

Jutta Urpilainen
Commissioner for International Partnerships
European Commission
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels

Brussels, 17 April 2020

Concerns: Exceptional support fund for Overseas Countries and Territories

Dear Commissioner Urpilainen,

Today the European Parliament has adopted its resolution on the COVID-19 situation. As part of this resolution, the European Parliament has called for the creation of an exceptional support fund for Overseas Countries and Territories of the European Union. The economy of most of these islands heavily relies on the tourism sector, making these islands disproportionately vulnerable to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The exceptional support fund should contain sufficient means to assist OCTs. We are asking you to ensure that the allocation of these funds will be carried out in a proportional way and that funds should be earmarked in advance for OCTs.

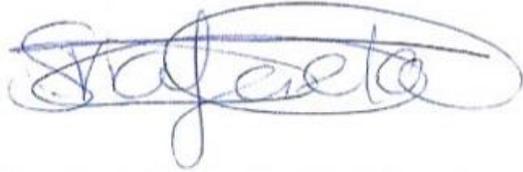
The situation in many OCTs is dire. With income from tourism having come to a halt, these islands are looking at unemployment figures up to 50%. Therefore, we ask you to conduct a swift assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, before allocating funds. Furthermore, we ask you to assist these OCTs with a simplified and swift procedure that will enable them to rapidly counter and mitigate the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The latter is of critical importance given the fact that not all of the OCTs have a civil service large enough to successfully complete the normally complex procedures for EU-funding, while also allocating the required resources to combatting the direct effects of the COVID-19 outbreak.

We are asking you to make the exceptional support fund also directly accessible to NGOs that are already active in OCTs. Many of these have a proven track record, for instance on combatting the consequences of hurricanes and can now directly deliver humanitarian aid. Some of them are already delivering humanitarian aid, albeit without sufficient support.

The citizens of OCTs are EU-citizens and vote in European elections. They are our ambassadors in many corners of the world and they deserve the Union's full support during these times of crisis.

Yours sincerely,

Samira Rafaela



Stéphane Bijoux



Members of the European Parliament

CC:

Mme Annick Girardin, Ministre des Outre-mer (France)
Mr Raymond Knops, State Secretary for the Interior and Kingdom Relations (Netherlands)
Ms Evelyn C. Wever-Croes, Prime Minister of Aruba
Mr Eugene Rhuggenaath, Prime Minister of Curaçao
Ms Silveria E. Jacobs, Prime Minister of Sint Maarten
Mr Edison Rijna, Island Governor of Bonaire
Mr Marnix van Rij, Government Commissioner of Sint Eustatius
Mr Jonathan Johnson, Island Governor of Saba
Mr Thierry Santa, Président du Gouvernement de Nouvelle-Calédonie
Mr Edouard Fritch, Président de la Polynésie française
Mr Bruno Magras, Président de la collectivité de Saint-Barthélemy
Mr Stéphane Lenormand, Président du Conseil territorial de Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon
Mr Atoloto Kolokilagi, Président de l'Assemblée territoriale de Wallis et Futuna
Mme Evelyne Decors, Préfet des Terres Australes et Antarctiques Françaises