

Richard Doornbosch: Caribbean guilder coins and banknotes

Speech by Mr Richard Doornbosch, President of the Central Bank of Curaçao and Sint Maarten, at the reveal event of the Caribbean guilder Coins and Banknotes, Willemstad, 22 August 2024.

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With all protocol observed-Welcome, Distinguished Guests

We are gathered here today to witness a momentous occasion – one that, for many of us, will be a once-in-a-lifetime event.

The formation of our autonomous nations on October 10, 2010, brought about a new monetary union and a shared central bank, tasked with the creation of a new common currency: the **Caribbean guilder**.

Today, we proudly reveal the results of that mandate – our new, secure, innovative, and beautifully designed Caribbean guilder banknotes and coins. Our countries, like the rest of the world, continue to value the physical security and convenience of cash, and this new currency reflects the natural beauty of our cherished islands.

Before we unveil these new symbols of our countries let us reflect on the journey that brought us here.

Although the countries took the decision in 2010 for a new currency, it soon became clear that this would not be feasible right away. Therefore, the Regeling Gemeenschappelijk Geldstelsel included a provision that the Netherlands Antillean guilder would remain legal tender until the new Caribbean guilder is introduced. At that time there were sufficient Netherlands Antillean banknotes and coins in stock, and many felt that creating a new currency whilst the existing currency was working seemed a waste of time, effort and resources.

Years passed by and during these years we were confronted with some unforeseen challenges. Among these were that our previous currency supplier ceased its operations, and the security features of our old Netherlands Antillean guilder banknotes had become outdated, and every day increasing the risk of counterfeiting. Meanwhile, we were regularly assessing our existing stocks of banknotes and coins, projecting future demand, and determining for how long these would last.

There was also the on and off question of dollarization. US dollarization appeared to work well for some of our closest neighbors. Would it also work for Sint Maarten and Curaçao? That important question led the Bank to commission a study with the IMF to research and document the pros and cons of dollarization, with the ultimate conclusion being that with our own currency we maintain control over our monetary policy, the Bank's remains able to act as lender of last resort, and the currency seigniorage is kept.

Oh, and then there was another challenge that we all faced, something called Covid-19.

Eventually in September 2022 both governments gave us the green light to proceed with the introduction of the Caribbean guilder.

We formed a dedicated committee to oversee this project. Alvin Francisco, Siuwella Esterga, Ria Lemmers, Gisah Hollander, Lonneke Reynaert, Raquel Lo Fo Wong and Nancy van der Wal. Your dedication to this historic moment in our nations' history is truly commendable. Your efforts are deeply valued and appreciated.

This Caribbean guilder project team gathered insights from an industry that had evolved significantly since our guilder was last updated 35 years ago. The team meticulously researched potential suppliers, rigorously evaluated their proposals, and selected partners capable of bringing our vision to life. I would like to thank both Crane Currency and the Royal Canadian Mint, who are with us this evening. These esteemed companies not only delivered secure and aesthetically stunning banknotes and coins but also exemplified true partnership by working closely with the Bank's Caribbean guilder team to achieve this extraordinary result – the new business cards of our countries.

The creative work on the Caribbean guilder began swiftly, and what seemed deceptively simple at first, quickly revealed its complexity. The initial discussions centered on selecting a theme that would resonate with our people, both in Sint Maarten and Curaçao, and represent our countries. We wanted a theme that would reflect our identity, showcasing our national treasures in a way that our citizens and the world could appreciate. Even though the design for the coins is guided by the *Regeling gemeenschappelijk geldstelsel* we were still able to include the theme here as well, so that the banknotes and coins together form one family.

But what should remain? And most importantly, what should be changed? Although the birds on our current banknotes are a good representation of the fauna of our countries, we felt that it was time to let them fly away – and to replace them with designs that communicated a sense of familiarity and include security technology that was at the forefront of the industry so that our currency designed today would remain secure for years into the future.

The project included not only the design and production of Caribbean guilder banknotes and coins, but also the adaptation of systems used by the commercial banks and vending and payment machine operators. From the inception of this historic project the CBCS and the commercial banks are in continual communication agreeing on the timing of adaptation of their systems to identify and address any possible hurdles.

We also worked with the International Organization for Standardization (or "ISO") to ensure our currency introduction is recognized internationally and run in accordance with international standards, and importantly to confirm that all is in place not only for the physical introduction of notes and coins which is estimated now for March 2025, but also for its digital twins.

Since the introduction of a new currency is not a project solely for the Central Bank but for the good of our communities we focused from the beginning on extensive communication with all stakeholders. The Finance Ministers of Sint Maarten and

Curaçao are on a regular basis informed on the progress of the project and we continue to endeavor to keep the public well informed and ready for the change.

I want to express my gratitude to the community at large and to the many stakeholders who provided and are providing their commitment and cooperation, input, patience, curiosity, and energy throughout this project. Your contributions have been invaluable in making the Caribbean guilder a reality.

And now, we have arrived at the Grand Reveal. I hope that tonight you will fully experience a connection with the new Caribbean guilder banknotes and coins and that it will resonate deeply with you.

Thank you very much.