

**Minutes from meeting in the Council for Development Policy**  
**on 8 February 2024**

- Members: Professor Anne Mette Kjær, University of Aarhus (Chair)  
Deputy CEO and International Director Jarl Krausing, CONCITO (Deputy Chair)  
Director for Global Development and Sustainability Marie Gad Hansen, Confederation of Danish Industries (DI)  
Head of Secretariat Lone Ilum Christiansen, The Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA)  
Political Consultant and Project Officer of DAPP Lucas Højbjerg, The Danish Chamber of Commerce  
Senior Researcher Adam Moe Fejerskov, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS)  
Secretary General Charlotte Slente, Danish Refugee Council (DFC)  
Director Charlotte Flindt Pedersen, Danish Foreign Policy Society  
Political Director Jonas Manthey Olsen, Danish Youth Council (DUF)  
Chief Advisor Mattias Söderberg, DanChurchAid
- MFA: Under-Secretary for Development Policy Ole Thonke  
Head of Department Ketil Karlsen, Department for Africa, Policy and Development, AFRPOL (Agenda item 1)  
Head of Department Tove Degnbol, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LÆRING  
Deputy Head of Department Henrik Larsen, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LÆRING  
Head of Section Caroline Busk Ullerup, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LÆRING
- Agenda item 2: Ambassador Ib Petersen, Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations' Office in Geneva  
Senior Policy Advisor Nanna Svejborg, Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations' Office in Geneva
- Agenda item 3: Head of Department Marie-Louise Koch Wegter, Department for Multilateral Cooperation and Policy, MULTI  
Team Leader Jacqueline Tara Hasz-Singh Bryld, Department for Multilateral Cooperation and Policy, MULTI  
Head of Section Marie My Warborg Larsen, Department for Multilateral Cooperation and Policy, MULTI
- Agenda item 4: Special Representative of Denmark to Afghanistan Lars Bo Møller, Department for Asia, Latin America and Oceania, ASILAC  
Head of Development Cooperation Bjørn Blau, Department for Asia, Latin America and Oceania, ASILAC

- Agenda item 5: Ambassador Jens Godtfredsen, Department for Migration, Peace and Stabilisation, MIGSTAB  
Special Advisor Serena Hebsgaard, Department for Migration, Peace and Stabilisation, MIGSTAB  
Student Assistant Nanna Holm, Department for Migration, Peace and Stabilisation, MIGSTAB  
Special Attaché Peter Krogh Sørensen, Royal Danish Consulate General in Istanbul (Online)
- Agenda item 6: Ambassador Stephan Schönemann, Embassy of Denmark in Nairobi  
Deputy Head of Mission Trine Grønborg, Embassy of Denmark in Nairobi  
Ambassador Kira Sindberg, Embassy of Denmark in Addis Ababa  
Special Advisor Kristian Westad Bertelsen, Embassy of Denmark in Addis Ababa

### **Agenda Item No. 1: Announcements**

The Under-Secretary for Development Policy briefed the Council for Development Policy about the plan for Denmark's engagement in Africa. He underlined that it was a whole-of-Government plan and as such, development policy was only one element. On the development policy side, the Council had already had a good dialogue with the Minister for Development and Global Climate Policy. The plan would amongst other things touch on how divisions due to geopolitics was affecting Africa, the role of climate change, and population growth. At its next meeting, the Council would receive a more in-depth presentation of the plan.

A kick-off event on March 11th with key stakeholders was planned and there would be a Nordic-Africa Foreign Ministers Meeting on 2 and 3 May. The plan would likely be published in August and focus on geo-political trends in Africa as well as a number of thematic areas of engagement and concrete actions. Development cooperation would be particularly relevant when discussing how strategic concerns in the plan could be implemented, e.g. when discussing the construction of equal partnerships.

Updating the Council on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) case, the Under-Secretary informed that Denmark had asked UNRWA for a written statement regarding the accusations and how these had been followed up on by the organisation. It was considered positive that UNRWA had acted immediately by dismissing the involved employees and that the UN had launched an investigation. An independent investigation had also been launched, involving amongst other the Danish Institute for Human Rights, with a focus on UNRWA's control mechanisms and its ability to protect its own neutrality as well as its ability to handle such serious accusations against its staff. Denmark's contribution to UNRWA was due in the first quarter of 2024 and provided that continued stern and credible action was seen from UNRWA's side, it was the intention to disburse the funds.

The Under-Secretary further briefed the Council on the Minister for Development and Global Climate Policy's visit to Ukraine where the Minister had announced Denmark's third reconstruction support package, primarily focusing on energy and de-mining.

The Under-Secretary also informed the Council about the Minister for Development and Global Climate Policy's visits to Rwanda, Uganda, and Ethiopia. The visits had a broad range of focus areas, including climate change issues, LGBT+ rights, handling of the regional refugee situation, and preparations for a Danish engagement in forestry.

Finally, the Under-Secretary briefed the Council on the worrying situation in the Sahel. The withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger would undoubtedly lead to increased divisions in the region. ECOWAS had not only played an important role in the area of security policy but had been a key player in terms of ensuring the free movement of workers which was of enormous importance in the region.

*With reference to the Rules of Procedure for the Council for Development Policy, the Chair of the Council asked if members had any conflicts of interest related to the agenda items. There were no conflicts of interest.*

## **Agenda Item No. 2: Organisation strategy, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, 2024-2028**

*For discussion and recommendation to the Minister*

DKK 750 million

Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations' Office in Geneva

### *Summary:*

*The new Organisation Strategy outlines strategic considerations and specific goals for Denmark's engagement with The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria 2024-2028. It forms the basis for the Danish financial contributions and is the platform for dialogue with the Fund. It outlines Danish priorities for The Fund's performance within the framework established in the Fund's own strategy.*

*The Council for Development Policy recommended the Organisation Strategy for The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria 2024-2028 for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy.*

The Council commended the Mission for a well-written organisation strategy. Members of the Council particularly appreciated the focus on poverty, climate change including waste disposal, civil society, and the links to the particular health mandate of the Global Fund. The Council highlighted the importance of not building parallel health systems at country level and in that regard underlined the need for a strong focus on national plans to ensure country ownership. The lack of country presence of the Fund was mentioned as a possible challenge. The Council also expressed concern that the mandate of the Fund towards three particular diseases could lead to a bias away from other important health issues and diseases.

Members of the Council asked whether the Fund could handle challenges related to the civil society in countries where civic space was increasingly being restricted, not least when it came to LGBT+ rights but also concerning other marginalised groups. The strong focus on women and especially Sexual, Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) was appreciated by the Council but it was asked whether women and children should have an even stronger focus under priority 1 in the strategy.

Members of the Council questioned the broad focus of the strategy and asked which strategic choices had been made. Denmark's financial contribution was minor compared to other donors and if we had particular policy agendas that we wanted to advance, such as e.g. SRHR, the Danish priorities had to be very sharp. The question was whether there were themes that Denmark had strategically chosen not to prioritise.

Main priorities of the strategy were seen as a continued emphasis on treatment of symptoms, whereas Members of the Council suggested that Denmark could have prioritised a more structural approach towards promoting better health systems (prevention of diseases). Related to this it was asked why the newly approved malaria vaccine was not mentioned in the strategy,

Members of the Council asked about the engagement with Non-State Actors (NSA), including Foundations, in the decision-making and how the Fund worked with these actors.

The overall budget for the Fund had increased over the years, and Members of the Council asked whether the Fund would be able to manage and absorb this increased level of funding. In this regard, the focus on risk management in the strategy was appreciated with a request for more information on how the Fund itself worked with risk mitigation.

It was highlighted that Denmark would become a member of the board of the Fund in 2027, and Members of the Council asked whether it would be worthwhile to shorten the period for the strategy to align the period with the board membership.

Finally, Members of the Council pointed out that the Programme Committee had asked for a Partner Assessment as a mandatory annex to the organisation strategy and had suggested an overview of countries where the Global Fund was operating but that this was not seen reflected in the presented draft. The minutes of the Programme Committee meeting also mentioned a mid-term review of the organisation strategy.

The Permanent Representative and Ambassador to the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the UN in Geneva thanked the Council for useful reflections, comments and questions. He underlined that with the commitment to the Fund, through participation in succeeding replenishments of the Fund, Denmark had already made a strategic choice to contribute to the overall focus and mandate of the Fund. The Fund had a specific focus on SRHR and marginalised groups and was considered a key player in these areas. With a core contribution to the Fund, Denmark accepted that activities of the Fund were not all one to one equal to Danish priorities.

The Ambassador agreed that the Danish contribution represented a small share of the overall budget of the Fund (of which 90% were funded by government donors) but pointed out that Denmark had a strong platform as a member of the 'Point Seven' group (i.e. the group of countries which provide 0.7% of BNI for development cooperation). Denmark experienced a high degree of responsiveness to its views, and as an example the Ambassador mentioned the importance of Denmark's focus on climate change which would be followed very closely throughout this strategy period. On the initiative of the 'Point Seven' group, the Fund had now scaled up its focus on the link between climate change and health.

The Ambassador underlined that it had been a focus from the establishment of the Fund not to create parallel systems. A recent assessment by the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) had found a strong alignment with country strategic plans, but the concern from Members of the Council in this regard was acknowledged, and avoiding parallel structures would continue to be a strong focus in Denmark's work with the Fund. The Ambassador stressed that in the countries, the Fund was working with communities such as schools, district authorities, and civil society to build on already existing structures and to ensure country ownership.

Concerning the question about absorption capacity, the Ambassador stressed that the board of the Fund paid a lot of attention to this matter. The main issue was not whether the Fund had a high absorption capacity but whether its partners could use allocated funds well. The focus on risk mitigation had recently been further increased and was now very high.

Finally, the Ambassador noted the comment regarding the missing Partner Assessment.

With regard to mid-term reviews of organisation strategies, the Head of the Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality informed the Council that there was a plan to simplify guidelines by removing the requirement to do mid-term reviews of organisation strategies and instead focus resources on Denmark's engagement with the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) which made comprehensive and high quality organisational assessments.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council recommended the Organisation strategy, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, 2024-2028 for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy.

### **Agenda Item No. 3: Support to Population Council 2024-2026**

*For discussion and recommendation to the Minister*

DKK 30 million

The Department for Multilateral Cooperation and policy, MULTI

*Summary:*

*The project document outlines the Danish contribution to the Population Council 2024-2026. The project enables the Population Council to continue to advance two important bodies of work: 1. The GIRL Center's evidence-generation and utilisation activities to inform policies and programmes to meet the multi-faceted needs of adolescent girls and young women (AGYW); and 2. The Center for Biomedical Research (CBR)'s dapivirine vaginal ring (DVR) portfolio of HIV prevention products that meet the needs and preferences of women throughout their lives.*

*The Council for Development Policy recommended the support to the Population Council 2024-2026 for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy.*

The Council commended the Department for Multilateral Cooperation and policy (MULTI) for a well-written and comprehensive project document and noted the importance of cultivating research and evidence within the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) agenda.

While the research field was considered a priority, Members of the Council found that ambitions concerning the production and dissemination of research could be higher. The output indicators regarding the number of papers to be published and downloaded were considered low and so was the ambition that only five decision makers should make use of the data in policy, programmatic or investment decisions. Stressing the importance of producing research which was used by decision makers, the Council asked for an elaboration on the dissemination and implementation of the evidence and products made by the Population Council. Related to this, questions were raised concerning the way the Population Council collaborated with other actors. Did the organisation both undertake research and disseminate it to end users? Could other actors possible be better equipped to interact with the users?

Members of the Council enquired if the organisation was looking into commercial possibilities for disseminating the vaginal ring. Members also wondered if there was a risk that it would not be possible to conduct clinical tests of the product.

While some members found that the overhead of 20% was large, other members emphasised that research was an expensive endeavour. Members of the Council further enquired about how much of the support was spent at Headquarters and how much was spent locally in developing countries.

Members of the Council noted that the project addressed a politically sensitive issue and asked about a mitigating strategy if certain donors such as the US would withdraw their support for the organisation in case of changes in government.

Noting that Denmark had supported the Population Council since 1998, Members of the Council enquired about Denmark's long-term strategy and goals with regard to supporting the organisation. How did the support to the Population Council fit in with the rest of Denmark's SRHR portfolio? Would it make sense to alter the support to core funding? Members of the Council also asked for a historic overview of the support to the Population Council, including a clarification of the halt in contributions between 2015 and 2020.

Finally, Members of the Council observed that Denmark had not chosen to support the organisation's goal to "Pursue justice in the face of climate and environmental changes" even though climate was part of the project scope, and asked for an elaboration of the thoughts behind this choice.

The Head of MULTI appreciated the Council's reflections, comments and questions. The Head of MULTI emphasised the importance of the Population Council collaborating with other organisations and explained that the Population Council worked closely with other actors on the implementation and distribution of the products they developed. Implementation and distribution was not described in detail, as this was not the focus of the Danish funding. The Head of Section, MULTI provided current examples of collaboration between the Population Council and other organisations within Denmark's SRHR portfolio. She underlined that the choice of the Population Council as a partner complemented the programmatic objectives of other partners in Denmark's SRHR portfolio.

The Head of MULTI took note of the reflection on the politically sensitive nature of population issues and ensured that both the team and the organisation was mindful of this in their work. The Team Leader noted that due to the research focus on HIV products which historically had been less contentious, the team did not foresee abrupt changes to the donor pool, although this was of course hard to predict.

The Head of MULTI acknowledged the comments on the ambition level under Outcome 1 and highlighted the challenging nature of capturing advocacy changes within the timeframe of three years. The Population Council had sought to set realistic quantitative goals and had good experience in capturing how change was achieved through stories and case studies. Regarding the budget and relatively large overhead, the Head of MULTI informed that this was due to the high cost of research and highlighted that the area of finance would be looked further into during a financial capacity assessment in 2024.

The Head of Section gave an overview of the support to both the Population Council and the International Partnership for Microbicides (IPM), elaborating on the process of the merge of the two organisations and thus their joint project proposal. Regarding the halt in direct contributions, the Head of Section clarified that for a few years, the Population Council received Danish support through the organisation AmplifyChange.

The Head of MULTI emphasised that the focus of the collaboration with the Population Council included the intersection between SRHR and climate change. Climate was one of six focus areas for the GIRL Centre, and research under Outcome 1 would, among other areas, investigate the intersection between climate change, gender equality and SRHR.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council recommended the support to the Population Council 2024-2026 for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy.

#### **Agenda Item No. 4: Afghanistan Transition Programme, Phase II (2024-2025)**

*For discussion and recommendation to the Minister*

DKK 270 million

The Department for Asia, Latin America and Oceania, ASILAC

##### *Summary:*

*The Afghanistan Transition Programme, phase II is a two-year continuation of the previous Transition programme, maintaining established partnerships with strong UN organisations with the addition of new engagements with The World Bank as well as the Raoul Wallenberg Institute. All interventions are undertaken together with other donors, including from amongst the likeminded Nordic countries. The programme is focussed on support to basic needs (i.e. health, education, food security, etc.) and to the rights' agenda in Afghanistan and entails substantial un-allocated funds to ensure flexibility and ability to respond to emerging needs. No funds from the programme are routed through de-facto authorities.*

*The Council for Development Policy recommended the Afghanistan Transition Programme, Phase II (2024-2025) for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy. The Council strongly recommended to consider possibilities for committing to a longer-term engagement in the future and particularly*

*continuing support to civil society. The Council asked to be informed about the outcome of the Mid-Term Review planned to be undertaken in 2025.*

The Council appreciated the continued Danish engagement in the difficult Afghan context, underlining that the previous Danish military engagement, two decades of development investments, and the dire humanitarian situation warranted continued support to the Afghan people. Any engagement entailed numerous dilemmas, including how best to support a population facing substantive humanitarian needs, without engaging with the de-facto authorities of a government that was not recognised by the international community. It was, however, important not to leave Afghanistan to its own fate as this was almost certain to lead to even greater regional and international problems.

Members of the Council regretted that the Transition Programme was not operating with a longer time frame and a larger budget. Noting that this was the second *transition* programme or framework presented to the Council in recent time, Members of the Council wondered about the long-term considerations regarding the engagement in Afghanistan and asked what the programme was transitioning from and towards. While emphasising the necessity for basic needs support, Members of the Council recommended a nexus-focus of these interventions so also recovery was included. It was asked whether planned interventions could contribute to longer-term sustainability and thus reduce pressure on humanitarian funding.

Members of the Council stated that Afghanistan, as a highly fragile state, could be seen as a test of how best to engage in such a challenging setting. It was pointed out that the 20-years' engagement in the country during the time of the republic had provided a number of lessons, including that donors were too reactive and operating with too short time frames; did not fully understand prevailing conditions and Afghan processes; and did not fully trust the abilities of local institutions. These lessons should in a forward-looking perspective necessitate a stronger focus on long-term engagement while maintaining flexibility and the ability to undertake short-term adaptation. It was essential to ensure a high degree of cooperation with provincial institutions and local actors whilst ensuring non-engagement with central authorities.

Members of the Council asked if the Department for Asia, Latin America and Oceania (ASILAC) could clarify how the programme worked with reintegrating Afghanistan in the international system as was described in the programme document.

It was noted that the programme entailed partnerships with solid multilateral partners. The support to the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights through the Raoul Wallenberg Institute was particularly commended. However, considering that multilateral actors were not always strong in adaptive learning, agility and local anchoring, Members of the Council wanted to know if other possible partners had been considered? Could multilateral organisations be encouraged to work more actively with local organisations? Members also wondered how and whether multilateral organisations worked with applying a human-rights based approach (HRBA) when much focus was on the delivery of services to secure basic needs.

The Council further enquired about the reasons for supporting two multilateral trust funds (Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund, ARTF, and the UN Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan,



STFA), and why support was routed separately to UNICEF and UN Women when STFA was a UN organisation.

Members of the Council underlined Afghanistan's status as one of the most climate change susceptible and least adaptable countries in the world. The detrimental effects of climate change thus functioned as a threat-multiplier in an already volatile setting. As such, Afghanistan offered ample opportunities for harvesting learning in this area. With the Transition Programme clearly acknowledging the effects of climate change, Members of the Council stressed that key priorities should include working on climate resistant crops, water supply and the risk of maladaptation.

Members of the Council emphasized the importance of working with civil society for the transition programme to be successful and also asked how the Transition Programme would work with the youth and what sort of jobs the ARTF had been creating in its interventions.

Finally, the Council expressed interest in being kept informed about the Mid-term Review planned to be undertaken in 2025.

The Special Representative of Denmark to Afghanistan appreciated the Council's comments and questions. He stated that the initial intention had been to develop a Strategic Framework for the overall Danish engagement with a four to five-year time frame. However, in view of the restrictive decrees of Taliban, not least against women and girls, and due to the general uncertainty regarding Afghanistan, it was decided to embark on a programme of two years (2024-2025) following the first Transition Programme that ended in 2023. The new programme would ensure a flexible approach, including a budget containing a substantial amount of unallocated funds.

The Representative acknowledged that the time frame for planning was short. He welcomed the Council's interest in the outcome of this Mid-term Review to be undertaken in 2025 and would be pleased to share the results. The Representative underlined that, based on information from implementing partners on the ground, the established donor principles were working and interventions for and with women could largely be implemented. While Denmark followed a very restrictive approach regarding contact with the Taliban regime, it was recognised that multilateral actors and implementing partners would have to engage with de-facto authorities at local level to operate on the ground. De-facto authorities were consolidating their power also at local level and together with an improved security situation, this in many ways created a smoother and more effective environment for implementation of assistance. Meanwhile, it also increased the potential pressure on e.g. civil society organisations. Especially education was a sector of concern, where developments were to be monitored closely.

The Representative further explained that the two trust funds, ARTF and STFA, both focussed on basic needs but with different approaches - STFA had activities rolled out in a regional, needs-based sequence and ARTF had a thematic focus. The funds were closely coordinating activities. ARTF used to be the main mechanism for Danish support to Afghanistan and it was important to support continued engagement of the World Bank – also to release International Development Association (IDA) funds. As UNICEF was not part of STFA, continued Danish focus on education (community based education) could only be undertaken through a separate partnership with UNICEF. The importance and political focus on the rights of women and girls warranted a separate partnership with UN Women. This was also important in order to provide support for

their role vis-à-vis ensuring women's rights as a cross-cutting consideration within UN operations.

The Head of Development Cooperation explained that basic needs interventions were indeed operating in the nexus and were essential to reduce the pressure on humanitarian funding, aimed mainly at life-saving interventions. At the same time, deliberations were ongoing in the donor community on how best to ensure more sustainable interventions, possibly through additional focus on support to the private sector, microfinance or the like. In this process, jobs created should also have a more permanent perspective. Although partnerships were with UN organisations and the World Bank, implementation of activities involved both national and international civil society organisations, which also had local presence and anchoring.

Concerning climate change, the Head of Cooperation clarified that it was part of the programme but not in the form of a separate theme. Climate change was a cross-cutting consideration in the STFA, which also contained a substantial number of climate engagements, including strengthened resilience, climate adaptation, etc. Rio markers did not apply because of registration requirements to the implementing partners.

The Head of Cooperation emphasised that any development engagement in Afghanistan came with high transaction costs – not least in order to enable female participation in the interventions.

Lastly, the Special Representative of Denmark to Afghanistan mentioned that MFA staff had undertaken a successful visit to Afghanistan in late 2023 (the first since the fall of the republic). He underlined the ambition to undertake additional visits, both to maintain better dialogue with partners and beneficiaries and to better understand the continuously evolving context.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council recommended the Afghanistan Transition Programme, Phase II (2024-2025) for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy. The Council strongly recommended to consider possibilities for committing to a longer-term engagement in the future and particularly continuing support to civil society. The Council asked to be informed about the outcome of the Mid-Term Review planned to be undertaken in 2025.

#### **Agenda Item No. 5: Capacity Building Program for Reintegration and Social Protection in Afghanistan, Phase III 2024-2026**

*For discussion and recommendation to the Minister*

DKK 13.5 million

The Department for Migration, Stabilisation and Fragility, MIGSTAB

#### *Summary:*

*The project aims to expand the services offered to returnees through PARSAs Transition to Community Program, further contributing to avenues for sustainable reintegration in Afghanistan. To support returnees in achieving economic independence, the project continues to develop an economic programme that includes an economic centre in Kabul and a national business network. This project also works to serve a wider population of vulnerable Afghan people through capacity building support for local institutions and through PARSAs wider programming.*

*The Council for Development Policy recommended the Capacity Building Program for Reintegration and Social*

*Protection in Afghanistan, Phase III 2024-2026 for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy but with important concerns about proportionality, choice of partner, and cost. The Council therefore underlined the need to prioritise cost-effectiveness in implementation, and asked for the Council to be kept informed about a future evaluation of the programme.*

The Council recognised that sender countries have a responsibility to help establishing conditions for reintegration of returnees to Afghanistan. It was acknowledged that the Capacity Building Program for Reintegration and Social Protection in Afghanistan had the ambition to contribute to avenues for sustainable integration of returnees, but the Council had a series of concerns related to the design and approach of the project, its impact, value for money, and the limited coordination with other donor agencies.

The high costs and very few beneficiaries were found to be a key deficiency of the project. Members of the Council emphasised that the project would benefit from increasing the number of beneficiaries e.g. by working jointly with other donors so more returnees from Europe could access the services offered.

Alternatively, Members of the Council suggested that Denmark could support the large number of Afghans who were forcefully returned from Pakistan and Iran, thus emphasising proportionality in relation to the very low number of individuals supported in the proposed programme. Many more returnees could potentially be supported spending the same amount of funds.

Related to this, Members of the Council asked why Denmark was not working through the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) instead of opting for a costly bilateral approach.

If Denmark had compelling reasons to support a bilateral project, Members of the Council asked why the project was not included in the Afghanistan Transition Framework.

Concerning the approach of the project, Members of the Council wondered if it would make sense to expand the scope and apply a more structural approach to reintegration. It was noted that the programme seemed to be focused primarily on Kabul, and Members wondered if provision of subsidies to individual companies did not risk crowding out businesses not supported by the project. They asked whether PARSA had undertaken a market analysis to inform the job creation component of the project.

Members of the Council also asked to know more about PARSA as an organisation and about its other activities. Were they associated with the Scout Movement? And why had PARSA been chosen as implementing partner for this project?

Members of the Council suggested to elaborate on the anti-corruption clause with a view to explaining how the rather theoretical considerations were linked to practical anti-corruption measures applied by PARSA.

Finally, Members of the Council asked for more information on the possible phasing out of Danish support that was mentioned in the programme document but not elaborated upon.

The Ambassador for Migration, Return and Readmission in the Department for Migration, Peace and Stabilisation (MIGSTAB) appreciated the Council's reflections, comments, and questions. He underlined that the programme was open to Afghan returnees from all European countries. Many European countries had a clear interest in supporting this type of engagement, and a number of other interested donors had expressed potential interest in co-supporting the PARSA programme.

In terms of cost efficiency, the Ambassador noted that the project had been thoroughly adjusted to include a broader beneficiary group, but that the funds would still primarily be spent on returnees who did not have a network in Afghanistan.

The Ambassador highlighted that the PARSA project should be seen as complementary to other programmes in Afghanistan, including UNHCR's activities. It was planned to further integrate the elements of the Danish support to Afghanistan, and it was monitored closely that the project did not take place in isolation of other engagements and the general development agenda in the Afghan society. He also noted that the current situation at the borders with Pakistan and Iran had developed since the time of the project formulation.

The Ambassador confirmed that PARSA did indeed derive from the Scout Movement. He also noted that PARSA would undertake a market analysis to inform the economic component of the programme, and that the PARSA programme included other regions of Afghanistan than Kabul.

Concerning the request for an exit strategy, the Ambassador responded that a decision on Danish exit had not been taken. It was important, however, that reintegration in Afghanistan could continue regardless of Danish funding, and increasing the number of donors was therefore considered important.

The Under-Secretary for Development Policy added that it was a general ambition in MFA to design larger programmes, and that it would be relevant to integrate the present project, which was relatively small in size, in the larger Afghanistan Transition Framework.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council recommended the Capacity Building Programme for Reintegration and Social Protection in Afghanistan, Phase III 2024-2026 for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy but with important concerns about proportionality, choice of partner, and cost. The Council therefore underlined the need to prioritise cost-effectiveness in implementation and asked for the Council to be kept informed about a future evaluation of the programme.

#### **Agenda Item No. 6: Travel to Kenya and Ethiopia (Programme and logistics)**

*For information and discussion*

The Embassy in Nairobi and the Embassy in Addis Ababa

*Summary:*

*The Council for Development Policy will be visiting Ethiopia and Kenya in April 2024. Based on a draft programme for the trip, prepared by the two embassies, the Council had a discussion about priorities concerning what to see and whom to meet.*

The ambassadors to Ethiopia and Kenya explained the programme shared with Members of the Council before the meeting. They emphasised the attempt to cover key elements in Danish development cooperation; traditional bilateral development activities, Strategic Sector Cooperation, multilateral support, humanitarian assistance, civil society support, cooperation with philanthropic foundations, and private sector cooperation. In addition, time was set aside to meet resource persons who could present an overview of the political, economic and humanitarian situation in the countries. The Council would also interact with representatives of the African Union in Addis Ababa and with high-level staff of UNEP in Nairobi. Certain choices had been made based on security considerations, whereas others had to do with logistical challenges such as traffic in Nairobi.

The Council expressed appreciation of the draft programme prepared by the two embassies. It was suggested to add resource persons who could discuss an African perspective on Europe, equal partnerships, the role of youth, and the role of the private sector.

Council Members also underlined the importance of setting aside time for a thorough debriefing at the end of the visit before departure.

After the official meeting, the Council continued the discussion of the programme and came up with more suggestions which were sent directly to the two embassies.

#### **Agenda Item No. 7: Any Other Business**

In light of recent organisational changes in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and updated abbreviations for departments in the MFA, Members of the Council requested to receive an organigram at the next meeting.