

**Speech of the Minister of Education and Culture  
Minister of Public health and Social Development  
On the occasion of the signing of the financial agreement for the Academy hotel.**

Willemstad, 12.05.'08

**Success occurs when preparedness meets opportunity.**

The opportunity is here, it is the growing tourism industry in Curacao and the new tourism locations in building process generating employment for more than 2500 people in the next five years.

The preparation to meet this opportunity with success was made in 2006 when the deltaplanpartnership was signed between the Chatta and the minister of education.

This deltaplan public private partnership is based on the vision that professional education and the private sector are two sides of the same coin and real life training is the only way to guarantee high quality competent professionals. In April State Secretary Ms Ank Bijleveld agreed on the petition of the minister of education to finance this project with EUR 500,000 (NAf 1.2 mln). In addition my ministry of education has also agreed to participate with 109.000 guilders.

So you see that the Academy hotel is not an incident but the product of an explicit vision to make sure we are prepared to meet the opportunity of the growing tourism industry.

I believe in excellence. Those who know me know my dream that some day my country will not be judged by it's physical size but by the quality of the competence of my people.

With the Academy hotel we aim to provide or young people with practical as well as theoretical training and teach them to bear responsibility in everyday work situations. By putting this training center under the responsibility of the Chata, we guarantee that the sector itself is involved in creating excellent workers.

It was not an easy task to join the schools and school boards, as providers of the students, in an agreement with the hotel and tourism industry for the Academy hotel. It was like making the planets mars and Venus come together. This difficult task was however successfully acomplished trough the skillful intervention and mediation of my department under the management of Hans van de Straaten.

The timing could not be more perfect, because just last week Parliament voted for the vsbo and sbo education law, thus formalizing legally our vocational education. The diplomas of our vsbo and sbo students, have now legal bases. In this law we have also included flexible education, thus creating the possibility for students, were this is needed, to be in training for 60% of the time and be in school for only 1 or 2 days. This fits perfectly in the concept of the Academy hotel.

Ladies and gentleman I have every reason to believe that our local workers will soon be the best trained hospitality workers and our Academy hotel a model in its kind.

I thank you for being here to witness the signing of the financial agreement for this historic partnership.