Minutes from the meeting in the Council for Development Policy on 21 November 2024

Members: Professor Anne Mette Kjær, University of Aarhus (Chair)

Director for Global Development and Sustainability Marie Gad Hansen, Confederation of Danish Industries (DI)

Director for Nutrition Line Damsgaard, The Danish Agriculture & Food Council

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) Political Director Jonas Manthey Olsen, Danish Youth Council (DUF)

Head of Secretariat Lone Ilum Christiansen, The Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA) and Chief Advisor Mattias Söderberg, DanChurchAid had shared written comments but did not take part in the meeting.

MFA: Secretary for Development Policy Lotte Machon

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

Student Assistant Lotte Blom Salmonsen, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING

Agenda item 1: Deputy Head of Department Fenja Yamaguchi-Fasting, Department for Africa, Development Policy and Financing, AFRPOL

Agenda item 2: Head of Department Birgitte Nygaard Markussen, Department for Humanitarian Action & Civil Society, HUMCIV

Chief Adviser Marie Groth Kruse, Department for Humanitarian Action & Civil Society, HUMCIV

Head of Section Caroline Emma Troen, Department for Humanitarian Action & Civil Society, HUMCIV

Agenda item 3: Head of Department Birgitte Nygaard Markussen, Department for Humanitarian Action & Civil Society, HUMCIV

Chief Adviser Mia Steninge, Department for Humanitarian Action & Civil Society, HUMCIV

Chief Adviser Andreas Møller Andersen, Department for Humanitarian Action & Civil Society, HUMCIV

Special Adviser Mette Vinggaard Hellerung, Department for Humanitarian Action & Civil Society, HUMCIV

Agenda item 4: Ambassador Ib Petersen, Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nation's Office in Geneva (Online)

Senior Policy Advisor Aino Askgaard, Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nation's Office in Geneva (Online)

Intern Katrine German Knudsen, Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nation's Office in Geneva (Online)

Agenda item 5: Head of Secretariat Anette Aarestrup, Secretariat for Government-to-Government Cooperation, MYNSEK

Chief Advisor Bjarke Kofod Scheutz, Secretariat for Government-to-

Government Cooperation, MYNSEK

Head of Department Jakob Heltoft, City of Copenhagen Special Advisor Frej Witt Skovhus, City of Copenhagen Special Advisor Nanna Rosenfeldt, City of Copenhagen

Head of Section Kristoffer Nordal Rode la Cour, City of Copenhagen

Agenda item 6: Deputy Head of Department, Lars Von Spreckelsen-Syberg, Department for European Neighbourhood, EUNABO

Team Leader, Anne Kahl, European Neighbourhood, Department for European Neighbourhood, EUNABO

Chief Advisor, Mogens Blom, European Neighbourhood, Department for

European Neighbourhood, EUNABO

Special Advisor, Karin Nielsen, European Neighbourhood, Department for European Neighbourhood, EUNABO

Agenda Item No. 1: Announcements

The Secretary for Development Policy briefed the Council about Israel's new law to ban the UN Relief and Works Agency's (UNRWA) operations and about the ongoing negotiations at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The Deputy Head of Department for Africa, Development Policy and Financing further briefed the Council about the formulation and consultation process of the new strategy for development cooperation, emphasising that the substance of the strategy would be formulated during the first half of 2025 and that at the moment there was nothing new. The Chair of the Council responded by thanking the Deputy Head for the information and by emphasising the importance of the Council being able to offer constructive input for the Strategy.

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: Danish Support to DIGNITY 2025-2029

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

DKK 290 million

The Department for Humanitarian Action & Civil Society, HUMCIV

Summary:

The Danish Support to DIGNITY 2025-2029 builds upon Denmark's longstanding work for a world without torture. The project responds to the global challenge of prevalent torture and other forms of violence and limited access to human rights of survivors to access rehabilitation and justice. Through a combination of collaborative research, advocacy at multiple levels, and development partnerships with local actors across four regions and eight countries, the project will complement Denmark's goals of promoting and protecting a human rights and international rules-based order with strong partners.

The Council for Development Policy recommended the Danish Support to DIGNITY 2025-2029 for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

- The Council appreciated the support to DIGNITY but questioned the choice of modality i.e., that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) continues to support DIGNITY with project support rather than core funding. It seemed counter-intuitive to describe the support as a "project" when in fact, it comprised of several smaller projects. It was also not clear to the Council whether the project document was actively used by DIGNITY, and it was recommended to consider more generally how Denmark could best work with organisations such as DIGNITY when tapping into their existing projects that already had clear objectives in place.
- The support seemed to aim for systemic change, and while commendable, this required close cooperation with other actors. As such, Members of the Council suggested that the project document should better reflect DIGNITY's collective efforts on the anti-torture agenda and illustrate how the grant complemented other efforts. Likewise, the document should clarify how the support supplemented MFA's broader efforts on the anti-torture agenda, including diplomatic dialogue.
- Council Members enquired about the reintegration of victims of torture into society and whether there was an exit strategy in place. While the support did include a focus on dealing with the mental aspects of being a victim of torture, the focus on livelihoods could be strengthened. In this regard, it might be relevant to reach out to the private sector and local labour unions or engage in an activation programme to ensure that victims were properly reintegrated into society. It would also be relevant to incorporate the "Do No Harm" principle which was currently not mentioned in the document, to ensure that efforts were made to avoid any possible unintended consequences of MFA's support.
- There was a request for more information on concrete results from the current grant with DIGNITY (2021-2024) in order to assess the proposed results in the new grant. In this regard, Council Members noted that many civil society organisations (CSOs) working on anti-torture were under pressure and that goals set for such CSOs may be too ambitious. Considerations about an exit strategy were requested.

Other issues raised by the Council included the selection process of countries; whether efforts were spread too thinly across countries and partners; and how much of the budget was spent on staff and salaries.

MFA's response to key issues:

- The Head of Department for Humanitarian Action & Civil Society (HUMCIV)
 acknowledged that the modality was somewhat counter-intuitive. In 2021, MFA
 agreements with all human rights and democracy organisations changed into project
 support to enhance documentation of specific results. The possibility of using core
 funding would be reconsidered at a later stage.
- MFA's collective efforts on anti-torture included work with anti-torture resolutions within the UN, support to other CSOs, including Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) and International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), as well as the work of the Danish Embassy in Uganda together with DIGNITY in combatting torture and violence in Uganda. The Chief Adviser, HUMCIV added that a more concerted and holistic thinking had become more prevalent in both DIGNITY and MFA.
- The details of an exit strategy were still being discussed with DIGNITY, and the Council's comments were duly noted. The Head of HUMCIV agreed with the need to include the "Do No Harm" principle in relation to crisis and volatile country situations, especially as DIGNITY planned efforts in Burkina Faso, Myanmar, and Palestine.
- DIGNITY was a highly credible partner, well-equipped in the fight against torture. The Head of Section, HUMCIV noted that the results framework built upon results from the previous grant, which included many of the same partners and countries. A concrete result was the improved partner capacity to document cases of international crimes and human rights violations, including cases of torture, in Ukraine and Palestine. Results from the previous grant period would be shared with Members after the meeting.

The Chair of the Council concluded that <u>the Council recommended the Danish Support to DIGNITY 2025-2029 for approval</u> by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Agenda Item No. 3: Information about the programming of the unallocated funds of the Digital Democracy Initiative (DDI)

For information and discussion

The Department for Humanitarian Action & Civil Society, HUMCIV

Summary:

The Digital Democracy Initiative (DDI) is a global flagship programme with the objective of safeguarding inclusive democracy and human rights in the digital age. Due to additional funding from the Danish Government, the EU grant (EUR 11 million) and the Norwegian contribution (NOK 10 million), DKK 148 million were reserved for a call for proposals to identify additional partners and projects under 3 lots: 1) Combatting Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence; 2) Leveraging digital technologies for climate activism, and 3) Strengthening youth engagement in the digital democratic space. The call was launched in May 2024 and based on the outcome

of an assessment process, grants would be awarded to three consortia headed by the following organisations: Fundación Fondo de Mujeres del Sur, IWGLA, and European Partnership for Democracy (EPD).

Key observations and recommendations from the Council:

- The Council noted that the Digital Democracy Initiative (DDI) included a large range of activities in several countries and with many partner-organisations. The Council asked how learning and sharing of best practices were organised across the programme. Had sufficient resources been set aside for securing learning and coordination of the programme more generally? And was there still a Global hub of knowledge associated with the initiative?
- The Council observed that the collaboration with the private sector was limited in the programme. It seemed that within the private sector the programme had focused more on keeping Tech giants in check, rather than involving private sector actors who were interested in supporting democratisation. There seemed to be a large untapped potential in terms of involving the private sector. This was something that the Council had brought up in previous discussions, and as such, Members of the Council asked what options for private sector involvement had been investigated and why it had not been considered relevant. The existing cooperation between UNICEF and LEGO as well as between UNDP and cBrain were mentioned as good examples to draw inspiration from.
- While some challenges in the digital sphere were global, such as the prevalence of fake news, Council Members also emphasised that the digital sphere was highly localised in terms of how it was used. The importance of maintaining a focus on localisation was highlighted, as was the need to ensure that the consortia provided room for manoeuvre further down the system and at the local level.

Other issues mentioned by the Council included the implementation of the programme in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa; the materialisation of the priority on global advocacy and policy; the functioning of the administrative set-up of the programme; the relevance of using calls for proposals to identify the best activities to support; how to work with digital literacy, and the importance of linking the work of the programme to existing systems, including to the work of governments, to ensure sustainability.

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

- The Head of Department for Humanitarian Action & Civil Society (HUMCIV) stressed that learning was an important aspect of DDI and was discussed at quarterly meetings held by the Programme Coordination Group. The Knowledge HUB was facilitating cross-programme learning through a community of practice.
- There had been a push-back from the implementing partners on working with the private sector. In collaboration with the TECH Ambassador's office, the Programme Management Team had organised a side-event co-hosted by Microsoft at UNGA79, where several private sector actors had engaged in an exchange on "The Road to an

- inclusive and rights-respecting digital future". The team was determined to continue the dialogue with the private sector.
- Localisation had been in focus since the start of the DDI programme. Sub-granting was the main method used to secure support to small local organisations. These local partners were included in the design of both the financial and non-financial support mechanisms through regional co-design workshops run by CIVICUS.

Agenda Item No. 4: Organisation Strategy for Denmark's Engagement with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) 2025 – 2028

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

DKK 340 million

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

Summary:

The Organisation Strategy for Denmark's engagement with the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) 2025-2028 provides the overall framework for Denmark's engagement and financial support to the ICRC. The strategy presents five priority areas for Denmark's cooperation with the ICRC: 1) Protection and delivery of essential services to people affected by conflict; 2) Promotion and compliance with international human rights law (IHL); 3) Synergies between humanitarian and development efforts/Sustainable Humanitarian Impact (HDP-nexus); 4) Climate and conflict; and 5) Enhance organisational efficiency and effectiveness of the ICRC.

The Council for Development Policy recommended the Organisation Strategy for Denmark's Engagement with the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) 2025-2028 for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

- On the organisational matter, the Council welcomed ICRC's readiness to engage with the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) as this was an important tool in assessing the general performance, results, and organisational effectiveness of organisations. Members of the Council noted the lack of a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) at management level until recently. Furthermore, Members of the Council argued to focus more on results at outcome level in order to better assess impact and the importance of Denmark following up on how the ICRC receives MOPAN evaluation recommendations.
- Members of the Council questioned the number of priorities and asked whether it had been considered to narrow it down. Especially the inclusion of climate was pointed out, emphasising that the ICRC primarily was a humanitarian organisation. Other Members of the Council agreed to the importance of the inclusion of climate as a Danish priority, and welcomed the ICRC's work on climate exemplified by the ICRC's and the IFRC's Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organisations. Members of the Council highlighted the need for the development of an action plan and more sustainable procurement important next steps, as 75 per cent of ICRC's activities consist in buying goods and services.

- In light of an increasing number of violent conflicts and geopolitical changes, Members of the Council asked for an elaboration of the ICRC's neutrality and what it meant. They stressed that the principle of neutrality was facing a contextual challenge.
- Members of the Council found that the issue of localisation seemed weak in the strategy,
 e.g., under priority area 3 on nexus-approaches and suggested more explicit mentioning
 of it to underline the importance of Denmark ascribing the use of localisation in ICRC's
 operations.

Other issues raised by the Council included how the strategy would align with the new strategy for Denmark's development cooperation, ICRC's ability to put pressure on governments in regards to the International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and the diversity of ICRC staff.

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

- The Ambassador, The Permanent Mission of Denmark to the UN in Geneva, emphasised that the ICRC, under their new leadership, had undergone a significant restructuring of the organisation, and now had an increased focus on results, oversight and financing, as exemplified by the appointment of the new CFO at director level and the engagement in a MOPAN assessment. Previously, ICRC but also some donors had been reluctant towards MOPAN given that ICRC was not an intergovernmental organisation. Regarding the quantitative outcomes, the Ambassador underlined that although some of the outcome numbers were small, the effort of reaching these were substantial.
- Regarding the inclusion of climate as a priority, the Ambassador emphasised that it was also a priority for ICRC and referred to the two resolutions related to climate adopted at the recent 34th International Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference in Geneva.
- The Ambassador pointed out that neutrality was key for the ICRC, but also agreed that ICRC was challenged and often attacked from both sides of a conflict, which actually could be seen as a confirmation of its ability to keep its neutrality. The principal of neutrality was essential and strongly supported by Denmark, not least given that ICRC was currently challenged in their role in protection work and access in spite of states obligations under IHL.
- The Ambassador took note on the comments regarding localisation and agreed that this
 could be highlighted more explicitly in the strategy. The Ambassador mentioned ICRC's
 work with the national societies and other local actors, and the importance of the nexusapproach where these actors should take over from ICRC when possible as part of
 localisation.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council recommended the Organisation Strategy for Denmark's Engagement with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) 2025 – 2028 for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Agenda Item No. 5: Strategic Sector Cooperation Framework Programme with the City of Copenhagen

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister
DKK 59.7 million
Secretariat for Government-to-Government Cooperation, MYNSEK

Summary:

The objective of the Strategic Sector Cooperation Framework Programme with the City of Copenhagen is to make citizens of partner cities more resilient to climate change, to improve their quality of life, and to make cities cleaner and more efficient in their use of resources. This will be aimed at by sharing experience, building capacity, and demonstrating solutions based on partner cities' demand within two thematic areas: (i) sustainable urban planning with a focus on green surface water management and mobility, and (ii) sustainable resource management within energy efficiency, water and waste. Just transition and green jobs creation are promoted throughout the entire programme. Lessons learned from the cooperation will be shared with other cities through the C40 network and with national governments to inspire change at national level.

The Council for Development Policy recommended the Strategic Sector Cooperation Framework Programme with the City of Copenhagen for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

- While commending the framework programme for addressing the climate adaptation and reduction agenda in cities through capacity building, Members of the Council pointed to the risk of emphasising overall conditions for the cooperation and planning processes too much at the expense of creating specific results on the ground. This was reflected in the results framework, which tended to focus on the drafting of plans as outcomes rather than actual activities in each of the partner cities.
- It was appreciated by the Council that the programme was reflecting an understanding of poverty as a key problem in partner cities and it was suggested that it could more explicitly address issues such as access and rights to resources, job creation, and inclusion of vulnerable groups such as young people. In this respect, the importance of understanding the socio-economic and political diversity across and within partner cities was underlined, and the Council asked whether the City of Copenhagen had the capacity needed to handle the challenging and complex tasks of working with many different activities and therefore how to best combine depth and breadth in the partnerships. The Council recommended that a possible fourth partner city should be an African city.
- Coordination both with relevant other actors in Denmark and with the many actors in each of the partner cities was stressed as important. The private sector was particularly highlighted but the role of civil society organisations and trade unions was also emphasised. Members of the Council mentioned both positive experience from around the world of cooperating with individual private companies and finance institutions and negative experience of privatising resources such as drinking water.

• The Council commended the programme for its emphasis on mutual learning and asked for specific examples of what the City of Copenhagen would gain from engaging in the programme.

Other issues mentioned by the Council was how the framework programme aligned with the international strategy of the City of Copenhagen, the budget for staff, for activities, and for courses run by Danida Fellowship Centre, and the overall governing bodies of the programme and the joint-decision making bodies at project level.

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

• The Head of Secretariat for Government-to-Government Cooperation thanked for the Council's comments and acknowledged the challenge of having an overall results framework for a number of highly diverse cities and activities, while specific results were at the project level. An ongoing revision of guidelines was addressing the problem and aimed at a more informative presentation with more focus on the individual strategic sector cooperation (SSCs) in results reporting. She also explained the composition of the budget and the related budget lines in the Finance Act.

City of Copenhagen response to key issues:

- The Head of Department, City of Copenhagen, confirmed that poverty was considered a
 key concern in the programme, that social indicators were important, and that the task of
 Copenhagen was understood as providing capacity support to partner cities based on their
 demand, while at the same time maintaining a focus on the most vulnerable population
 groups.
- He further assured that the SSC projects were backed by the capacity of all parts of the City administration and associated utility companies. The political level in the City of Copenhagen was supportive of the projects, as they saw it as a responsibility to share relevant knowledge, whilst at the same time gaining knowledge through expert-to-expert cooperation. As an example of the interest of Copenhagen in the partnerships, he mentioned the possibility of getting inspiration for handling of the waste management where the learning need was continuous.
- The Head of Department reassured the Council that current and future projects would continue to focus on climate action, decent job creation, and combatting inequality, in line with standards set by C40 and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). He acknowledged the recommendation by the Council to select more African cities, while also explaining that Ukraine had high political priority in the City of Copenhagen.
- The Special Advisor, City of Copenhagen, stressed that the primary focus of City of Copenhagen was to assist partner cities with specific activities on the ground. As an example, support to recyclers (people collecting waste) in Columbia was mentioned.
- In addition to the utilities of the City of Copenhagen, the private sector was included where relevant such as e.g., used to showcase possible solutions to specific technical and

other challenges. When a solution had been tested, various private funding arrangements were often brought into the partnership by the partner cities.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council recommended the Strategic Sector Cooperation Framework Programme with the City of Copenhagen for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Agenda Item No. 6: Annual Stocktaking: Eastern Neighbourhood Programme

For information and discussion

The Department for European Neighbourhood, EUNABO

Summary:

The 2024 Stocktaking report for the Neighbourhood Programme encompasses projects and programmes under the initial Neighbourhood Programme 2022-2026 as well as the "Revised Strategic Framework: Denmark's partnership with the Eastern Neighbourhood Countries 2023-26" which was approved ultimo 2023 with the aim to reflect the changed security situation in Ukraine and the region with subsequent adjusted Danish strategic and geographical priorities. The strategic objectives of the framework are focused on: 1) conflict management, building resilience and addressing acute and humanitarian needs as we are supporting reconstruction; 2) Reform and EU integration, development of democratic institutions and processes; and 3) Sustainable and just growth, green transition and increased energy independence. The Neighbourhood Programme is financed through an annual commitment, and new engagements are therefore approved continuously through the whole programme period.

- Members of the Council noted the various sources of financing that constitute the Danish support to Ukraine and questioned how the strategic orientation and learning were ensured while working with various funding sources and through different programme modalities. Was there a risk of duplicating efforts? And could synergies be explored to a larger extent?
- The risk of corruption in especially Ukraine was a big concern for the Council who enquired as to how this risk could be further mitigated. Members of the Council observed that some high-profile cases had been investigated, which was very positive, and the Council commended the Danish/EU-funded Anti-corruption programme (EUACI). Continued successful anti-corruption interventions were crucial both to attract Danish and foreign private sector investments and for the further implementation and consolidation of the reform agenda and steps towards EU accession.
- Members of the Council questioned how the Department for European Neighbourhood (EUNABO) would maintain a long-term development perspective in Ukraine where the volatile and unpredictable situation made long-term planning difficult. Maintaining and strengthening social cohesion in a war-affected country, including to cater for the needs of people living behind or close to the front line, was challenging, and Members of the Council wondered if Denmark could engage further to secure humanitarian access to the occupied areas.

- The importance of the Ukrainian agricultural production was observed this crucial theme was not addressed in the report and seemed to not be included in the Danish Neighbourhood Programme.
- Members of the Council noted that EU accession while generating many opportunities also brought with it a more competitive environment and more regulatory requirements for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It would be important to consult with the private sector to ensure that SMEs felt the future benefits of EU accession more than the obstacles.
- The political situation in Georgia was brought up by Members of the Council, not least the approval of the "foreign agents" law in Georgia and the shrinking space for civil society activity. How would this be addressed in the further implementation of the Neighbourhood Programme?

Other issues mentioned by the Council included the strategic approach of the Neighbourhood Programme in its work to ensure a strong involvement of civil society; the continued interest of youth to engage in cooperation in Ukraine/the Neighbourhood region; as well as the importance of maintaining a strong commitment among the Danish public for the support to Ukraine.

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

- The Chief Advisor, EUNABO explained how the "Ukraine Fund" was a structure based on several accounts in the Finance Act pertaining to the overall Danish military, civil and private sector support to Ukraine. Coordination of Danish support to Ukraine took place in the overall Steering Committee (with representatives from both the Ukrainian Ministry of reconstruction and representatives from Mykolaiv) and through the Embassy's Mykolaiv office. Synergy and coordination across Danish supported activities were facilitated through NGO-Forum and regular meetings with implementing partners.
- Measures to address the risk of corruption were integrated across projects and programmes in Ukraine and the rest of the region. Civil society support was an important element in the fight against corruption.
- The Deputy Head of EUNABO informed the Council that Denmark had recently been included in the G7+ donor coordination due to the substantial Danish support to Ukraine. This coordination also encompassed thematic sub-groups.
- Long-term planning was difficult in the current situation in Ukraine. However, EUNABO had initiated a process to develop a three-year bilateral transition programme for the support to Ukraine. Consultations were ongoing with Ukrainian partners, and the programme would focus on agility and flexibility to adjust to the changing context.
- The Deputy Head of EUNABO noted that the latest figures reflected a quite positive level of agricultural production and income, but of course with substantial internal differences between various parts of Ukraine. Danish support to the sector was catered for in the reconstruction support and did also encompass the assignment of a Strategic Sector Advisor deployed at the Danish Embassy in Kyiv.

• Regarding the situation in Georgia, the Team Leader, EUNABO informed that the situation had been followed very closely in the past year, e.g., through close dialogue with partners. Denmark would align with the EU position on this matter. A mission to Georgia was scheduled to explore how to continue the cooperation with local civil society partners.

Agenda Item No. 7: Any Other Business

No issues were raised under this agenda item.