by the local company JCC Development N.V. and started this year. It includes a real estate project called THE WHARF that will be built on an area of 4,000 m² on Kleine Wharf (also known as Kop of Scharloo). The project comprises a complex of 35 luxury apartments with an investment of ANG 20 million. CPA will act as 'landlord' and keep ownership of the waterfront area. This first phase will also act as an incubator and promote development in the surrounding area.

Modernization of container handling

The acquisition of two new cranes supports the modernization efforts of the container handling operations at the Container Terminal in the harbour. The arrival of the new cranes took place in February at the same time as the start of the first phase of the Master Plan and reinforces the harbor development activities. The Panamax size cranes and related spare parts were ordered by the Curaçao Port Services B.V. This is the entity that takes care of the container handling. They will be used for modernizing the container handling operations at the Container Terminal in Curaçao. The supplier is Kalmar - Cargotec, a provider of cargo handling solutions and machinery. Curaçao Port Services chose Kalmar because of its reliability, technological expertise and wide service network.

The cranes are the so-called Ship-to-Shore (STS) cranes. Their delivery was originally expected by the end of 2019. Currently, Curaçao Port Services operates two Nelcon-Kalmar STS cranes with 400 meters total berth length. The new cranes are expected to improve the productivity, safety and eco-efficiency and at the same time decrease the maintenance costs of the port services. They have an outreach of 39 meters, under-spreader height of 32 meters and capacity of 40 tons under spreader for single lift operation.

A summary of the Master Plan plan including a short video is on the website of CPA: www.curports.com

#prosperityforall

Curaçao iGuide



In the mission to continue creating more ways to promote investment opportunities in Curaçao, the iGuide Curaçao has been launched. The Curaçao iGuide is a joint project of the Ministry of Economic Development of Curaçao, the Curaçao Investment & Export Promotion Agency (CINEX), the Caribbean Export Development Agency, CAIPA & UNCTAD.

The iGuide is an online investment guide that functions under the umbrella of the trusted international agency, UNCTAD in Collaboration with the International Chamber of Commerce. It is an important tool to position Curaçao and capture attention of potential investors.

UNCTAD and the International Chamber of Commerce built this platform from the investor's perspective. It has hands-on relevant information for investors. Everyone is invited to explore it. As it's a new tool, feedback is very much appreciated. So if there is something that needs an update or is missing, please feel free to contact vanessa.tore@gobiernu.cw.

The Curaçao information on iGuide is available in more than 100 languages.

[Click here](#) to reach Curaçao iGuide.

The importance of intercultural communication on foreign investment creation.

When communicating, the content of what is being expressed is not as important as how it's being communicated. As the French saying goes, 'c'est le ton qui fait la musique'. Here is where intercultural communication skills come into play. These are crucial to be effective in international business and includes both verbal- and non-verbal communication.

The Foreign Economic Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Economic Development welcomes the result of the graduation project of former student Ashanti Elisabeth who looked at the intercultural communication level at this Department during her internship in the spring of 2019. The International Business student of the University of Curaçao, graduated with a study about the impact of intercultural communication on foreign investment creation in Curaçao.

The department was interested in the outcome, as this could contribute to optimization of the intercultural communication skills of the team. This department is the main facilitator to attract foreign investors to the island. As such, having the proper communication skills is a must. The study gave valuable insight into the business culture profile of Curaçao, the department's stage of intercultural communication skills and its influence on the effectiveness in attracting foreign investors.

Intercultural communication and export development

Intercultural Communication plays a critical role in the development of exports. Marketing communication for



instance deals with culture management in the context of international marketing and export management. MEO is actively promoting exports from Curaçao and is now developing a national export strategy. The research covered the importance of intercultural communication for successful export development, to aid MEO with this strategy.

The study shows the impact of intercultural communication across cultures on foreign investment creation. It explains the extent to which intercultural communication of the Department can contribute to its improvement. Based on the research findings it can be concluded that intercultural communication, practiced by MEO, affects foreign investment creation in Curaçao and successful export development to a great extent. International business cannot be successful without

intercultural communication as one should know the cultural differences and adapt to the foreign market to effectively communicate and market products and services. In the context of international business, building relationships is essential and has a big impact on how the business proceeds. Related to this, the most important protocols and ethics are among others: respect, eye-contact, trust, honesty, right approach, meeting- and presentation protocols, dress code and open communication.

The research shows where the Department being an international trade facilitating agency, can upgrade intercultural communication. The team is aware of its importance and takes steps to prepare when going abroad. But MEO considers it also its responsibility to prepare local businesses that aspire international trading, in intercultural communication. The study provides an effective strategic communication plan as a guidance for negotiations and doing business with different cultures. The intercultural communication skills of both MEO and local businesses can be improved through training, seminars and workshops.

Curaçao's Business Profile

This study shows that Curaçao's Business Culture Profile has similarities with Jamaican and Dominican Republic's culture. This means that intercultural communication with these cultures/countries will go smoother as the countries have the most likenesses when it comes to their business culture. The results show that Curaçao's Business Culture Profile can be summarized as food-, dance and music lovers, meaning that, these ambiances are favorable when building business relationships or creating business networks.

MEO was recommended to create a strategic plan which includes intercultural communication skills training for the organization and intercultural communication workshops for local businesses. This strategic intercultural communication plan will improve the effectiveness in attracting foreign investors. Besides a literature review, the study included questionnaires and interviews to compare and connect with the literature information.



The questionnaires contained measurement elements of Geert Hofstede's 6 national dimensions theory to create a business culture profile for Curaçao. This enabled a better understanding of the local business culture, which is an important factor to identify possible adaptation needs to gain a competitive advantage when doing business internationally.

The acquisition of foreign investment is one of the important tasks that the Foreign Economic Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Economic Development of Curaçao (MEO) undertakes in its effort to stimulate the economy of Curaçao. The ability to have effective intercultural communication skills is fundamental in this endeavor. International Business student Ashanti Elisabeth looked at the impact of intercultural communication on the acquisition of foreign investors and made an assessment of the team's intercultural communication skills during her internship in the spring of 2019.

Virtual cooperation of Curaçao's young tech entrepreneurs.

CuraDAO evaluates pilot project



CuraDAO is an organization that was established in Curaçao in 2019 and started as an experiment of a group of young tech entrepreneurs. During a conference the organizers discussed what CuraDAO is all about and what they have accomplished during their pilot phase.

CuraDao is an online platform that allows organizations and persons to submit proposals for funding of projects. It has members. Those with voting power are allowed to vote on the funding requests. If passed the funds are transferred to the requester.

What differentiates CuraDao from common processes used by foundations is the fact that this is a virtual organization represented by rules programmed in a computer that is distributed, shared, transparent and called a Decentralized Autonomous Organization (DAO). All the funds are crypto currencies and the transaction records are maintained on a blockchain. A DAO is still largely a process in the making. It is effectively a business that uses an interconnected web to automate its processes. One of the organizations that received funding from CuraDao is Youth for Climate Curaçao, a group of teens working to educate the youth of Curaçao on pollution and climate change. They submitted a proposal and received USD 250 (equivalent to 1.8 Ethereum) to buy gloves, bags, jugs, and other materials to organize a big year's end cleanup at one of the local beaches in Curaçao.

[Click here](#) to Reach Curadao.



Curaçao entrepreneurs should make more use of RVO export incentives

Curaçao entrepreneurs are invited to make more use of the export incentives of the Dutch government agency Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland (RVO). The entrepreneurs were informed about these possibilities during an information session about doing business abroad, that the Ministry of Economic Development (MEO) hosted together with the RVO.

In its effort to support export activities of local entrepreneurs, the Foreign Economic Cooperation Department of the MEO, regularly hosts information events for local entrepreneurs. More than 25 local entrepreneurs participated at one in February where representatives of RVO and MEO, informed them about the latest developments regarding the RVO export subsidies and programs.

These programs are accessible since 2018 to Curaçao companies. One of the remarks that came forward during the gathering, addressed the need to adapt the criteria for project size that the RVO applies to the relatively larger companies in the Netherlands. The local entrepreneurs would like to see these more in line with the needs of

smaller sized projects in the Caribbean. The participants also expressed the importance to share success stories and the need for regular information sessions to inform the private sector in Curaçao.

Further information on upcoming sessions can be obtained via email: shereeta.ramcharan@gobiernu.cw



The photo shows Curaçao entrepreneurs listening attentively to Maikel Walker, Marcel Knoors, Regonda Bierens of the RVO and Shereeta Ramcharan & Sam Kruiner of the MEO.

[Click here](#) for more information.

MEO launches Path to Market tool.



The Ministry of Economic Development (MEO) used the National Export Awareness Week event to launch a new tool to support Curaçao exporters with their plans to enter new international markets.

The Path to market, Negoshi Repúblika Dominikana i hopi mas, is a tool for Curaçao's Micro, Small and Mediumsized Enterprises to get information, training and support to enter the market in the Dominican Republic and Beyond! All Curaçao SME's are invited to join and make use of this tool to help build a bridge for a successful future, post-Covid-19.

The Path to market, Negoshi Repúblika Dominikana i hopi mas, is a collaboration of the MEO, CINEX and NEX Consulting in the Dominican Republic!

For more information: pathtomarkets.com

Join for free now!

Reach your potential

reach-curaçao.com

