

## **INTRODUCTION ON BONAIRE**

The Netherlands Antilles, forming part of the Caribbean Archipelago, consist of the Leeward Islands and the Windward islands.

Bonaire is one of the islands of the Leeward Dutch Antilles. The capital is Kralendijk. The distinction between the Windward and Leeward Island dates back to the time of the transatlantic sailing and regard the location of the islands to the northeast trade winds.

### **1.1 Location and Climate**

The Leeward Islands, Curacao and Bonaire are located at 12° N and between 68° and 70° W. They lie at a distance of 30 to 90 km from the coast of South America. The Windward Islands, Saba, Sint Eustatius and the southern part of Sint Maarten (SSS) lie at 18° N and 63° W. The distance between the Windward and Leeward islands is 900 km.

Bonaire is located 30 miles (46 km) east from Curacao, 50 miles (80 km) north of Venezuela and 86 miles (129 km) east from Aruba. The total area in square kilometers is 288 and the population density per square kilometer is 48.

The capital of Bonaire is Kralendijk. Bonaire enjoys a mild tropical climate, fairly constant throughout the year.

### **1.2 Short History**

The Arawacs inhabited the island of Bonaire. In 1499 the Leeward Islands were “discovered” by the Spaniard Alonzo de Ojeda. Bonaire and Curacao were taken over by the Dutch in 1634. The Dutch Parliament enacted the first constitution of the Netherlands Antilles in 1865. This constitution has been revised several times. The most important revision was that of 1954, which resulted in the establishment of so called “Statute” This is the principal legal act within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which regulates internal self-government for the island of the Netherlands Antilles.

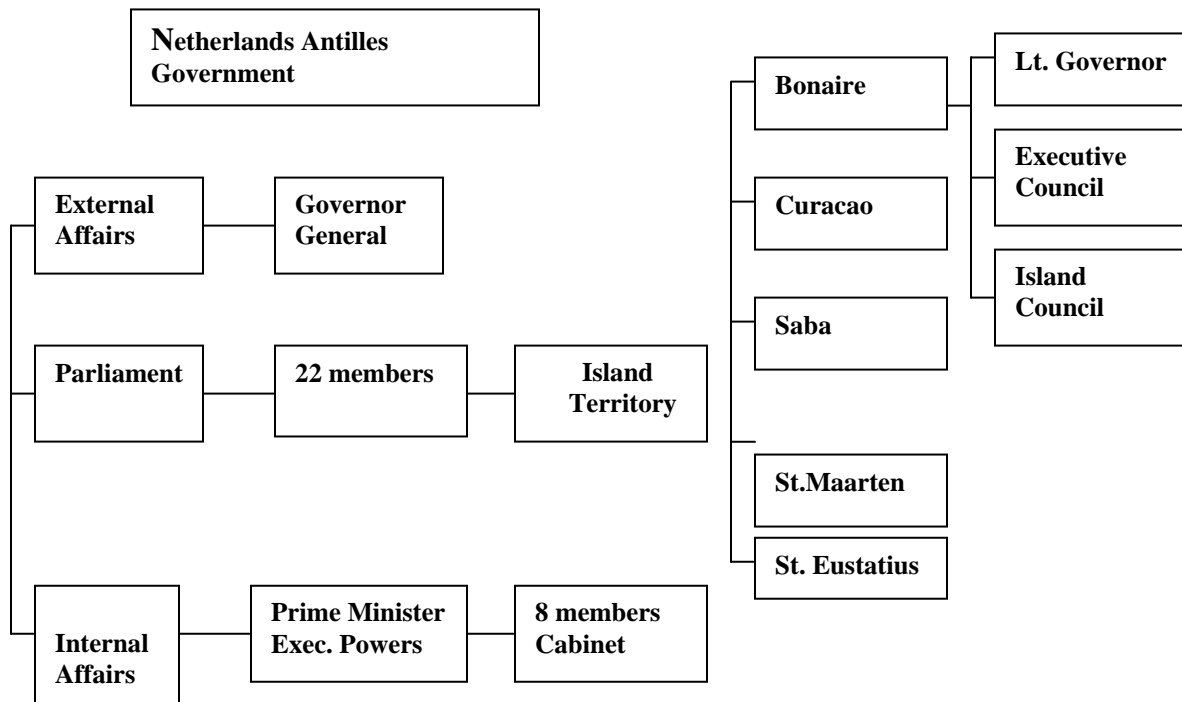
### **1.3 Actual Constitution**

The Netherlands Antilles forms an integral part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Sovereign of the Kingdom is head of the State and is represented in the Netherlands Antilles by the Governor. The Governor with the legislative body called the “Staten”; consisting of 22 members, form the legislative power. The Governor with the Council of Ministers forms the Central Government, with executive power in internal affairs.

The executive power in external affairs rests with the Council of Ministers of the Kingdom. The Minister Plenipotentiary, who has full voting power, represents the Netherlands Antilles in this Council.

Besides the central government each islands has its executive Council, Island Council and a Lieutenant Governor. The island government administers the domestic affairs within the island territory as stipulated in the Constitution of the Islands Regulation (ERNA).

The Island territory's Government is finally subject to and invariably interacts with the central government in Willemstad Curacao, and the kingdom government in The Hague, Holland. The Island territory's limited self-government is outlined in the ERNA and can be amended by a Central Government ordinance (federal ordinance). This has to be approved by the kingdom government, led by the Netherlands. The main responsibilities of Central government include the introduction and passing of laws on the levying of taxes. The local governments have the right to propose additional subjects that should be determined by the local government ordinance or those that should not belong to its care or should be regulated by parliament. The primary governing bodies in the territory are the Island Council, the Executive Council, and the Office of the lieutenant Governor. All international affairs for the Netherlands Antilles falls under the auspicious and responsibility of the kingdom government of the Netherlands.



## 1.4 Population

Population figures are available from different sources. The continuous registration of births, deaths and arrivals and departures takes place at the island registry offices. These figures concern only the legal population. Other sources of population figures are the population censuses. The population of Bonaire was till 31 January 2003, 13832<sup>1</sup> inhabitants. Most of the inhabitants are concentrated around Kralendijk. The population has a variety of ethnical background.

On Bonaire fifty three per cent of the population currently residing on Bonaire was born locally, which means that nearly fifty percent of persons is born abroad.

The number of persons residing on Bonaire with a Dutch nationality is 86 per cent. In the 14 per cent of non-Antillean the distribution various over different nationalities like Dominicans, Venezuelans, Colombians and Peruvians.

### 1. Total Population by nationality and sex

Nationality	Male	Female	Total
Dutch	5496	5308	10804
American (US resident)	142	128	270
Argentinean	5	4	9
Australian	0	1	1
Barbadian	1	0	1
Brazilian	3	4	7
Belgian	12	7	19
English (UK resident)	16	12	28
Residents of BRD	22	19	41
Citizens of Dom.Rep.	215	258	473
Citizens of Trinidad & Tobago	11	4	15
Indian	12	4	16
Dominican	0	2	2
Canadian	13	17	30
Costa Rican	6	0	6
Cuban	9	4	13
Chilean	6	1	7
	180	196	376

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Colombian	53	26	79
Chinese	19	4	23
Ecuadorian	0	1	1
Finnish	5	5	10
French	3	1	4
Filipino	11	11	22
Guyanese	14	29	43
Haitian	1	1	2
Honduran	15	12	27
Italian	0	1	1
Citizens of Iceland	2	2	4
Jamaican	10	8	18
Lebanese	1	1	2
Moroccan	3	4	7
Norwegian	49	9	58
Portugese	98	71	169
Peruvian	6	1	7
Spanish	1	0	1
Salvador	47	58	105
Suriname	1	0	1
Tsjechian	1	1	2
Uruguayan	354	198	552
Venezuelan	5	4	9
Zweedse	6	9	15
Swiss	2	1	3
South Africa	1	0	1
Slovaks			
	<b>6857</b>	<b>6427</b>	<b>13284</b>
<b>Total</b>			

Source: Island Registry, January 2003

## 1.5 Households

There are 3,677 households in Bonaire. The average household size of 2.9. Thirty per cent of the households is female headed in 15 per cent of those households the head of the households has a partner (husband or cohabitant). In the household with a male head 70 per cent has a partner.

### 2. Some characteristics of households, Bonaire – in %

	2001
Household size (%)	
1 person	20.6
2 persons	25.5
3 persons	20.6
4 persons	18.2
5 persons	8.1
6 or more	7.0
Total	100.0
Average household size (number of persons)	2.9
Nuclear families (in %):	70.8
one nuclear family	4.2
two or more nuclear families	25.0
no nuclear families	
Total	100.0
Head (in %)	
male	70.0
female	30.0
Total	100.0

Source: Fourth Population and Housing Census, 2001

## 1.6 Language

The language usually spoken on the island of Bonaire is Papiamentu, which is a Creole one with elements of the African, Portuguese, Spanish, English and Dutch Language. In the vast majority of the households, Papiamentu is the most spoken 72.6%.

The official language is Dutch, although at different formal occasions the local language is being used more and more.

### 3. Language spoken most in the household, Bonaire, 2001

<b>Language</b>	<b>in %</b>
<b>Papiamentu</b>	<b>72.6</b>
<b>Spanish</b>	<b>11.5</b>
<b>Dutch</b>	<b>10.5</b>
<b>English</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>Chinese</b>	<b>0.7</b>
<b>Portuguese</b>	<b>0.2</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Fourth Population and Household Census, 2001