

St. Maarten has to set up Gaming Control Board

The Hague – Dutch State Secretary of Kingdom Relations Ank Bijleveld-Schouten will urge St. Maarten's Executive Council to establish a Gaming Control Board (GCB).

The State Secretary said this in a letter to the Second Chamber on Tuesday. Members of Parliament's Permanent Committee of Antillean and Aruban Affairs NAAZ had sought clarity on the ownership of casinos on St. Maarten.

Bijleveld-Schouten explained that permits and supervision of casinos was an affair of the island territory. Casinos on St. Maarten have the legal format of a limited liability company, an N.V., and no information is kept about the shareholders of N.V.'s in the public registers of the local Chamber of Commerce, she said.

The State Secretary lamented that after years of discussions, the island still hasn't set up a Gaming Control Board which would be supervising the fourteen casinos on the island. Curaçao has a GCB. "I will press on St. Maarten's Executive Council to make this happen," she stated.

The establishment of a supervisory body is a component of the measures that have to be taken based on international agreements relating to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Complying with FATF's recommendations is one of the criteria that St. Maarten needs to meet to acquire country status in the Dutch Kingdom, concluded Bijleveld-Schouten.

Supervision is important since casinos hold a particular attraction to money launderers.

Money laundering through traditional casinos has been growing at an "alarming rate," it was stated in the 2008 International

Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) of the US State Department. The Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, with respectively 30 and 11 casinos, were not among the 57 countries mentioned on the "blacklist" of the US State Department. Homeless persons, among others.