

## **Evaluation of the Africa Programme for Peace, 2004-17**

### **Summary, management response & follow up note (16.11.18)**

This note summarises the main findings and lessons learned from an evaluation of the Africa Programme for Peace (APP) undertaken between December 2017 and August 2018. The note includes the management response and follow up proposals drafted by the Danish Embassy in Addis Ababa together with the Africa Department (AFR) and the Danish Embassy in Abuja. EVAL commissioned and managed the evaluation which was carried out by an independent team of international consultants working with ECORYS (NL) and the Clingendael Institute.

#### **Summary of the evaluation**

Since the approval of a first grant in 2004 the APP has sought to enhance peace, security and governance in Africa by supporting the capacity of regional organisations, their member states and stakeholders. The programme's logic is built around the 'African solutions to African problems' maxim, whereby the APP targets support to key organisations with the appropriate policy dialogue, funding and technical assistance in order to strengthen their capacity to plan and execute their work: with a specific focus on implementing the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA). Increasingly, the programme logic has been complemented by the assumption that the APP would provide Denmark with better access to key African officials, thereby also enabling Denmark to better pursue its national security and trade objectives.

The APP has gone through three sequential phases (2004-2009; 2010-2013 and 2014-2017) and is currently in its fourth phase (2018-2021). APP programme documents set out the priorities and objectives of Danish funding for each phase; development engagement documents are produced to specify Danish support to each individual partner organisation (thereby breaking the APP down into separate components). The APP is managed from the Danish Embassy in Addis Ababa.

The evaluation primarily focuses on three organisations that have been identified as the main APP partners: the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). In addition, the evaluation assesses APP support provided to the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). Finally, the evaluation briefly reviews the APP engagement with the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS), the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and the Eastern Africa Standby Brigade Coordination Mechanism.

Overall, each of the three main APP partner organisations has been involved in conflict prevention, conflict management or conflict resolution processes critical to peace, stability and governance in Africa. As a funder of these APSA and AGA organisations, Denmark deserves credit for investing in initiatives that are highly relevant.

However, while the relevance of the APP and its partner organisations is confirmed by this evaluation, it is less clear that the programme and the organisations cover an adequate spectrum of relevant peace and security priorities. The nature of conflict in Africa has changed considerably, and it is not evident that the APP's focus and approach have adequately adapted to new threats. The key question is where the added value of regional organisations lies, in relation to not only the changing nature of conflict in Africa, but also the changing stakeholders and geopolitical agendas. The relevance and impact of the AU, IGAD and ECOWAS seem to be mostly linked to their norm-setting roles and less to their ability to develop and implement transnational policies and operations (except in specific instances such as the AU mission in Somalia or post-election negotiations in the Gambia). The norm-setting function has primarily focused on the conflict prevention and mediation agenda, providing a supportive political backdrop for interventions in an effort to reach more versatile peace architecture in the region.

While the evaluation found the APP and its partner organisations relevant, the intermediate results (outcomes) of APP funding have been less clear. The reporting on outcomes by the AU, IGAD and ECOWAS has been unsatisfactory throughout the evaluation period, resulting in a broken results chain where it is unclear whether the impact of the organisations can indeed be partially attributed to Danish APP funding. The contributions have allowed each of the three main APP partners – but also the supporting organisations that received APP funding – to increase their capacity across a range of functions that are relevant to the APSA and AGA. Overall, the longer-term and flexible nature of the funding has been crucial in allowing the organisations to respond quickly to opportunities as they arose. Still, the capacity both in terms of quality and quantity of the organisations remains weak, and there is a continued need to strengthen the organisations' financial management and their technical capacities.

Whereas policy dialogues and regular interaction with the partner organisations have been identified as the most important instruments of the APP, this evaluation finds that these dialogues and interaction have mostly taken place in Addis Ababa in relation to the AU. While the APP contributions may have enabled access to African officials, there are no clear indications that the access has been leveraged to engage in a policy or political dialogue. A clear strategic framework identifying the overall purpose of access, e.g. influencing officials to pursue particular objectives or policies, has so far been lacking. Given the overall weak capacity of the APP partners, more guidance and steering is required from an effectiveness and efficiency point of view. It is commendable that Denmark continues to 'work through' the APP partner organisations despite the capacity limitations that apply, rather than 'working around' them as many other donors do, as it engenders ownership. Yet it is also clear that such an approach must be accompanied by a regular strategic dialogue and technical assistance.

The cost-effectiveness of the APP is hard to establish, given the insufficient reporting over the years and particularly as a large part of the funding goes through Joint Financing Agreements (JFAs), i.e. pooled funding arrangements. Compared to other donors, particularly the other Nordic donors, Denmark employs a relatively low number of staff to manage the APP. Danish officials noted, however, that the small team ensured better coherence and no division between Danish political and development initiatives.

The choice to manage all APP components out of Addis Ababa makes sense from an efficiency standpoint, as in theory this allows Denmark to bring the various components together and

ensure coherence between them. However, it is not clear how these potential benefits have been materialised in practice. The evaluation finds that the APP setup has not been conducive to establishing a more solid division of labour between the AU and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) based on their comparative advantages and abilities. By managing the various APP components as individual programmes rather than as elements of an overarching programme, Denmark did not stimulate or facilitate further cooperation between the organisations. This is linked to the fact that the evaluation has found ambiguity between the verbal and the written accounts of the programmatic features of the APP. On one hand, some officials engaged with the APP argued that it was simply a 'funding stream' targeting institutions operating with similar objectives; on the other hand, some officials maintained that all components should be managed from a single programme coordination unit, as this would increase synergy and cohesion. This ambiguity should be tackled in order to allow for a shared set of expectations vis-à-vis the APP across the range of stakeholders involved, as well as to allow for a clear and realistic results framework for the programme.

The APP is perceived as flexible by the partner organisations, and the partners considered Denmark to be a constructive actor that operates on a level of equality. The consistency and predictability of the APP support allows for planning and flexibility allows for shifting priorities. Yet other aid officials questioned whether the Danish approach has undermined the overall donor effort to keep specifically ECOWAS and IGAD accountable and focused on delivering, both in terms of their convening mandates and the capacity building efforts.

The sustainability of the APP support is weakened by the high level of dependency of the APP partners on external funding. However, the JFAs allow for better coherence between Danish support to key partners and the support provided by other donors. This is also important with regard to complementarity between Denmark's 'through the system' approach, and other donors 'around the system' approach. Denmark needs to coordinate its efforts more with these donors in order to mitigate the risk of aid funding overlap. In addition, the evaluation notes a need for further alignment and coordination resulting from the growth of other regional security initiatives in response to the current security threats (e.g. the G5 in West Africa).

Finally, the evaluation team notes that synergies and coherence between the APP and the Peace and Stabilisation Fund (PSF) - the other major Danish instrument on the African continent focused on providing support to activities that directly target peace and stabilisation - have been variable. While the two instruments are distinct, they have the same overarching objective and often even work with the same organisations. One way of viewing the relationship is to see the APP as working at the 'strategic normative', continental and regional level, and the PSF as working at the 'strategic operational', and regional and country level.

Given the findings of the evaluation, the evaluation team *recommends (1) that Denmark continues to fund African institutions that contribute to peace and stability in Africa*. In order to meet these ultimate objectives, the evaluation team recommends that the following actions be taken:

## A. Strengthen the analytical foundations

The APP is built on the assumption that peace and security in Africa is best ensured if there is a strong continental architecture of organisations and capabilities preventing and reacting to conflicts and building peace. Furthermore, Denmark has employed an open, flexible, eye-to-eye approach with its partner institutions. Denmark, however, could be clearer on the conscious choice of approach and the consequent lack of intermediate, measurable results. Whereas the approach encourages flexibility in outcomes, the APP reviews note dissatisfaction with the paucity of results. As a first step, the evaluation team *recommends (2) that Denmark expounds the programme logic to specify how transmission effects occur or do not occur.*

This can be achieved through two interlinked exercises. Firstly, the APP could helpfully combine the explicit (as listed in the Programme Documents) and the implicit (Danish officials' verbal accounts) theories of change. If access to African officials and the furthering of Danish national interests in trade and security are commonly agreed objectives, the APP would benefit from a clear description of these elements. This would facilitate (a) greater understanding of Denmark's interests among APP partners, and (b) a more adequate assessment of Denmark's overall objectives. Secondly, the expanded programme logic would help clarify the apparent mismatch between the flexible approach and the results expected.

## B. Innovate monitoring methods

A critical challenge in designing and evaluating the APP is how to measure institutional success. What are the key indicators that would demonstrate progress towards a more capable institution? Is there a path of organisational development, which is suitable to particular institutions in specific circumstances? Can the progress of an organisation be benchmarked to help set target timelines and assess its performance? Given that the APP is broadly defined as an institution-building programme, such an institutional success measure is strangely absent. The evaluation team *recommends (3) that the ongoing monitoring and future assessments view the programme through an organisational development lens.* The evaluation team has developed a model which could be applied (as outlined in the main report).

## C. Invest in people and relationships

The evaluation found that Denmark's moment as a 'pioneering and special friend' of the APSA and AGA institutions has passed. This development is partly due to the greater maturity of the organisations and partially to the increasing number of donors providing support. The evaluation team *recommends (4) that Danish officials reengage with a more proactive approach,* particularly in light of the need to accompany institutional capacity building with strategic dialogue and technical assistance. Such re-engagement does not require greater control over programming or processes but a more energetic focus on making tangible progress.

The evaluation team also *recommends (5) that Denmark strengthens coordination with other donors* to help monitor and strengthen the partner organisations' administrative and financial capacity and to build coalitions to jointly advance political-level collaboration within and among partner institutions. This is particularly likely to lead to results with ECOWAS, but also with IGAD

where Nordic donors could increase coordination, and with the AU where Denmark could help advance some of the conversations that the EU is finding difficult to make progress on.

The evaluation team further *recommends (6) that the Africa Department more actively engages in regional programmes* by facilitating regular communication among embassies and Copenhagen and by effectively advocating that African conflict prevention is in Denmark's strategic interest.

#### D. Consolidate programme focus and adjust programme management set-up

The evaluation found that the various APP components have been managed as individual projects rather than as elements of an overarching programme, possibly as a result of different interpretations of the need for cohesion and coherence within the overall programme. As such, Denmark purposely did not stimulate or facilitate cooperation between the APP organisations in relation to their roles and responsibilities in implementing the APSA and the AGA. To ensure coherence, the evaluation team *recommends (7) to strengthen the strategic focus of the APP, including in its choice of partner organisations.* This should follow not only an overarching and coherent theory of change for the APP, but also a renewed political analysis of the organisations and their capacity to deal with new threats to stability, including violent extremism and migration.

Finally, if Denmark decides to continue to support both the AU and the RECs relevant to the Danish priority regions in Africa (i.e. ECOWAS and IGAD), then the evaluation team *recommends (8) to place the management responsibility, including the responsibility for political dialogue, with the embassies located in physical proximity to the relevant organisations.* The Embassy in Addis Ababa could act as the overall programme manager for the APP.

### Management response

#### *General comments*

Danish support to the peace and security agenda across the African continent was initiated at a time when African institutions had just begun taking greater ownership of the issues. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) had just transformed itself into the African Union (AU). The change meant a new approach to crises and conflicts from non-interference to non-indifference. As noted in the evaluation, Denmark was amongst the first international partners to support the African institutions in their renewed role which has ensured that Denmark has a unique role and partnership with the organisations.

Much has happened since the creation of the African Union in 2002 and the initiation of the Africa Programme for Peace in 2004, both within the organisations supported and in the context. The organisations supported through the APP have generally expanded and reforms are underway to ensure their relevance and effectiveness. And while Africa is still the continent with the largest share of global conflicts, the nature of these conflicts have changed. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is therefore pleased to receive a valuable external assessment of the achievements of the programme so far as well as guidance on how to improve the programme going forward.

The Ministry appreciates the work of ECORYS in evaluating a programme focusing on exactly this. The evaluation finds that the organisations supported are highly relevant and that the

programme is closely in line with Danish development assistance and foreign policy objectives. The long-term engagement of Denmark and flexible nature of funding have been crucial in allowing the organisations to respond quickly to opportunities as they arose. The Ministry also notes that Denmark is seen as a constructive partner that operates on a level of equality by its partners. As emphasised by the evaluation, the programme therefore provides a valuable platform from which Denmark can pursue political dialogue “eye-to-eye.” The Ministry also takes good note of the recommendations from the ECORYS team on how to improve the programme and interaction with partner organisations going forward.

Many of the recommendations outlined in the report have already been integrated in the design of the new, fourth phase of the APP initiated earlier this year. For instance, the fourth phase puts greater emphasis on results to be obtained through identification of clear yearly targets. Communication of the results and ensuring a space for strategic, political dialogue are other features strengthened in the new phase of the programme. For instance, the fourth phase includes a “dialogue mechanism”, which will ensure a yearly forum for interaction between Danish and African stakeholders within the peace, security and governance agenda. The interactions will provide a platform for regular, strategic dialogue between the parties and ensure coordination across the different Danish engagements in the area.

Yet other recommendations can be incorporated in the management of the programme e.g. through dialogue with the partners. Furthermore, the mid-term review of the APP is planned to take place in late 2019. The evaluation and its recommendations will serve as key guidance to the review and can be used to reshape the remainder of the fourth phase of the APP. The fourth phase of the APP includes unallocated funds, which can be utilized to steer the programme in the direction recommended by the current evaluation as well as the mid-term review. These funds will also to some extent enable the programme to respond to the changing nature of conflicts over the coming years.

*Comments on recommendation 1: that Denmark continues to fund African institutions that contribute to peace and security in Africa.*

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is pleased to note that the findings of the evaluation have led the team to recommend that Denmark should continue to fund the African institutions. The AU along with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are *the* organisations responsible for the implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Governance Architecture (AGA). They are all essential for finding *African solutions to African problems*. The organisations themselves are aware of the need to become more efficient and effective and reform processes are currently underway in both the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). However, continued support is needed to develop the organisations and their capacity to fulfil their mandate and the fourth phase of the APP which was initiated earlier this year will allow for the relationship with the African organisations to continue until the end of 2021.

*Comments on recommendation 2: that Denmark expounds the programme logic to specify how transmission effects occur or do not occur.*

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs notes that according to the evaluation “*researchers have long advocated that the Danish partner approach is indeed the solution for avoiding capability traps*”.

The evaluation also notes a contradiction between building the institutional capacity of organisations and expecting the organisations to achieve results.

The results frameworks of the different phases of the APP have all been aligned with the African organisations' own work plans and targets. As such, Denmark does not expect more of the organisations than they do of themselves. The aim of the APP is to increase capacity within the African organisations in order for them to deliver on their mandates and thus obtain results and have a tangible impact on the peace and stability of the continent. As such, the APP has sought to achieve results relating to both outcomes and capacity within the organisations.

There is, however, a paucity of documented outcome level results from the organisations. This is in part due to the difficulty in measuring the outcomes and in part due to weak results based management systems within the organisations. A focus in the fourth phase of the APP is therefore to improve the results based management of the organisations, which is likewise high on the agenda for other partners and hence part of the joint dialogue between partners and the organisations. Funds are set aside in the fourth phase of the programme for technical assistance.

External factors also influence the organisations' abilities to reach the desired outcomes. The Ministry will continuously update the risk matrix of the programme in order to also assess the obstacles in transmitting organisational capacity to impacts and identify potential risk mitigating measures.

*Comments on recommendation 3: that the ongoing monitoring and future assessments view the programme through an organisational development lens.*

The suggestion to measure medium term impacts in terms of the developments within the organisations is indeed very useful. The Ministry appreciates the proposed methodology for measuring institutional capacity which can be elaborated and adapted to the specific institutions supported. Such an approach could complement the existing focus on institutional development which often takes the European Union 7-pillar assessment as a vantage point.

*Comments on recommendation 4: that Danish officials reengage with a more proactive approach.*

The evaluation finds that the pioneering support to the African Institutions from Denmark, means that Denmark is perceived as a "special friend" by these institutions. As the institutions have matured more donors are now providing support and Denmark is now one amongst a multitude of international partners.

The Ministry takes note of the suggestion to further utilize this access and special status to pursue strategic Danish policy interests. It should be underlined that the aim of the APP is to develop the ability of African institutions to deliver on their mandate. However, it should also be possible to pursue strategic objectives of mutual interest through the interaction with the African institutions and their member states. The increased dialogue between the different entities within the Ministry working within peacebuilding and governance as proposed later in the response to recommendation six will further assist in guiding the policy dialogue with the African institutions.

The Ministry recognizes the need to improve the understanding amongst Danish stakeholders about the APP and its potential impact whilst at the same time increasing awareness amongst

African counterparts of the Danish support and interests. This is the reason why the new, fourth phase of the programme includes a "dialogue mechanism." This mechanism is foreseen to include a yearly forum for dialogue between Danish and African stakeholders on the topics of peace, security and governance. It is expected that the first such dialogue forum will take place in early 2019.

*Comments on recommendation 5: that Denmark strengthens coordination with other donors.*

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs already enjoys a strong collaboration with other donors supporting the African Union and the regional organisations (including the RECs), both through formal arrangements and through informal networks. Denmark is part of a number of joint financing arrangements and joint programming arrangements (JFAs/JPAs) with both the AU and the IGAD. The JFA/JPA set-up serves a multitude of purposes, including a reduced administrative burden on the supported organisations, and as a platform for partners to coordinate and pursue joint monitoring. Denmark currently leads the JFA/JPA partnership with AU on the support to the Department for Political Affairs and with IGAD on the support to the Peace and Security Division.

One element in the ongoing African Union reform process is a redefinition of the relationship with international partners. The Ministry is in close dialogue with the other stakeholders in order to ensure this relationship will be as strong as possible. Within IGAD, the recent positive developments in the region could result in a strengthening of the organisation and its relationship with the international partners.

For the support to the organisations based in West Africa, donor coordination is slightly more complex due to fewer formalized structures for this purpose. For KAIPTC other donors also have the administrative responsibility placed in Addis Ababa allowing for coordination - as well as through board meetings. For the partners supporting ECOWAS there are informal although fairly regular meetings between the donors in Abuja. The coordination between the Embassies in Addis Ababa and Abuja is strong with e.g. the defence attaché posted in Abuja liaising with other defence attachés and ECOWAS. Furthermore, the new phase of the programme entails quarterly physical visits to ECOWAS.

In addition to the formalised dialogue between donors and the supported organisations, the informal coordination amongst donors takes place on an ad-hoc basis with closest coordination with a group of like-minded donors based in Addis Ababa. The cooperation with especially the European Union and the other Nordic countries as well as e.g. the Netherlands, Germany and UK is strong on both programmatic and political issues. The Nordic countries, for instance, draft joint statements for the African Peace and Security Council.

Throughout the engagements Denmark works closely with the European Union which - due to the size of support as well as historical ties - often has a certain leverage with the African institutions. As such, policy as well as administrative issues are at times raised more effectively through the EU.

*Comments on recommendation 6: that the Africa department more actively engages in regional Africa programmes.*

Denmark has invested in a number of peace and stabilization initiatives across the African continent as a testament to the strategic importance of conflict prevention. To ensure

effectiveness and synergies between these initiatives knowledge sharing and coordination continue to remain a key focus in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Ministry agrees with the importance of ensuring closer links and pursuing synergies between the engagements of the APP and the Peace and Stabilization Fund (such as the regional programs in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel) as well as bilateral engagements, humanitarian contributions and contributions to the Danish civil society organisations. Consequently, the Africa Department (AFR) will host bi-annual meetings gathering relevant departments engaged in peace, stabilization and conflict prevention as suggested in the evaluation.

These meetings will enable discussions on Danish strategic priorities which will help inform and further strengthen the policy dialogue undertaken by the Embassy in Addis Ababa with the African institutions supported under the APP.

*Comments on recommendation 7: to strengthen the strategic focus of the Africa Programme for Peace, including in its choice of partner organisations.*

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs completely agrees with the need to focus strategically. Not only on the organisations provided support but also thematically. This was one of the primary objectives during the formulation of the new, fourth phase of the APP. As a result the programme now has fewer partners, and has increased its attention to the need for good governance. This is partly due to the changing conflict landscape, with increased tensions and instability stemming from “constitutional coup d’états” or lack of transparent election processes.

Violent extremism and migration are two other important although proximate causes of conflict. Arguably, the African Peace and Security Architecture needs to be revised in order to enable the African institutions to adequately respond to the increased regional threat of violent extremism. New structures are arising outside the APSA framework to address some of the trans-boundary issues as currently witnessed in the Sahel. Denmark will continue to be able to support the African institutions in their efforts to make the APSA more relevant to today’s crises within the framework of the APP and is closely following the current efforts by the AU to adapt the APSA.

There is an ongoing dialogue within the Ministry as well as with the organisations and other partners on how best to achieve the goals of the programme. It is true, that as long as the capacity of the African institutions is limited there is a need for external support. Not only financially but also technically and analytically. Hence a key element of the programme has been support to organisations supporting the African institutions such as the Institute for Security Studies which enjoys a unique position of trust within the AU allowing it to provide analytical support on sensitive and strategic issues.

The Ministry will continuously assess the support provided. The new phase of the APP does have some flexibility through unallocated funds. These will enable Denmark to tweak the programme during the current phase to exploit opportunities as they arise and respond to changes in the context. The mid-term review expected at the end of 2019 will provide opportunity for further analysis on the allocation of these funds in accordance with strategic priorities. Special attention will be given to the possibilities of supporting civil society organisations role vis-à-vis the African regional organisations, including the possibility of continuing support to WANEP in its capacity to bring the voices of the West African civil society organisations into the early warning system of ECOWAS.

*Comments on recommendation 8: to place the management responsibility, including the responsibility for political dialogue, with the embassies located in physical proximity to the relevant organisations.*

The evaluation team has found that there is a need for increased physical presence of the programme manager to especially ECOWAS, in order to achieve the full potential of the programme. For this reason, the team suggests transferring the responsibility for the political dialogue as well as programme management to Abuja where the ECOWAS Commission is based. At the same time, the evaluation notes that the programme is at risk of being managed as individual projects rather than a comprehensive programme.

Danish interest in and cooperation with ECOWAS goes well beyond the APP and includes maritime security, regional economic integration, trade and economic interests as well as broader political dialogue. To promote these broader interests, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will look into the possibilities of accrediting the Embassy in Abuja to ECOWAS. This will allow for closer and more efficient strategic and political dialogue to promote Danish priorities.

Looking more specifically at the thematic focus of the APP, the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are jointly responsible for the implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture and the African Governance Architecture. The potential complementarities between the organisations' work are thus significant and should be supported in order to most efficiently pursue the strategic priorities of the Programme. As the complementarities between the organisations are being further spelled out as part of the AU reform process, it underscores the relevance of having a strong coordination between support to the different institutions. The Embassy in Addis Ababa will therefore maintain the overall management responsibility for the APP engagement with ECOWAS.

The new phase of the APP entails an increased physical presence in Abuja by the programme manager from the Embassy in Addis Ababa. Quarterly physical visits will supplement the continuous dialogue through e.g. video conferences with the ECOWAS Commission. This will allow the Embassy in Addis Ababa to engage more closely with the ECOWAS Commission whilst closely coordinating and providing opportunities for discussing policy and strategy with the colleagues from the Embassy in Abuja.

The increased involvement of the Embassy in Abuja in terms of the political, strategic dialogue with ECOWAS will provide benefits in terms of the strategic objectives of the APP. This requires close coordination between the Embassies in Abuja and Addis Ababa. The Embassy in Addis Ababa will provide inputs for the strategic and political dialogue with ECOWAS and will coordinate with the Embassy in Abuja, which will participate in specific activities when deemed relevant to promote the strategic objectives of the programme. Similarly, the Embassy in Abuja will keep the Embassy in Addis Ababa informed of the ongoing political dialogue and developments within the organisation to guide the dialogue with other partners in the programme. Finally, the increased coordination under the responsibility of the Africa Department (AFR) - as elaborated above - along with the yearly dialogue forum will serve to enhance the cooperation.