

Minutes from the meeting in the Council for Development Policy
on 20 February 2025

- Members: Professor Anne Mette Kjær, University of Aarhus (Chair)
Deputy CEO and International Director Jarl Krausing, CONCITO (Deputy Chair, Online)
Director for Global Development and Sustainability Marie Gad Hansen, Confederation of Danish Industries (DI)
Director for Nutrition Line Damsgaard, The Danish Agriculture & Food Council
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 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 Caroline Busk Ullerup, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING
Head of Section Lotte Blom Salmonsens, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING
- Agenda item 1: Chief Advisor Thomas Thomsen, Department for Humanitarian Action & Civil Society
Special Advisor Karin Eriksen, Department for the Middle East and Northern Africa
Team Leader Jacob Faber, Embassy of Denmark in Beirut (Online)
Special Advisor Anna-Sofia Olesen Yurtaslan, Embassy of Denmark in Beirut (Online)
- Agenda item 2: Deputy Head of Department Lars Von Spreckelsen-Syberg, The Department for European Neighbourhood, EUNABO
Team Leader Anne Kahl, The Department for European Neighbourhood, EUNABO
Head of Section Johanne Richter Larsen, The Department for European Neighbourhood, EUNABO
Ambassador Ole Egberg Mikkelsen, Embassy of Denmark in Kyiv

Deputy Head of Mission Jens Martin Alsbirk, Embassy of Denmark in Kyiv (Online)

Agenda item 3: Ambassador Ib Petersen, the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nation's Office in Geneva (Online)
Senior Policy Advisor Trine Lyst Hansen, the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nation's Office in Geneva (Online)

Agenda item 4: Ambassador Stephan Schønemann, the Embassy in Nairobi (Online)
Team Leader Henrik Larsen, the Embassy in Nairobi (Online)
Team Leader Tobias von Platen-Hallermund, the Embassy in Nairobi (Online)

Agenda Item No. 1: Announcements

The Under-Secretary for Development Policy briefed the Council about recent events with significance for Danish development cooperation, including the USAID stop-work-order put in place by the newly appointed Trump-administration in the USA, the situation in Syria after the fall of the Assad regime, and the first months since Denmark took its seat in the UN Security Council for the period 2025-2026. The Under-Secretary further mentioned that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) was currently undergoing a process to streamline procedures for development aid with more information to come at a later time. Finally, the Under-Secretary noted that he looked forward to discussing the coming strategy for Danish development cooperation with the Council at the Council's seminar in the beginning of March.

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. Several members, including Charlotte Slente (DRC), Marie Gad Hansen (DI), Mattias Söderberg (DanChurchAid), Jarl Krausing (CONCITO), Jonas Manthey Olsen (DUF), Line Damsgaard (The Danish Agriculture & Food Council) and Lone Ilum Christiansen (DTDA) announced a potential conflict of interest in relation to the Strategic Framework for Denmark's partnership with Ukraine 2025-2028. It was decided that all members should take part in the discussion because it concerned a strategic framework, which does not include the final allocation of funds. Reference was made to similar situations in the past. It was agreed that members with a potential conflict of interest would not express themselves about themes directly related to activities or interests of their organisations. The minutes of this agenda item should be read with this in mind.

Agenda Item No. 2: Strategic Framework: Denmark's Partnership with Ukraine 2025-2028

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

DKK 2,805 million

The Department for European Neighbourhood, EUNABO

Summary:

The new Strategic Framework for Ukraine establishes goals, priorities, and principles for Denmark's state-led development assistance to Ukraine, incorporating a broad involvement of public authorities through a 'whole-of-government' approach. Three strategic goals are at the core of the Strategic Framework: 1) Building resilience; addressing urgent and basic social needs, including early reconstruction and humanitarian assistance; 2) Energy

security, green transition and just growth; and 3) Supporting reforms and thereby EU accession; Promoting the development of democratic institutions and processes.

In the Finance Act for 2025, a total of DKK 1,700 million has been allocated for initiatives in Ukraine and the other Neighbourhood countries, corresponding to DKK 5,100 million over three years. Under the new Strategic Framework, the support efforts in Ukraine are brought together under one programme that addresses the three strategic objectives of the Strategic Framework. The programme, 'Ukraine Transition Programme' (UTP), will be implemented over a period of three years starting in July/ August 2025. The UTP will have an annual budget of DKK 935 million out of the total DKK 1.7 billion allocated annually to Ukraine and the Neighbourhood countries.

The Council for Development Policy recommended the Strategic Framework: Denmark's Partnership with Ukraine 2025-2028 for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Key observations and recommendations from the Council:

- The Council praised the Strategy Document for its overview of the many instruments and initiatives being implemented in Ukraine and appreciated the fact that the City of Mykolaiv had also submitted its inputs to the Strategy.
- The Council enquired about the scenarios and how the high uncertainty about future developments would affect the strategy and the Ukraine Transition Programme (UTP). The current unpredictable context required increased focus on flexibility and adaptability with regard to strategy and programming, and longer-term planning could be challenging in such a volatile context.
- Members of the Council wanted to know how Denmark intended to work towards implementation through Ukrainian authorities and organisations. Now that Denmark was implementing more long-term support, it would be important to secure national and local ownership. Ukrainian authorities currently had varying capacities for handling budgets and battling corruption, and while some authorities wished for more ownership, others did not. Referring to a recent review, Members of the Council also pointed to the varying success of implementation by intermediary organisations (such as UN organisations and Danish Strategic Partnership organisations). How would Denmark ensure an increased ownership by Ukrainian partners while at the same time mitigate the risk of corruption in relation to the development support?
- Members of the Council questioned the coordination among the myriad of actors, including particularly with the European Union.
- Members of the Council questioned whether there was an adequate focus on social coherence, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), inclusion, and vulnerabilities in the society. This would be particularly important in the Eastern regions after a possible ceasefire, but also in general related to both internally displaced persons (IDPs), veterans, and returnees from abroad. Council Members recommended to clarify the definition of vulnerable groups, which should also include LGBT+, Russian-speaking populations, and Roma people, and underlined the priority for development projects to

focus on marginalised populations. Along the same lines, the challenge of integrating humanitarian, peace, and development concerns, was pointed out. It was asked whether the relevant How-to notes, particularly the note on Humanitarian, development and peace (HDP), had been considered in the Strategy.

- The Council asked about the specific focus on Mykolaiv, wondering if there was a risk of contributing to an uneven or non-uniform development between Mykolaiv and other regions.
- Members of the Council stressed the importance of considering climate adaptation, options for 'Building Back Better', and conditions for agriculture, including the importance of demining. Related to this it was recommended to consider framework conditions for the private sector and further explore synergies with other financial and private instruments. The private sector component and broader Danish private sector activities in Ukraine could be described in more detail.

Other issues mentioned by the Council included the need for planning activities based on data and context analyses, and communication to the Danish population about the need for continued support to Ukraine. The Council also asked for the possibilities to see the country programme, or at least the budget and results framework for the country programme, as this information was not included in the strategy.

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

- The Deputy Head of Department for European Neighbourhood (EUNABO) acknowledged that it was challenging to work with realistic scenarios given the highly unpredictable context. A high degree of flexibility and adaptivity was required in the strategy and beyond.
- Efforts in Ukraine came with a significant risk due to the ongoing war and instability, as well as lack of personnel and national capacity. Simultaneously, widespread corruption remained a serious risk. With regard to Ukrainian ownership, Ukrainian authorities had been included early in the process of developing the three-year strategy. Furthermore, the new programme would focus on building local and national capacities, including strengthening of the capacity of the State Agency for Restore and Development of Infrastructure of Ukraine.
- The Team Leader, EUNABO agreed with the comments made regarding the importance of including vulnerable groups and efforts to enhance social cohesion in plans and across activities. The war had undermined social cohesion particularly in frontline regions, gender-based violence had increased since the invasion, and millions – including veterans, IDPs and youth – were in need of mental health and psycho-social support services. Even more so after a potential ceasefire. This would need to be addressed by Danish partners, and the flexibility built into the strategy allowed for Denmark to adjust according to needs and developments on the ground.

- The Danish Ambassador to Ukraine noted that the private sector engagement and synergy between the different instruments were integrated at embassy level in Kyiv. The Investment Fund for Developing Countries (IFU) and the Export and Investment Fund of Denmark (EIFO) and other instruments supporting the private sector had office space in the Embassy and were part of discussions and planning of Danish activities in Ukraine.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council recommended the Strategic Framework: Denmark's Partnership with Ukraine 2025-2028 for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Agenda Item No. 3: Denmark's Organisation Strategy for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) 2025-2030

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

DKK 360 million

The Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nation's Office in Geneva

Summary:

The Organisation Strategy for Denmark's engagement with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) provides the overall framework for Denmark's engagement and financial support to OHCHR in 2025-2030. The strategy presents five priority areas for Denmark's cooperation with the OHCHR: 1) strengthening civic participation and state accountability, 2) enhancing equality and countering discrimination, 3) mainstreaming human rights in development, peace, and security, 4) digital technologies serve humanity and advance human rights, and 5) action for organisational effectiveness.

The Council for Development Policy recommended the Organisation Strategy for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) 2025-2030 for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Key observations and recommendations from the Council:

- The Council took notice of the vast number of tasks to be performed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), on top of strategic decisions which required resources, such as strengthening OHCHR's presence in the field. The Council underlined that in the current situation, the work of OHCHR would require strong prioritisation between the many tasks and topics. Given that Denmark's strategic priorities largely followed those of OHCHR, the Council asked how OHCHR defined its core tasks and how Denmark's support to OHCHR could help OHCHR in its prioritisation.
- In connection with the above, the critical financial situation of OHCHR was emphasised by the Council. It was asked how OHCHR mitigated the large financial risks associated with the limited funding, including if focus was given to increasing OHCHR's part of the regular UN budget, relying on more extrabudgetary funding, or other ways of mitigation.
- The strategy's thematic focus on new technologies and artificial intelligence was highlighted by the Council. It was noted that the UN provided a unique platform to engage on these matters in a multilateral arena which was outside the EU, and that this aligned very well with Denmark's TechPlomacy effort. How did OHCHR work with this

topic, and were they inclusive towards companies, positioning themselves as a constructive partner for the private sector?

- Other issues mentioned by the Council included topics which Members found could be of relevance to Denmark's cooperation with OHCHR. Among these were support for the UN treaty bodies system, special procedures, and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism; a stronger emphasis on the Women, Peace and Security-agenda; focus on the link to Denmark's membership of the Security Council; and more emphasis on the fight against torture and the continuation of the previous level of support to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (UNVFVT). The Council expressed appreciation for Denmark's involvement in OHCHR's coming MOPAN-assessment.

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

- The Ambassador to the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations Office in Geneva noted that the strategy should be seen in the context of a long-standing push back against human rights. This push back had been exacerbated after the Trump-administration took office, which happened after the strategy was submitted to the Council.
- The Ambassador agreed with the strong need for prioritisation, which was also a focus area for Denmark's cooperation with OHCHR. At the same time, OHCHR was part of the UN secretariat and therefore bound by the mandates given by Member States. Thus, it could be difficult for OHCHR to dismiss certain topics or tasks, and it was necessary to navigate under these conditions.
- The financial situation was highlighted as a particular concern. The human rights pillar received 5 pct. of the UN's regular budget, and due to the UN liquidity crisis, OHCHR received even less in 2024. They were thus highly dependent on voluntary contributions. OHCHR had recently launched an appeal for USD 500 million voluntary contributions for 2025. It was currently expected that they would receive less than half of this, which would be critical for OHCHR's ability to work.
- As for new technologies and artificial intelligence, the Ambassador noted the Danish focus on this topic, which amongst other things had manifested in the High Commissioner's participation in a round table dialogue with tech-companies in Silicon Valley, facilitated by the Danish representation there. Denmark had also suggested OHCHR to cooperate with local chapters under the Global Compact in order to ensure genuine and constructive cooperation with Tech-companies.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council recommended the Organisation Strategy for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) 2025-2030 for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Agenda Item No. 4: Ewaso-Ng'iro Basin Water, Forest, and Climate Resilience Programme (EWFCP)

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

DKK 100 million

The Embassy of Denmark in Nairobi

Summary:

The overall objective of the programme is to enhance the socio-economic well-being and climate resilience of local communities in the Ewaso Ng'iro Basin through a combination of nature-based solutions and institutional strengthening of local water governance actors. The programme will provide institutional support for community-based water governance institutions, infrastructure for water resource management, rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems (including forest ecosystems), livelihood support, technical inputs for policy and planning, and awareness raising for stakeholders' coordination and basin management.

The Council for Development Policy recommended the Ewaso-Ng'iro Basin Water, Forest, and Climate Resilience Programme for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Key observations and recommendations from the Council:

- The Council found the programme highly relevant to the Kenya country programme and the challenges described and underlined its pilot nature. In this regard, lessons learned during the first phase of the programme would be critical to consider, potentially in collaboration with the Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality (LEARNING).
- Members of the Council appreciated the political-economy analyses which had informed the programme and stressed the likelihood of sensitive political and power dynamics as part of the programme implementation when seeking to improve availability of water resources for community members. In order to address this, Members of the Council noted the importance of including sufficient capacity-building activities for key programme institutions in the programme design before sub-grants were distributed to ensure that programme funds reached those most in need and not only those with the strongest institutional capacity.
- Members of the Council asked for more details on the forest-related activities of the programme and whether any other development partners were engaged in the programme area.
- Members of the Council enquired about the plans for scaling the programme to other basins. How did the embassy envisage this happening, and would new partners be involved? It would be important to ensure an in-depth mapping of relevant actors and potential partners in the process.
- Finally, Members of the Council stressed the importance of ownership of the various local government institutions involved in the programme through co-financing in order to ensure sustainability of programme results. Questions were asked about the management set-up of the programme, and access by the many interest groups to have a say.

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

- The Ambassador to Kenya underlined that lessons learned from implementing activities in the priority subbasins would be used to select other subbasins.
- In terms of capacity building of programme institutions, this was a fundamental element of the programme design to ensure a common basis for local institutions to access programme funds.
- The Ambassador clarified that while water resource management was at the core of the programme, many forest activities were included, e.g., introduction of energy-efficient stoves to reduce reliance on forest for fuel wood, and planting trees to increase water retention capacity for the forest.
- Further, the Ambassador explained the strong linkages between the programme and the new Strategic Sector Cooperation on water in Kenya as well as the interests from the Investment Fund for Developing Countries (IFU)/Danida Sustainable Infrastructure Finance (DSIF) to partner with the main programme partner, the Water Sector Trust Fund (WSTF).

For the sake of full transparency, the Ambassador mentioned that in September 2024, the MFA received an anonymous whistle blower report with allegations of various misconducts within WSTF. As a consequence, a C-case had been opened and the presentation of the programme to the Council had therefore been postponed. A financial audit had not found any evidence of irregularities and after a conversation with the Kenyan Office of the Auditor General, the Embassy was now confident to move ahead with the programme. An adviser will be posted to WSTF and the Embassy will be represented in a Programme Steering Committee.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council recommended the Ewaso-Ng'iro Basin Water, Forest, and Climate Resilience Programme for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Agenda Item No. 5: Any Other Business

Members of the Council enquired about Denmark's response to the Rwandan government's suspected role in the conflict in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The Under-Secretary for Development Policy agreed that the situation was serious, and noted that Denmark had called on Rwanda to immediately withdraw their forces from DRC territory and to cease its support to the M23 rebel group.