In the near future, you will sign a Culture Covenant for the period 2022-2025 with the policy department of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. I would like to take this opportunity to inform you about one of the areas covered by this covenant: heritage participation under the Faro Convention.

The Faro Convention, drawn up in 2005 under the auspices of the Council of Europe, is a special kind of heritage convention. Whereas most other international conventions in this field are concerned with heritage conservation and professional care for our heritage, the Faro Convention focuses on humanity and society. Its full title is *The Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*.

The Dutch government intends to sign and ratify the convention on behalf of the Caribbean and European Netherlands. The other countries in the Kingdom of the Netherlands will be asked whether they wish the application of the convention to be extended to them. We are eager to discuss the significance of this convention and the possible consequences of ratification with the representative for culture and the relevant department(s) of the public body.

The Faro Convention emphasizes the importance of giving communities access to heritage, enabling them to determine what heritage means to them, to identify and shape their own heritage, to have control or shared control over their heritage and to feel responsible for its management and conservation. This encompasses intangible, movable, built, landscaped and archaeological heritage and historical archives. The wording of the convention calls on us to consider why we conserve heritage, who we are conserving it for, and how these people engage with heritage. Not only is this in keeping with the values of a democratic society but it also helps strengthen democracy. The convention also highlights many of the other roles that heritage can fulfil, such as contributing to human wellbeing and social cohesion, providing a source of income, and acting as a carrier of spatial quality.

The Faro Convention is what is known as a framework convention. This means that its provisions do not constitute legal obligations but serve as guidelines for policy. Each country is therefore free to come up with its own translation and interpretation of the convention. With this in mind, the Dutch government wants to begin by examining the extent to which the concepts of the Faro Convention are already part of how we practise heritage and how it can serve as a catalyst for further developing our approach. The government has asked the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands to research these possibilities. The Agency’s first step was to establish the Faro programme team.

An initial survey has now been carried out for the European Netherlands and an implementation agenda is currently being drawn up in collaboration with the heritage field. This exploratory phase, which centres on the applicability of the convention, will now be followed up in the Caribbean Netherlands. The policy department of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has commissioned the Agency to explore how the Faro mindset corresponds to existing heritage practice in the Caribbean Netherlands and to identify the ambitions of government bodies and partners in the heritage field. What lies within reach, what is further removed at present and how can we work together to achieve progress?

The implementation agenda will set out the ambitions of the field as regards implementing the convention, how it wishes to approach this task and what the Ministry can do to provide support. The implementation agenda will be presented to the State Secretary for Culture and Media, who will then determine how policy and financial resources can be deployed to support the ambitions of the heritage field. The results of this exploratory study can then become part of the agenda to be drawn up as an appendix to the Culture Covenant soon to be adopted by the Ministry and the Caribbean Netherlands.

In cooperation with the National Office for the Caribbean Netherlands and the Ministry, we will contact your official representatives, not only those responsible for culture but also for spatial planning, archaeology and historical monuments. We would like to engage them in discussions on how best to inform you and join you in shaping your own exploratory study for the Caribbean Netherlands. For example, this could take the form of roundtable discussions with government bodies and heritage partners, and/or further developing existing practices, possibly in cooperation with the national cultural foundations.

We are curious to hear your views and look forward to discussing these matters with you.

Kind regards,

Cultural Heritage Agency, Faro Programme

Michaela Hanssen

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