

Minutes from meeting in the Council for Development Policy
on 02 October 2025

- Members: Professor Anne Mette Kjær, University of Aarhus (Chair)
Deputy CEO and International Director Jarl Krausing, CONCITO (Deputy Chair)
Secretary General Charlotte Slente, Danish Refugee Council (DFC)
Director Charlotte Flindt Pedersen, Danish Foreign Policy Society
Chief Advisor Mattias Söderberg, DanChurchAid (Agenda items 1,2,3,5 and 6)
Head of Secretariat Lone Ilum Christiansen, The Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA)
Senior Researcher Adam Moe Fejerskov, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS)
Political Director Jonas Manthey Olsen, Danish Youth Council (DUF)
Director for Nutrition Line Damsgaard, The Danish Agriculture & Food Council
- Regrets from: Director for Global Development and Sustainability Marie Gad Hansen, Confederation of Danish Industries (DI)
Political Consultant and Project Officer of DAPP Lucas Højbjerg, The Danish Chamber of Commerce
- MFA: Head of Department Tove Degnbol, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING
Deputy Head of Department Mette Bech Pilgaard, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING
Head of Section Lotte Blom Salmonsens, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING
Student Assistant Anton Hannibal Fischer Kirknæs, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING
- Agenda item 2: Head of Department Mette Nørgaard Dissing-Spandet, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA
Team Leader Peter Morling, The Embassy of Denmark in Dar es Salaam (online)
Head of Section Pauline Kudsk, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA
- Agenda item 3: Deputy Head of Department Mads-Emil Stærk, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA
Head of Section Pauline Kudsk, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA

- Agenda item 4: Deputy Head of Department Thomas Nikolaj Hansen, Department for Humanitarian Action and Civil Society, HUMCIV
Chief Advisor Marie Groth Kruse, Department for Humanitarian Action and Civil Society, HUMCIV
Chief Advisor Serena Hebsgaard, Department for Humanitarian Action and Civil Society, HUMCIV
- Agenda item 5: Head of Mission Sigurd Halling, Royal Danish Representative Office in Ramallah (online)
Deputy Head of Mission Kristina Kinch, Royal Danish Representative Office in Ramallah (online)
Team Leader Rebekka Storm Rubin Lauritzen, Royal Danish Representative Office in Ramallah (online)
Team Leader Johan Villemoes Grønvold, Royal Danish Representative Office in Ramallah (online)
Special Advisor Max Mortensen, Royal Danish Representative Office in Ramallah (online)
- Agenda item 6: Head of Department Tove Degnbol, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING
Deputy Head of Department Mette Bech Pilgaard, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING
Chief Advisor on Evaluation, Eva Brandt Broegaard, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING
Chief Advisor on Evaluation, Ninja Ritter Klejnstrup, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING

Agenda Item No. 1: Announcements

The Head of Department, LEARNING, gave an orientation about the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the overall UN80-reform process. Members of the Council contributed their experience from participating at UNGA.

With reference to the Rules of Procedure for the Council for Development Policy, Mattias Söderberg announced a conflict of interest in relation to agenda item 4 due to the Secretary General DanChurchAid being a member of the Board of the Institute for Human Rights. Mattias Söderberg left the room during the deliberations of agenda item 4.

Agenda Item No. 2: Scaling-up Locally-Led Climate Action Programme (World Bank)

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

DKK 60 million

Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate (KLIMA)

The objective of the programme (2025-2030) Scaling-up Locally-Led Climate Action Programme (SCALE) is to strengthen national and local government systems in Tanzania to implement national climate strategies and deliver locally-led climate resilience actions in selected districts. The programme is implemented through two instruments: one supporting the national-level infrastructure, also to build capacity to attract a of global climate finance; and another supporting the local-level infrastructure to implement strategies and carry out participatory and inclusive climate resilience projects locally. Denmark supports the programme with a grant of DKK 60 million.

The Council for Development Policy recommended Scaling-up Locally-Led Climate Action Programme (SCALE) for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Key observations and recommendations from the Council:

- Overall, the programme was commended for its relevance by addressing key issues such as access to climate finance and ensuring climate adaptation is locally led. While the two instruments in the programme were considered highly relevant, Members of the Council asked if the programme represented the best way of supporting local-level activities? Members expressed concerns about whether the local-level activities were too project-based, and if the budget planning processes would reach the community levels.
- Council Members asked for additional information about the World Bank as implementing partner. Concern was expressed about the underlying IDA loan, considering the rising debt burden on the African continent. Could the grant have been channelled directly to the government of Tanzania? Was the administration fee of 12% standard?
- In light of a number of very capable African climate finance experts, Members of the Council asked about the relevance of recruiting a Danish climate finance specialist to the World Bank as part of the programme. It was suggested that expert might be better placed in the Ministry of Finance or another relevant institution.
- The targets in the results framework were highlighted as very ambitious, and information about the metrics behind the numbers were requested.
- Finally, the Council asked for the underlying strategic considerations which had guided the choice of the programme as part of the new development engagement in Tanzania. Related to this, Members of the Council asked if alternatives to the partners chosen had been considered, e.g. linking the new engagement to Private Agricultural Sector Support (PASS) Trust (ongoing) or previous activities.

Other issues mentioned by the Council included the risk of maladaptation within the projects and ineffective use of resources at the local level, encouragement to mainstream a stronger youth lens into the programme, and the inclusion of civil society, a possible focus on youth, and the relationship with the Kenyan counterpart to the programme.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) response to key issues:

- The Head of Department, KLIMA, highlighted that Denmark's contribution to SCALE was based on a request from the Tanzanian government and the World Bank, which had already established the SCALE programme from an IDA loan of USD 100 million for climate adaptation finance. It was highlighted that the loan was on concessional terms and the long-term goal of the programme was for Tanzania to strengthen its national-to-local financing structures and raising capacity at national level to better access more global climate finance, which should also enable the country to repay its loan.
- The Team Leader, Embassy in Dar es Salaam, highlighted that the debt-to-GDP in Tanzania is at approx. 40%, which speaks to the country's responsible management of its public debt. The SCALE programme is ultimately supporting the ability to attract climate finance from global climate funds or private finance that contribute to debt sustainability of the IDA loan.
- The 12% overhead fee to the World Bank is a standard fee applied to all trust fund contributions and agreed to by donors during the World Bank Trust Fund reforms.
- Besides the direct contribution to the programme, a Danish climate finance expert within the World Bank could support the dialogue between the Embassy and the Government of Tanzania (GoT) on climate and environment issues through the SCALE programme. Better access to climate finance is the highest priority for the Government of Tanzania and the African Group of Negotiators (AGN), which Tanzania chairs, towards COP30. The Danish expert is a technical resource that directly contributes to the GoT priority of accessing more Climate Finance.
- The Team Leader, Embassy in Dar es Salaam, explained how building capacity at both national and local level should ensure sustainability and how the projects at local level would be aligned with the national climate plans and thus ensure synergy.
- The Head of Department, KLIMA, acknowledged that the results framework was ambitious and stressed that Denmark would continuously monitor the programme's progress as well as any potential gaps in the results that may emerge
- The Embassy in Dar es Salaam is developing a new strategic partnership with Tanzania based on political dialogue, economic diplomacy and a continued development cooperation programme. The SCALE programme is a stepping stone towards a green partnership in response to Tanzania's overarching priority of attracting more climate

finance for adaptation and mitigation measures. The Team Leader, Embassy in Dar es Salaam, added that it would be considered if a link between SCALE and PASS could be established.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council for Development Policy recommended Scaling-up Locally-Led Climate Action Programme (SCALE) for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Agenda Item No. 3: Resilient Urban Futures: Support to C40

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

DKK 100 million

Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate (KLIMA)

Summary:

Expanding on the work supported by previous Danish grants, the new C40 programme “Resilient Urban Futures” aims to support climate adaptation activities in 20 cities across primarily Africa as well as some cities in Southeast Asia. It focuses on urban flooding, droughts, and extreme heat while promoting nature-based solutions, targeting cities vulnerable to climate impacts. The programme will be implemented through three workstreams: 1) capacity building in the cities; 2) supporting the implementation of concrete climate adaptation projects aligned with the cities’ Climate Action Plans; and 3) strengthening leadership, knowledge sharing, and partnerships between the targeted C40 Cities. The programme contributes to SDGs 1, 10, 11, 13, and 17, and it aligns with the Danish objective of strengthening actions to support climate adaptation and resilience in the poorest and most vulnerable countries.

The Council for Development Policy recommended Resilient Urban Futures for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Key observations and recommendations from the Council:

- Overall, the Council acknowledged C40’s vital role as a convener and advocate, driving ambitious Climate Action Plans at the city level and combining climate change and development in its focus. While the political endeavour was clear, Members of the Council asked how this was reflected on the ground in the practical implementation of activities, and how the project contributes to mobilisation of funds to implement adaptation activities on the ground and also asked if the city advisor model was effective.
- Members of the Council noted that international experts seemed to play an important role in the activities and enquired about the role of national and local expertise.
- If C40 is a key actor on the adaptation agenda, Members found it important that this was further stressed in the programme document and encouraged KLIMA to pursue the ambitions in the dialogue with C40.

- Members of the Council also asked about the collaboration between C40 and other key actors in the field such as World Resources Institute and ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability and emphasised the importance of linking the support to other Danish support to cities e.g. Global Centre on Adaptation.
- Members of the Council mentioned that a large share of the budget was allocated to e.g., salaries, travels, and workshops and requested information on the added value of these elements.

Other issues mentioned by the Council was the risk of maladaptation in the cities, a request for more clear definition of poor and vulnerable populations (specific mentioning of youths and people with disabilities), a call for more ambitious targets in the results framework, including targets about mobilisation of adaptation finance for the cities, questions about how Denmark could affect C40's work since the MFA was not part of the Steering Committee, and finally since C40 was working at mayoral level, a concern about keeping momentum in case of changing political leadership.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) response to key issues:

- The Deputy Head of Department acknowledged that a large part of C40's work was advocacy but stressed that it was also capacity building within the cities. As this was the third contribution, the set-up was tried and tested and had shown impact in the cities' climate ambitions and implementation of Climate Action Plans. It had been the experience from the beginning that climate plans for the cities tended to be more ambitious than national plans. In quarterly meetings with C40, implementation was a key topic, and Denmark pushed for specific results on the ground.
- City Advisers were local experts with extensive knowledge about the particular circumstances in the cities and also about climate financing. Thus, the programme was not run mainly by international specialists as suggested by some of the questions.
- Adaptation was an important part of the agenda and Denmark was pushing for C40 to host a forum solely for adaptation funders.
- The Deputy Head of Department mentioned examples of synergies between C40 activities and those of other organisations supported by Denmark. At the same time, he stressed that C40 was different from many of the other initiatives as it had consistently pursued the city agenda, while other organisations had paid more sporadic attention to the situation of the cities. He added that C40 had also demonstrated ability to attract new funding, including from some of the philanthropical funds.
- Regarding the budget, the Deputy Director confirmed that a large part would be directed to elements such as salaries to the C40 city advisors. It was a lesson from previous contributions that it was crucial to have advisors embedded in the city administration.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council for Development Policy recommended Resilient Urban Futures for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Agenda Item No. 4: Institute for Human Rights: Promoting and Protecting Human Rights

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

DKK 250 million

The Department for Humanitarian Action & Civil Society, HUMCIV

Summary:

The objective of the project is to ensure governance is based on international human rights norms and standards, and that citizens, individuals and affected groups assert their rights and have equal access to rights fulfilment. This will be done through support to national human rights systems and to academia and civil society with a geographical focus on Africa and European Neighbourhood countries. The project will also contribute to increasing responsible business conduct.

<p><i>The Council for Development Policy recommended 'Institute for Human Rights: Promoting and Protecting Human Rights' for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.</i></p>
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Key observations and recommendations from the Council:

- While appreciating the importance of the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) and their unique mandate as a National Human Rights Institute (NHRI), the Council expressed concern about DIHR expanding its work beyond the institute's core expertise by working with multiple actors (e.g. civil society actors, departments, agencies) rather than NHRIs and the associated Paris Principles and by addressing multiples themes (e.g. business regulation, migration and climate) rather than focusing on core human rights. The Council expressed concern whether this approach could compromise the specific expertise and value added of DIHR. Members also asked how DIHR worked on climate issues in practice.
- Seeing that DIHR received several different grants and contracts from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Members of the Council enquired whether it had been considered to streamline the multiples funding sources into one grant, which could contribute to better transparency and mitigate a mushrooming effect.
- Members of the Council noted that if the future modality were to be softly earmarked or core funding, DIHR needed a clear international framework strategy as recommended in the Midterm Review. Members asked whether DIHR was preparing such a strategy, and found that issues such as partner and country selection was not clearly addressed in the presented earmarked project. Whereas Africa was mentioned as a geographical priority in the project, the focus was less prominent in the budget.

- Members of the Council remarked that the documentation did not explicitly describe how the project would address - and be influenced by – the diminishing global respect for human rights and the deepening normative clashes currently characterising the international community. The consequent risks and necessary mitigation were not adequately addressed in the project document. This included reputational risks for local NHRIs and other partners by receiving support from an external institution like DIHR. In this vein, the Council was curious to know how the Institute would engage in authoritarian contexts in the Sahel – and what role the Institute would take.
- Finally, Members enquired whether DIHR had committed to increasing transfer of funds to its local partners noting that the current percentage of funding allocated to local partners was very limited. Members also asked to what extent DIHR had committed to strengthening research capacity of local partners rather than doing research for them. Members asked whether local partners to such an extent preferred capacity building and knowledge from DIHR over direct support.

Other issues mentioned by the Council included the budget allocation to overhead/indirect costs, the importance of including the trade unions when addressing business and human rights, and the relevance of supporting the human rights agenda regardless of global political tendencies.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ (MFA) response to key issues:

- As also noted by the Council, the Deputy Head of HUMCIV stressed the particular capacity of DIHR as NHRI. While in some countries, there was a local demand for cooperation with its peers, DIHR assessed that in other contexts, support was only possible through civil society partners. The Deputy Head emphasised that DIHR’s expertise consisted in knowledge on how to apply and work with human rights standards and principles (aka Human Rights Based Approach) across topics and sectors incl. climate.
- Addressing the suggestion to integrate all DIHR grants into one, the Deputy Head informed that Institute’s activities in the Eastern Neighbourhood were fully folded in the framework grant in coordination with the relevant department in the MFA, whereas DIHR activities funded under various country programmes (Uganda, Ethiopia) were coordinated in close consultation with the relevant embassies. The Danish Arab Partnership Programme was a different modality with a procurement process in which DIHR had been chosen alongside other partners.
- The Deputy Head acknowledged that the level of abstraction in the current DIHR strategy did not allow for unearmarked funding and confirmed that there had been a dialogue with DIHR on the possibility of developing an actual international strategy. It had been decided to base the support on the programme document, which as a result had been made more specific in terms of results and countries compared to the version under appraisal.

- The Deputy Head underlined that DIHR's legitimacy was appreciated in partner countries, and that strong partnerships and flexible mitigation allowed DIHR to operate in difficult political contexts such as the Sahel. Whereas DIHR was able to maintain the cooperation with the NHRI in Burkina Faso for example, it had been decided to reallocate cooperation away from the NHRI towards civil society partners doing similar work in Niger.
- On the question of support to local partners, the Deputy Head noted that DIHR's approach was to contribute e.g. with monitoring tools, in order to facilitate and support further initiatives and processes locally. The Deputy Head added that while the share of funds transferred to local partners could be expected to increase marginally in the next phase, transfers were not always in demand from local NHRIs but could be relevant for civil society partners.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council recommended 'Institute for Human Rights: Promoting and Protecting Human Rights' for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Agenda Item No. 5: Annual Stocktaking of the Cooperation in Palestine (2024)

For information and discussion

Royal Danish Representative Office in Ramallah (DRO)

Summary:

The Annual Stocktaking Report provides an analysis of the changes in context and the implications for the implementation of the Country Strategic Framework for Palestine 2021-2026. Specifically, the report outlines the deteriorating Palestinian context with a particular focus on the West Bank, incl. East Jerusalem, as activities in Gaza have widely come to a halt. The analysis is followed by an update on the implementation of the Bilateral Development Programme. Implementation across all three strategic objectives continues, albeit the changing and deteriorating context.

Key observations and points raised by the Council:

- The Council commended the stocktaking report and acknowledged the way the programme continued to be able to adapt and be flexible considering the difficult and volatile situation.
- Members of the Council commented on the Danish government's new position on the question of recognition of the State of Palestine and asked whether this political announcement would have an impact on the design of the bilateral development programme.
- Members of the Council expressed concern about the severe financial crisis of the Palestinian Authority and inquired about the impact on the development cooperation.

Members of the Council further asked about the prospect for Israel's release of the Palestinian tax and clearance revenues.

- Members of the Council highlighted the pressure on Israeli civil society organisations due to the Israeli draft law regarding taxation on funding from foreign entities. Members of the Council asked about future prospects for these organisations.
- Members of the Council pointed out the funding gap under the Multi-donor Agribusiness Programme II and asked for an elaboration on this matter.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) response to key issues:

- The Head of Mission noted that the government's new conditions for recognition of the State of Palestine would not have an immediate impact on the design of the bilateral development programme. Regarding the condition of reforms of the Palestinian Authority, the Head of Mission explained that the three essential reform areas were education, social protection, and elections. The Head of Mission stressed that even though the bilateral development programme did not include these sectors specifically, the importance of these reforms was raised in policy dialogue with the Palestinian Authority.
- In relation to the financial crisis of the Palestinian Authority, the Head of Mission emphasised the recent Danish announcement of DKK 50 million to the Emergency Coalition for the Financial Sustainability of the Palestinian Authority lead by France, Norway, Saudi Arabia, and Spain. Concerning the prospect of Israel releasing the Palestinian tax and clearance revenues, the Head of Mission noted that this was the resort of the Embassy in Tel Aviv. He added that in the short-term perspective, prospects seemed dire.
- Regarding the pressure on Israeli civil society, the Head of Mission noted that the revised draft law was still problematic and emphasised that the Israeli civil society organisations generally expressed deep concern. The Head of Mission informed that the Representative Office was continuously monitoring relevant developments and engaged with civil society partners under the bilateral development programme. He noted that with the current revised draft, the law would only take effect a year after a potential approval.
- Finally, the Head of Mission highlighted the importance of the agricultural sector in providing employment opportunities in light of the hundreds of thousands of jobs lost in the West Bank since October 2023. The Head of Mission informed of the recent allocations of funds from Gaza to the West Bank under the Multi-donor Agribusiness Programme II. Due to the positive results and the needs within the agricultural sector, the Head of Mission emphasised the Representative Office's focus on this sector in relation to the costed extension (2026) of the bilateral development programme.

Agenda Item No. 6: Thematic discussion of the Evaluation of Management of Danish Development Cooperation 20 years after decentralisation

For information and discussion

The Department for Evaluation, Quality and Learning (LEARNING)

Summary: The Evaluation of Management of Danish Development Cooperation 20 years after decentralisation has investigated the major changes in the international context for development cooperation, how they have affected Danish policy objectives as well as how development cooperation management changed in response. While the evaluation stresses that Denmark has a strong reputation as a flexible and capable partner, it also points to a range of challenges, including the recentralisation of development cooperation implying that decisions are taken further away from national beneficiaries, its increasing fragmentation, capacity constraints in MFA, increased use of third-party implementers, and scope for improving the dialogue with and influence on multilateral partners. The evaluation is expected to be published by the end of the year.

The Chief Advisor from LEARNING gave an overview of the findings and recommendations of the evaluation. As a management response had not yet been approved by MFA, the Head of Department, LEARNING, underlined that questions regarding findings and recommendations could not be answered. Due notice would be taken of comments provided by the Council and these would be considered in the editing of the management response.

The Council found the evaluation interesting and timely but worrying. They noticed that many of the evaluation findings were in line with observations made by Members over the years when assessing new grants. Members of the Council considered it important that conclusions and recommendations were thoroughly discussed and followed up internally in MFA and also suggested that the public was given access to engage in the discussions. It was mentioned that after its launch, Danish Institute for International Studies was planning a seminar based on the evaluation.

Agenda item no. 7: Any Other Business

No issues were raised under this agenda item.