



**WINDWARD ISLANDS CIVIL SERVANTS UNION-
PRIVATE SECTOR UNION (WICSU-PSU)**

Established in 1979; Affiliates: W.I.C.L.U.; C.C.L.; C.P.S.A.; P.S.I. & A.C.O.M.
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November 10, 2025

Honorable Dr. Luc Mercelina
Prime Minister and Minister of General Affairs

The Council of Ministers
Government Administration Building
Soualuga Boulevard #1,
Pond Island, St. Maarten

VIA EMAIL: wicsu-psu@outlook.com

Ref. Nr.: SCVC/WB1125/860c

Subject: Response to Your Letter Dated November 7, 2025, and Submission of revised Commitment Letter

Honorable Prime Minister,

The Union hereby acknowledges receipt of your letter dated November 7, 2025. After careful review and consultation with the members of both the Fire Department and the Ambulance Department, we must respectfully convey that the members collectively disagree with the position outlined in your correspondence specifically, the assertion that a commitment conveyed via text or written message can substitute for a formally signed commitment letter.

The position of both departments remains clear: if the Government agrees to the requests presented, there should be no obstacle to signing the commitment letter. This formality is particularly important given the longstanding mistrust that has existed and has further escalated due to recent developments. Consequently, members have requested additional commitments to their initial proposal, as the absence of a signed commitment has led to multiple interpretations and ongoing uncertainty.

President: Sharon Cangieter
Secretary General: Jaghaira Lioe-A-Tjam
Treasurer: Francisco Mariana

Women's Committee
Chair – Julia Solognier

Your letter referenced the existence of a placement committee. However, the Fire Chief has confirmed that, although he requested the establishment of such a committee, he has not received any formal follow-up communication confirming its creation or outlining its function. This lack of clarity continues to fuel confusion and mistrust within the ranks.

Without a signed commitment letter confirming that the placement process will be made retroactive, there remains a real risk that members will once again be informed just as in the May 5, 2025, meeting that there is no written proof supporting retroactive placement or payment. The justification provided at that time was that the function book, enacted in 2025, could only take effect from that date.

During the meeting of August 15, 2025, members presented written documentation dating back to 2003, signed by then-Lieutenant Governor Mr. Richards. This was dismissed as non-binding. The Union subsequently presented the National Decree of the Government of Sint Maarten containing rules regarding the appointment and promotion requirements of fire brigade personnel, valid from March 3, 2017, and retroactive to October 10, 2010.

This document was submitted twice, first to the negotiators and again as an attachment in our communiqué of November 5, 2025. Despite this, there has been no formal acknowledgment or acceptance of this legal instrument, which clearly governs the placement and promotion framework of the Fire Department.

The continued assertion that “agreement has been given in writing” does not constitute an official or binding agreement. Moreover, given the current status of the function book, even the proposed placements “scheduled to begin shortly,” as mentioned in your correspondence leave several critical questions unanswered.

This situation directly contradicts the understanding reached with the Union regarding why the function book was permitted to move forward. At the request of the Fire Chief, the Union agreed through the CCSU process to allow the book to be implemented despite its known shortcomings, in order to ensure that retirees and near-retirees could access their rightful benefits. The agreement at that time was that the function book would be revisited within three years to correct any discrepancies.

To clarify, the agreement was not that the revision would occur *after* three years, but rather that corrections could begin *at any point within* the three-year period. These corrections could begin immediately. As history shows, the finalization and amendment of function books have typically taken a considerable amount of time to be enacted or corrected. Unfortunately, the agreement made within the CCSU prior to the legalization and enactment of the Function Book is not reflected in any of the official documentation. This omission marked the beginning of the Go-Slow action on April 19, 2025, and reignited mistrust among members.

It is now being stated that retroactive application is “not possible” due to the date of promulgation of the function book. This represents a breach of trust and underscores why a signed commitment is indispensable before any further steps are taken.

In previous correspondence, it was also indicated that this proposal constituted a new submission for the negotiation team mandated to determine the way forward. The Union wishes to reiterate that the present situation originated from the non-retroactive implementation of the function book. It must be emphasized that there was no formal, signed agreement stipulating that retroactivity would be applied.

By definition, negotiations are “a discussion aimed at reaching an agreement.” Accordingly, during the meeting with the designated negotiation team comprising one representative from your Cabinet and another from the Ministry of Finance the Union introduced this matter as an initial point of discussion. However, it became apparent that the representatives had arrived with predetermined positions and were therefore unprepared to address this particular issue, as it did not appear to be part of their prepared agenda.

The principal objective of the meeting was to deliberate on the draft covenant submitted by the Fire Department. Nevertheless, given that the issue of retroactivity remained unresolved from prior discussions, it was appropriately reintroduced as a necessary discussion point to ensure meaningful progress.

While the Union and its members were prepared to proceed with negotiations, it must be noted that the Go-Slow action remained in effect. It was therefore difficult to advance discussions on other matters while the principal issue the proverbial “elephant in the room” remained unaddressed.

The Union is also aware of a statement being circulated alleging that “the Union dropped the ball regarding the Fire Department’s function book.” Attached for your reference are communications sent to the CCSU that clearly refute this allegation. Furthermore, the Fire Chief can confirm that this statement is not factual.

While there may be various assumptions and interpretations of past events, one truth remains clear: this situation was inherited, not created, by your administration. Likewise, I too inherited this matter as Union President. However, as leaders, we both share a duty not to dwell on the past but to resolve the challenges that confront us.

As I stated in a previous meeting, “We are in the same boat; how we steer it determines whether we reach the same destination or drift apart.” I reiterate that sentiment today.

It appears that the full complexity of this issue may not yet be fully understood. The Union therefore renews its proposal to engage a neutral mediator to assist both the Government and the Union in reaching an amicable and transparent resolution.

The Union together with the Fire and Ambulance Departments remains fully prepared to bring this impasse to a peaceful resolution. However, if a signed commitment letter is not received within 24 hours, members from both the public and private sectors have indicated their readiness to stand in full solidarity with their colleagues from the Fire and Ambulance Departments.

The Union recognizes that within organizational hierarchies, workers are often viewed as being on a certain level within the system. However, the WICSU-PSU does not look down on its members. We are here to respect, represent, and acknowledge the hard work and unwavering commitment these men and women demonstrate every single day for the people of Sint Maarten even when they are perceived as being "below the level of the regime."

Their dedication, professionalism, and sacrifice elevate them beyond any formal classification or rank. It is precisely because of their integrity and service that the Union insists they be treated with fairness, transparency, and respect.

The men and women of the Fire and Ambulance Departments are far from ordinary employees they are highly skilled professionals who safeguard the lives, property, and safety of the people of Sint Maarten. Even while working under severe understaffing, with grievances unaddressed and often feeling undervalued, they continue to rise to every challenge and "make it happen." Their unwavering dedication demands not only respect but also written, transparent, and enforceable commitments not verbal assurances that allow for ambiguity or reinterpretation.

The WICSU-PSU finds it necessary to recall the historical discussions and events that brought us to this point, as time seems to have clouded collective memory of how this matter began and where it presently stands. Hence, the detailed explanation above. The Union and its members stand ready to move forward in good faith. We therefore look forward to your favorable and timely response so that calm, trust, and mutual respect may be restored.

Attached is the revised Commitment Letter, which includes the three original points and the following additional requests:

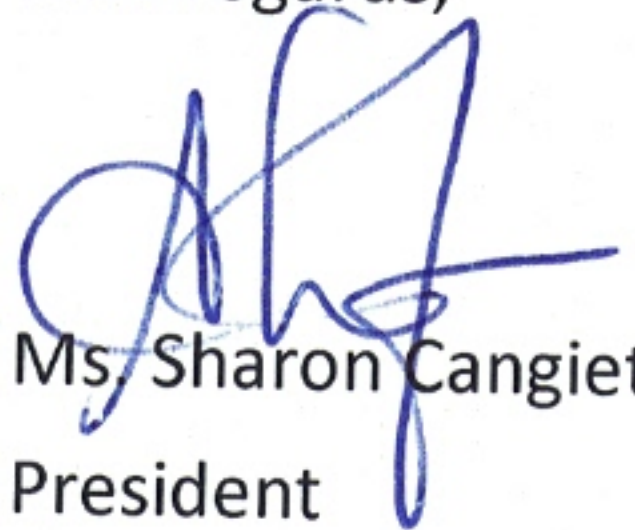
- Agreement and confirmation of the date by which retroactive placement and payment will be formally acknowledged.
- Acknowledgment of Correction Page of the Function Book 2025 for the Fire and ICT Departments, regarding the implementation of the Function Book registered in No. 08 of 2025.
- Letter to the CCSU regarding the union's knowledge of the function Book
- Agreement to the assignment of a neutral mediator, reflective of the agreement made on April 29, 2025, and ratified in the meetings of May 5 and August 15, 2025,
- The relevant correspondence from the members of the Fire Department outlining the circumstances that precipitated the Go-Slow.

The members of the union WICSU-PSU are requesting a response by no later than Wednesday, November 12, 2025, at 5pm.

Enclosed for your urgent attention:

1. Attachment 1: Position Members of the Fire Department to the Union and Fire Chief
2. Attachment 2: Follow-up on pending response from Minister of General Affairs
3. Attachment 3: Letter to CCSU inquiry about Fire Department Function Book
4. Attachment 4: Commitment Letter
5. Attachment 5: AB 2025 no. 7 – Landsbesluit, houdende algemene maatregelen, van de 4^{de} februari 2025 tot wijziging van het Organisatiebesluit Algemene Zaken

Kind regards,



Ms. Sharon Cangieter
President

C.c. Honorable Minister of Finance – Minister Gumbs
Honorable Minister of Justice – Minister Tackling
Fire Chief – Mr. C. Richardson
Department Head Ambulance – Mr. C. Richardson
WICSU-PSU Board Members
C.C.S.U. Secretariat
WICSU-PSU Fire and Ambulance Members