

Religious Curaçao, rituals and traditions

Speech by Mr. Reynaert on the occasion of the official
opening of the photo exhibition by
Ms. Sinaya Wolfert

Centrale Bank van Curaçao en Sint Maarten

February 3, 2011

His Excellency the Governor of Curaçao,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you today to the opening of the exhibition “Religious Curaçao, rituals and traditions” by Sinaya Wolfert. It is our belief that art is an important pillar for acceptance of cultural diversity, social cohesion and hence sustainable development of society. It is for that reason that the Central bank has agreed to host this exhibition and that the Bank has supported our local artists for many years, as evidenced by, among other things, our extensive local arts collection.

Today’s exhibition includes a selection of photographs from Sinaya’s book titled “Religious Curaçao, rituals and traditions”. This exhibition has already been held in “De Melkweg Galerie” in Amsterdam. The Central Bank of Curaçao and Sint Maarten is pleased to now host this exhibition *in Curaçao*.

In this exhibition Sinaya focuses on one of the cornerstones of our Curaçao society, religious freedom. Our community consists of people from different religious backgrounds, including Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam. It is within the context of our long history of freedom of religion, that the religious diversity in Curaçao has had an important impact on our culture and the openness and friendliness of our people towards others.

While Curaçao is characterized by religious tolerance and mutual respect, religion and ethnicity have throughout history also been sources of conflict within many societies and between many countries. Unfortunately, over the past decade, we have observed a surge in religious intolerance and radicalism in the world that has resulted in, among other things, conflicts and even increased terrorism. I believe that Curaçao can serve

as an example to other countries, of how people from different backgrounds, ethnic or religious, can live together peacefully.

Ladies and gentlemen. Sinaya's exhibition shows us many aspects of religious rituals and traditions in Curaçao, some of them perhaps unknown to us until now. Therefore, I recommend that everyone in Curacao visit this exhibition, because it explores different aspects of our cultural and religious diversity, and I am therefore pleased to hereby pronounce its official opening.

Thank you.