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**Minister of Security and Justice**

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**Our reference**

657945

**Appendix**

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*Please quote date of letter and our ref. when replying. Do not raise more than one subject per letter.*

Date 7 July 2015  
Re Your letter regarding Professor Maat

Pg Dear Professor [REDACTED],

With apologies for the delayed response, I am writing in reply to your letter of 1 May.

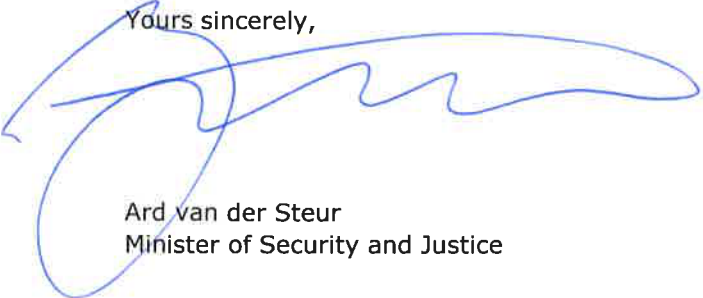
As I stated in the debate with the Dutch House of Representatives on the subject, Professor Maat has an outstanding track record. We are grateful for his exceptional expertise and all the work he has done, often under extremely difficult circumstances. Although Professor Maat doubtless had the best of intentions, I deeply regret the pain his actions caused to the relatives of the victims of flight MH17.

The police, who hired Professor Maat, launched a fact-finding investigation after it transpired that he had given a presentation on the MH17 disaster, featuring photos of victims, to a broader audience than just professionals in the field. This was not a criminal investigation by the Public Prosecution Service, but rather an internal investigation within the police organisation. For your information I have enclosed my letter to parliament, detailing the results of the investigation.

We are and will remain grateful for Professor Maat's service during the identification process for the victims of flight MH17 and in previous investigations.

I would kindly ask you to forward this letter to the other signatories of your letter.

Yours sincerely,

  
Ard van der Steur  
Minister of Security and Justice

**Letter of 15 June 2015 from the Minister of Security and Justice, Ard van der Steur, to the House of Representatives on the results of the fact-finding investigation into lectures given by Professor George Maat on the MH17 disaster**

In the wake of media reports about presentations given by Professor George Maat on the MH17 identification process and the subsequent internal fact-finding investigation, I would like to inform you about the outcome of the investigation, as reported to me by the police.

To begin with, I would like to stress once again that I deeply regret what happened, especially in light of the pain and offence it caused to the next of kin.

As I stated in the debate on the subject, Professor Maat has an outstanding track record. He is associated with the Leiden University Medical Centre as emeritus professor and works as an educator and researcher in the field of physical anthropology. Because of his exceptional expertise Professor Maat has been advising the police since 2000 in complex identification investigations. He also did a great deal of work, under extremely difficult circumstances, for the National Forensic Investigation Team (LTFO, a subdivision of the National Police) in connection with the identification process for the victims of the MH17 disaster. We remain grateful to him for that.

In academic circles it is common and necessary to share knowledge and information with professional colleagues for educational purposes. In the LTFO, too, lessons and experiences are customarily shared with professional colleagues. This is done in a private setting and with members of the same field. After it transpired that Professor Maat had given a presentation on the MH17 disaster, featuring photos of victims, to a broader audience, the police launched a fact-finding investigation. This was not a criminal investigation by the Public Prosecution Service, but rather an internal investigation within the police organisation.

The investigation is now complete, and its findings are twofold.

On the one hand, the investigation shows that Professor Maat did not ask permission to deliver the lecture. He knew that the audience for the 9 April lecture was made up of students in the health sciences and not only professional colleagues in forensic anthropology. In his talk he touched on matters that lie outside the realm of forensic anthropology, using photos which the LTFO could later determine depicted a single, non-Dutch victim.

On the other hand, the investigation shows that the LTFO does not have clear frameworks, agreements and criteria in place for giving lectures and using and releasing visual material related to the team's working processes. Within the working culture that has evolved within LTFO over the years it has become commonplace to give lectures to colleagues.

The findings have been addressed as follows:

1. The identification of human remains is an emotionally charged process. Professor Maat did not observe the level of discretion and care that can be expected of a scientist who advises the LTFO. His actions had a major impact on the next of kin of the victims of MH17. The police have terminated their professional relationship with Professor Maat.
2. The shocked response of the next of kin to Professor Maat's actions shows that there is a need for formal rules on the involvement of third parties in investigations of this kind and the use of visual material in lectures and for other educational purposes. With respect to the MH17 investigation it has now been agreed that images of the victims can only be used with the express permission of the next of kin.

With respect to working methods more generally, more focus should be given to the trade-off between the interests of victims and next of kin and the importance of education and professional development. The LTFO will explore this issue together with the next of kin, including the MH17 Aviation Disaster Foundation, the Public Prosecution Service and representatives of the relevant medical disciplines.

The police have spoken with Professor Maat. The next of kin have been informed by letter about the outcome of the investigations.