



## Open letter to:

The Executive Council of St. Eustatius  
Government Guesthouse  
Oranjestad  
St. Eustatius, Dutch Caribbean

St. Eustatius, July 17, 2011

Honorable members of the Executive Council,

It is with great concern that we have been following the developments around the plans of NuStar Energy L.P. for a second oil terminal in the area known as The Farm. This concern stems not only from the plans themselves but also from their consequences and effects and from the way they are dealt with.

Building the new oil terminal on the location desired by NuStar will heavily impact on a very valuable historical site. The slave burials on the former plantation of Benners will be destroyed. Oil tanks will take their place. This shows disrespect for a people who suffered hardships inflicted upon them by another people. Even after their death, they might now not be left in peace. That would amount to a crime on top of a crime. The slave burials are an essential part of the historical heritage of the people of St. Eustatius. Bulldozing them is unacceptable.

The conclusions from the Archeological Watching Brief by the St. Eustatius Center for Archaeological Research (SECAR) make it very clear: *"Given the important historical value of the archaeological sites discovered during this campaign, it is recommended they are left in situ and preserved for posterity wherever possible as recommended by the Malta Treaty. This is particularly the case for sites 4, 5, and 10, which are interpreted as slave cemeteries. Site 5 may be one of the largest slave cemeteries ever found in the Caribbean."* This Watching Brief was published in April 2011 by SECAR as commissioned by NuStar (see copy of the report presented by this letter).

The fact that the burials are being documented and researched by archaeologists is no excuse for destroying them. Actually, that fact in itself leads to many questions. Standard archaeological practice is to leave remains undisturbed – unless they will be tampered with. As far as we are aware, there are no actual, immediate threats to the remains – because the Executive Council has not taken the decision to allow a new oil terminal in The Farm yet. So why has the island government given a permit for digging up the remains to the archaeologists? One of the requirements of the Malta Convention that regulates archaeological heritage and is also in force in the three islands of the Caribbean Netherlands is

communication with the public. The people of St. Eustatius have never been informed about this dig. We also wonder whether the results will be shared with the descendants of the people who toiled there, before they are being presented by NuStar to the government as an argument to go ahead. That would mean that the people of St. Eustatius will only learn what is going to be destroyed after the fact.

Apart from the plans themselves, their effects and consequences also give cause for concern. An oil terminal south of Signal Hill will seriously affect the quality of life of a large proportion of Statia's population. They will have to live in close vicinity to a major industrial site – with all the negative consequences for their visual environment, safety and long-term health. The impact on the ecological values of the area is considerable.

A second oil terminal south of Signal Hill, in full view of most of the used part of the island, with a jetty for 4 mega-tankers right at the end of the beach of Lower Town, will seriously hamper any future development of tourism as a second economic pillar of the island. This makes St. Eustatius even more dependent on one single economic partner. That is not a good situation.

The St. Eustatius Monuments Foundation, set up to protect and preserve the historical heritage of St. Eustatius, decided that the issue is serious enough to go to Court over it and filed an appeal with the Court of First Instance against those parts of the Spatial Development Plan that enable the construction of a new oil terminal in the area known as The Farm.

There are alternatives for a new oil terminal in The Farm. The existing location offers scope for expansion. However, these alternatives cost more money. The fact that NuStar is unwilling to make a higher investment in order to accommodate the people of St. Eustatius seems to mean that, obviously, they do not think we are worth it.

We hope that you, as members of the Executive Council, our elected representatives, will stop the proposed expansion of Nustar Energy in the Farm area.

Sincerely,

Mr. P. W. Spanner, President Statia Roots Foundation

Mr. G. Berkel, Secretary of Statia Roots Foundation

Mr. K. Cuvalay, on behalf of the St. Eustatius Awareness and Development (SEAD) Movement