

**Minutes from meeting in the Council for Development Policy**  
**on 30 October 2025**

- Members: Professor Anne Mette Kjær, University of Aarhus (Chair)  
Chief Advisor Mattias Söderberg, DanChurchAid  
Head of Secretariat Lone Ilum Christiansen, The Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA)  
Senior Researcher Adam Moe Fejerskov, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS)  
Director for Nutrition Line Damsgaard, The Danish Agriculture & Food Council  
Senior Vice President for Global Development and Sustainability Marie Gad Hansen, Confederation of Danish Industries (DI)
- Regrets from: Deputy CEO and International Director Jarl Krausing, CONCITO (Deputy Chair)  
Secretary General Charlotte Slente, Danish Refugee Council (DFC)  
Director Charlotte Flindt Pedersen, Danish Foreign Policy Society  
Political Consultant and Project Officer of DAPP Lucas Højbjerg, The Danish Chamber of Commerce  
Political Director Jonas Manthey Olsen, Danish Youth Council (DUF)
- 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 Lotte Blom Salmonsén, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING  
Student Assistant Nanna Kirkegaard, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING
- Agenda item 2: Deputy Head of Department Christian Palomäki Nybroe Arnesen, Department for Migration, Stabilisation and Peace, MIGSTAB  
Chief Advisor Nicolaj Sønderbye, Department for Migration, Stabilisation and Peace, MIGSTAB
- Agenda item 3: Ambassador Karin Poulsen, The Embassy of Denmark in Pretoria  
Team Leader Tine Anbæk, The Embassy of Denmark in Pretoria
- Agenda item 4: Deputy Head of Department Simon Wandel, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA

Chief Counsellor Jesper Hilsted Andersen, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA

Agenda item 5: Deputy Head of Department Jane Werngreen Rosales, Department for Multilateral Cooperation, MULTI  
Team Leader Signe Schelde, Department for Multilateral Cooperation, MULTI  
Special Advisor Tao Malte Ask Andersen, Department for Multilateral Cooperation, MULTI

Agenda item 6: Head of Department Ketil Karlsen, Department for Africa, Development Policy and Financing, AFRPOL  
Team Leader Mette Strand Gjerløff, Department for Africa, Development Policy and Financing, AFRPOL  
Head of Section Mie Sofie Nielsen, Department for Africa, Development Policy and Financing, AFRPOL  
Head of Department Anne Dorothea Bruun Aubry, Department for Public Diplomacy, Press and Communication, KOM  
Special Advisor Synne Nyrop Henriques, Department for Public Diplomacy, Press and Communication, KOM

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

The Under-Secretary opened the meeting by an orientation regarding the preparation of COP30. He highlighted the accelerating climate change especially with temperatures now rising by 0.3 degrees Celsius every ten years instead of 0.15 degrees Celsius as previously expected. At the same time geopolitics and other priorities globally were deferring the negotiations on climate solutions. He underlined the increasing mis- and disinformation on climate challenges. The Under-Secretary informed the Council, that climate adaptation would be a priority on COP30 as well as innovative solutions on climate adaptation financing.

Further, the Under-Secretary spoke of the situation in Palestine and highlighted the positive news regarding a humanitarian agreement incorporated in the Gaza peace plan. He emphasised that there was still a long way to go, but it was a more positive scenario than we had seen so far.

The Under-Secretary briefed the Council on a re-allocation of DKK 56.6 million from a Danida Sustainable Infrastructure Finance (DSIF) project, Zaporizhzhia Wastewater and Sludge Treatment, to two new DSIF project in the Mykolaiv region. The re-allocation was approved by the Minister for Foreign Affairs on 24 October after the project in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine was no longer able to implement the project due to the Russian invasion. After the reform in DSIF

in 2024 the new projects follow Impact Fund Denmark's (IFDK) guidelines, and the implementing partner continued to be Nefco. Therefore, the case only regarded the changed application of existing funds.

Finally, the Under-Secretary gave a brief account of the Management Response to the recommendations of the Evaluation of Danish Development Cooperation, presented in the Council's meeting on 2 October. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomed the findings and recommendations, of which many were considered of key strategic importance. This particularly regarded the finding that during recent years, a significant share of Danish development cooperation had been concentrated in Copenhagen (as opposed to in embassies) and the recommendation to address the increasing fragmentation of the cooperation by supporting fewer and larger programmes. The evaluation is expected to be published before the end of the year.

*With reference to the Rules of Procedure for the Council for Development Policy, the Chair of the Council asked if members had any conflict of interest related to the agenda items. No member announced potential conflict of interest.*

## **Agenda Item No. 2: Danish Support to the Rome Process/Mattei Plan Financing Facility (RPFF)**

*For discussion and recommendation to the Minister*

DKK 70 million

Department for Migration, Stabilisation and Peace (MIGSTAB)

### *Summary:*

*The support to the RPFF programme is a new migration programme designed to support key development areas and improve living conditions in partner countries in Africa with an aim to address root causes of irregular migration. This includes support in areas such as infrastructure, climate, energy, and job opportunities for youth and women. The project is implemented through the African Development Bank (AfDB) that supports African States with technical assistance, loans and/or grants. The support is designed to complement existing support to the African States through the AfDB as it specifically focuses on root causes of irregular migration. The programme also complements the existing migration portfolio by addressing concerns of key migration host countries, which have strongly demanded this kind of support.*

*The Council for Development Policy recommended Danish Support to the Rome Process/Mattei Plan Financing Facility (RPFF) for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs but stressed that the reputational risk for Denmark of supporting the programme was an important concern. Other reservations included the added value of the programme, the lack of inclusion by African partners, and therefore possibilities for ensuring national ownership, which could counteract the purpose of Denmark's Strategy for Engagement with Africa.*

### **Key observations and recommendations from the Council:**

- At the strategic level, the Council noted that the Rome process had been widely criticised by the public e.g. for lacking genuine partnership with African countries, supporting fragmented projects, and having a pronounced Italian bias. Lack of genuine partnership could risk contradicting the core aims of Denmark's Africa Strategy. The Council raised concern about the reputational risks for Denmark of supporting the programme and also mentioned that Italy and the United Arab Emirates were not like-minded with Denmark on development cooperation. The Council found that the programme did not live up to the vision of equal partnership with African countries expressed in the Africa Strategy and the development strategy. While Council Members commended MIGSTAB for having managed to establish a holistic approach to the migration portfolio in the four existing programmes, concern was expressed about whether this programme could be counterproductive.
- The Council expressed a need for further clarity on the added value of the programme vis-à-vis the other four large migration programmes, and the reasoning behind supporting this Facility when Denmark was already channelling significant support through the African Development Bank (AfDB) in similar areas such as access to water, infrastructure, clean energy, etc.
- Questions were raised with regard to the role of the Governance Council, its set-up with the AfDB, the role of donors and Denmark's role, the role of Danish Embassies in the dialogue on implementation, and the ownership of African countries.
- At the technical level, the Council noted that the theory of change was rather broad and perhaps a little far stretched when it came to the relationship between infrastructure activities and migration. Also, the broad assumptions were pointed out. Council Members furthermore asked for more explanation about project identification and criteria for selection of projects (loans, grants, technical assistance). The risks of fragmentation in the form of too many and too small projects was also observed.
- Members of the Council found it positive that an indicator on employment indeed had been included in the results framework but recommended further elaboration so it also considered aspects such as vocational education and training, jobs for youth and women, decent jobs, and employment of nationals versus foreigners.

*Other issues mentioned by the Council* included assessment of the countries' possibilities for repaying loans, AfDB procurement requirements, and synergies with EU Global Gateway.

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

- The Deputy Head of MIGSTAB addressed the concern about reputational risks and said that similar concerns had been considered upon during the formulation process. It had been established, however, that the criticism of the Rome process did not relate to the

AfDB Facility per se. Furthermore, the support to the Facility was only a part of the Rome process. The RPFF was implemented by the AfDB, a trusted partner of Denmark, and the AfDB had ensured that the support was demanded and owned by the African States. The Emirates was a new donor indeed, but only a minor donor compared to Italy, which was a key player on migration cooperation and already engaged in the collaboration on the Danish migration portfolio.

- On the added value of the Facility, the Chief Advisor MIGSTAB emphasised that this programme was in fact “the glue” that could facilitate a more effective implementation of the four other large migration programmes and help form an equal and strategic long-term partnership on safe, orderly and rights-based migration with partners in the Global South. In recent years, economic migrants from Tunisia and Egypt had been amongst the top nationalities arriving to Italy due to lack of job opportunities in their home countries. There was a significant need to support these countries with economic development that could address outward migration and reduce irregular migration. Furthermore, he highlighted that joining the RPFF would broaden and underpin Denmark’s engagement with a number of key countries in primarily Northern Africa, while also providing opportunities for access to increased dialogue through Italy’s strong links to countries such as Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya. Concerning the Governing Board, the Chief Advisor informed that Denmark would be a member. The Board would meet quarterly, and Denmark expected to be able to influence the collaboration with AfDB as the main actor as well as monitoring and mitigation of risks.
- The Chief Advisor acknowledged that the theory of change indeed had a very long-term perspective. Meanwhile, there was plenty of studies from e.g. the World Bank and the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) that indicated that supporting economic development may reduce migration or curb irregular migration. Other evidence suggested that development could lead to increased migration. The important point was to support the partner countries’ development and pathways towards a more safe, orderly, and rights-based migration.
- With regard to the results framework, the Chief Advisor informed that targets and indicators would be further finetuned during the inception and implementation. He agreed that decent jobs, integrating youth or women’s economic empowerment, human rights, and gender equality were key issues which should be reflected, and he added that this was also part of AfDB’s core principles. Projects and future pipeline would be developed and implemented in accordance with AfDB’s ”Integrated Safeguards System and Human Rights”.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council recommended Danish Support to the Rome Process/Mattei Plan Financing Facility (RPFF) for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs but stressed that the reputational risk for Denmark of supporting the programme was an important concern. Other reservations included the added value of the programme, the lack of

inclusion by African partners, and therefore possibilities for ensuring national ownership, which could counteract the purpose of Denmark's Strategy for Engagement with Africa.

### **Agenda Item No. 3: Water Reform Programme Support for Sustainable and Reliable Urban Water Supply in South Africa**

*For discussion and recommendation to the Minister*

DKK 300 million

The Embassy of Denmark in Pretoria

#### *Summary:*

*The overall purpose of the Water Reform Programme Support (WRSP) is to improve South African's access to sustainable and reliable water supply that is more resilient to climate change. The programme will contribute to change through four mutually reinforcing projects that all support the implementation of South Africa's comprehensive structural reform programme addressing the crisis of municipal water services provision. The programme builds on synergies with strategic sector cooperation and trade and investment and will include Danish technology and solutions where feasible.*

*The Council for Development Policy recommended the Water Reform Programme Support for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.*

#### **Key observations and recommendations from the Council:**

- The Council commended the programmatic approach, combining climate and development and a mix of instruments, in support of structural reform. Members asked how the WRPS was related to the DKK 1 billion to water in Africa in the finance act 2025. Questions were furthermore raised on how the programme was linked to the new financing tools currently being developed by the MFA.
- Members of the Council enquired how ownership by national authorities and the involved municipalities would be promoted and to what extent users would be represented in programme-related dialogue.
- Members of the Council were under the impression that the bulk of the programme would be implemented by the Embassy and enquired how this considerable task would be managed by the Embassy team.
- The Council raised the issue of poverty reduction remarking that end users were mentioned but not further detailed as part of programme beneficiaries and further asked how the programme would work with poor municipalities noting that some projects would prioritise reform friendly municipalities.
- In light of the considerable SSC engagement in the water sector in South Africa (national and urban levels), Members asked how synergies would be unpacked between WRPS and

this portfolio as well as to the growing engagement of Impact Fund Denmark in South Africa.

- Given the substantial Danish engagement in water sector activities in other countries on the Continent, Council Members highlighted the importance of finding ways to bring into play experience and lessons gained across the broad commitment, given that the World Bank would be mainly responsible for implementing. Members of the Council commended the use of Danish secondments to partner organisations to strengthen national partner authorities.
- Finally, emphasising the high level of competences in South Africa, Members observed that a role for Danida Fellowship Centre (DFC) included in the budget of one of the four projects might not be obvious.

*Other issues mentioned by the Council included* the choice of urban water instead of rural water, the appraisal process, timing of Mid-Term Review, procurement, exit strategy, privatisation of the water sector and conditions for private sector, challenges for Danish companies in South Africa, involvement of civil society organisations, a possible link between water and health and education activities, and coping strategies in informal settlements.

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

- The Ambassador explained by way of introduction that the DKK 1 billion to water was intended to unfold in countries with existing engagements in the water sector (Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Morocco, and Rwanda). The cross-cutting themes would be resilience towards climate change and the inclusion of Danish technology and solutions where feasible. She underlined that in South Africa, water was the next crisis after energy and that the South African partners appreciated the whole of Denmark approach, where the water reform programme would benefit from the synergies between and integration of development assistance, strategic sector cooperation and trade and investment.
- The Counsellor informed that national ownership and alignment were key in the programme and the Embassy will not be implementing the support. National partners were in a leading role in all four projects. This was also the case for the Metro Training Services Programme Technical Assistance project although the contribution would be channelled through a World Bank-executed Trust Fund. Involved municipalities would have Council-approved plans for improvement of water services provision. In the Metro Trading Services Programme, Denmark has ensured inclusion of community-based monitoring of water services levels and quality for accountability dialogue with municipalities.
- Addressing the issue of poverty and inclusion of poor municipalities, the Counsellor clarified that WRPS would adapt a gradual approach building convincing cases and best practices with reform friendly municipalities for later expansion to other municipalities.

The reform initiatives supported by WRPS were intended to benefit all user communities through the professionalisation of water services provision, including reduction of non-revenue water, leading to more sustainable use of water resources and less frequent interruptions of services in townships and informal settlements. In the current situation, interruption of water services was hitting poor communities disproportionately hard.

- The Counsellor described how strong synergies existed across the existing SSC water portfolio. WRPS was built on the water reform engagement in the National Water SSC and drew on experience from the technical assistance and demonstration projects in the Urban Water SSC projects with two metros. Synergies would be further expanded in the WRPS implementation as would synergies to the growing Impact Fund Denmark engagement. Many Danish companies were operating in the water sector, and the Embassy Trade team would organise seminars with prioritised metros and other municipalities engaged in WRPS showcasing Danish solutions and paving the way for Danish companies.
- The Counsellor took note of the Council's recommendation to build on experience from other water engagements on the Continent and stressed that lessons learned, especially from other Danish-funded activities in the water sector, were considered.
- Responding to the Council's enquiry of DFC's role in training activities, the Counsellor informed that DFC would mainly be engaged in organising visit programmes to Denmark for South African municipalities, including visits to and seminars with Danish water utilities.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council recommended Water Reform Programme Support for Sustainable and Reliable Urban Water Supply in South Africa for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

#### **Agenda Item No. 4: Mobilising sustainable private investments into climate adaptation**

*For discussion and recommendation to the Minister*

DKK 200 million

The Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate (KLIMA)

##### *Summary:*

*The programme is divided into two projects both aiming to mobilise private capital into sustainable investments for adaptation. The first project is a grant to Climate Bonds Initiative (CBI), which will develop a taxonomy on adaptation and resilience for countries and financial institutions to help facilitate bond issuances and direct proceeds into the right adaptation and resilience investments. This will be tested in India as a pilot country. The second project is a grant to Nordic Development Fund (NDF) targeting the more risk-willing side of private capital. This aims to mobilise asset managers to develop investment fund structures to deploy private capital to companies focusing on adaptation primarily in Africa. The mobilisation is done through a request for proposals process lead by the Nordic Investment Mobilization Collaboration Alliance (IMCA).*



*The Council for Development Policy recommended Unlocking Sustainable Investments at Scale towards Adaptation (USISA) for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.*

**Key observations and recommendations from the Council:**

- The Council expressed appreciation of the programme but noted that the connection between the two projects was not clear. They both aimed at mobilising private capital into adaptation investments, but what other connections did they have? Council Members noted that whilst mobilising private investments into adaptation was broadly recognised as very challenging, it was important that Denmark tried various modalities to see if some of it worked.
- Members of the Council found it difficult to see how the funding would reach the end beneficiaries and stressed that the financial additionality was not quite clear. Information was needed on whom the implementers would be and who were assumed to be engaged, e.g. civil society, small and medium enterprises, international enterprises, etc. It was pointed out that there might be a risk of crowding out other actors such as national companies. The capacity of the fund managers had to be carefully assessed, and the importance of impact monitoring was stressed.
- Members of the Council questioned the choice of India as the pilot country and asked why an African country had not been selected in line with priorities in Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation. Also, relevant how-to-notes stressed that adaptation support should be provided to the least developed countries. If the project in India succeeded, Council Members asked whether the lessons learned from India would be applicable to a project in the context of an African country.
- Council Members pointed out that preparing taxonomies was an extremely difficult endeavour. It was important to have an overview of the entire field and there was a tendency to repeat old solutions and omit cutting-edge technologies when focussing on existing technologies and investments. Therefore, it was important that the private sector was involved in the development of the CBI taxonomy to ensure the usability and forward-looking nature of the taxonomy.

*Other issues mentioned by the Council included the very condensed preparation process of the programme and the procurement policy of CBI which did not have sustainability considerations.*

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

- The Chief Counsellor KLIMA addressed the overall connection of the CBI and the NDF projects by explaining the considerations of asset owners such as pension funds. Broadly speaking asset owners divided investment allocations into two types of investments: first, fixed income, typically sovereign bonds, with less risk and usually making up 50-90% of

the investment portfolio, and second alternatives with higher risk such as real estate, stocks, and private equity. The two projects target bonds and private equity, respectively, under the common headline of mobilising investments for adaptation in developing countries: CBI was establishing and piloting an adaptation and resilience taxonomy for bonds, while NDF aimed to mobilise asset managers to develop investment fund structures to deploy private capital to companies focusing on adaptation primarily in Africa.

- The Chief Counsellor acknowledged that mobilisation investments for adaptation was a complex task. However, he argued that by using two specialised financial expert organisations within each of the two fields (bonds and equity investment) the best possible circumstances for a positive outcome were provided. On the one hand, end beneficiaries would be the people who benefitted from public infrastructure investments, based on bonds issued using the new CBI taxonomy. On the other hand, it would be people who got access to products which could help them adapt to climate change based on investments by asset managers backed by NDF.
- The Chief Counsellor further explained that by choosing India as pilot country, CBI utilised its strong relationship with Indian authorities. The National Development Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) had issued a letter of intent to use the new adaptation and resilience taxonomy to finance a list of projects in the country. Building on the experience from India, it was the ambition to later use the taxonomy in collaboration with African countries.
- Regarding the risk of omitting cutting edge technology when preparing the taxonomy, the Chief Counsellor stressed that CBI would develop it in dialogue with private investors and developers of adaptation investment projects. This would ensure the future validity of the taxonomy for upcoming and next generation technologies.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council recommended Unlocking Sustainable Investments at Scale towards Adaptation (USISA) for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

#### **Agenda Item No. 5: Danish Organisation Strategy for Denmark's engagement with the Regional Development Banks (2025-2030)**

*For discussion and recommendation to the Minister*

DKK 1.1 billion (AfDF-17) and DKK 88.2 million (AsDF-14)

The Department of Multilateral Cooperation (MULTI)

*Summary:*

*The Regional Development Banks (RDBs) include the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Asian Development Bank (AsDB), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The RDBs are central to the multilateral system and play a vital role in fostering sustainable*

*development, reducing poverty, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and objectives of the Paris Agreement. Denmark's strategic priorities for the RDBs will be centred around i) reforming the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) to make them bigger, better, and more effective, ii) supporting fragile and conflict-affected contexts, iii) furthering climate action and a just, green energy transition, and iv) mobilising private capital.*

*The Council for Development Policy recommended Danish Organisation Strategy for Denmark's engagement with the Regional Development Banks (2025-2030) for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.*

### **Key observations and recommendations from the Council:**

- Recognising the benefits of applying a concerted and coherent approach to the Regional Development Banks, Members of the Council asked for further information on the diversity and political dynamics of the Banks covered by the strategy and advised on using a differentiated approach to the banks, reflecting these differences, including different geographical offsets. Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was highlighted as different from the others in a number of aspects. The Council also noted that the organisation strategy covered support to the banks but not to their underlying trust funds and asked how coordination was sought. Elaboration on the link between core funding and project funds to RDBs was also requested.
- While supporting the four priorities of the organisation strategy, the Council encouraged further integration of jobs as a dimension in the strategic priorities to better reflect how bank investments are generating jobs. Members of the Council underlined the need to maintain strong focus on delivering financing to countries most in need, including climate financing and financing for countries in fragile contexts. Furthermore, the Council recommended that the organisation strategy becomes more explicit about how Denmark would like to see the follow-up on MOPAN recommendations.
- Members of the Council recognised the ongoing efforts to support reform of procurement policies across the RDBs with a view to strengthening focus on life-cycle-costs, quality and sustainability criteria. Members also encouraged further deepening links between the banks and Danish businesses, including utilising Danish commitments to trust funds such as the Urban and Municipal Development Fund under the African Development Bank. Members of the Council regretted that some Danish businesses did experience payment challenges at national level as this lowered appetite for further engagement. In such instances, further support from embassies was needed.
- Members of the Council found secondments to the banks useful, also as a tool for competency development of Danish nationals to better facilitate cooperation. It was stressed that secondments should be at a senior level and should support – not distort – priorities of the banks.

- Members of the Council noted that civil society organisations (CSO) experienced challenges with accessibility to the banks and encouraged focus to ensure Danish facilitation of civil society perspectives and access.

*Other issues mentioned by the Council included* possible reference to other joint Nordic initiatives and experience such as the work of the Nordic Development Fund, the engagement by Denmark in governing bodies of the RDBs, broadening of coalitions and alliances, sensitivity to geopolitical shifts, and appropriate MFA staffing to deliver on priorities and appropriate Board engagements.

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

- The Special Adviser, MULTI, acknowledged the diversity among the four banks, but argued that the strategic priorities provided a useful platform for differentiated implementation across four institutions and three continents. She explained that the initial reservation concerning the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) related to its larger focus on investments than traditional development banks was no longer an issue. As an example, she mentioned that AIIB and Asian Development Bank had developed a good cooperation.
- The Deputy Head of MULTI highlighted that job creation was included in the organisation strategy, not least as part of the private capital mobilisation priority and focus on procurement.
- The Deputy Head underlined the importance of MOPAN in the dialogue across banks. The priority on reform in the strategy was a clear example of addressing MOPAN's recommendations for institutional improvements.
- The Deputy Head acknowledged inertia in winning procurement contracts but underlined the good cooperation between the MFA and business organisations to match the banks and Danish businesses. The Action Plan for Economic Diplomacy proved a good platform for integrating commercial perspectives in RDB work. The Deputy Head invited Danish businesses to engage actively with the banks and embassies at country level.
- The Deputy Head acknowledged the need to deliver on developing countries' own developing priorities and highlighted that this was exactly the fundamental mission of the banks, which created a high level of national ownership. On access to financing to fragile countries specifically, the Deputy Head noted that one of the comparative advantages of the banks was their flexibility to provide quick financial support in e.g. crisis situations.
- On CSOs, the Deputy Director noted that access and integration of CSO perspectives were integrated in Denmark's approach to the banks and, as an example, referred to an upcoming meeting between the African Development Bank and Danish CSOs.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council recommended ‘Danish Organisation Strategy for Denmark’s engagement with the Regional Development Banks (2025-2030)’ for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

**Agenda Item No. 6: The Fund for African-Danish Relations through mutual ExCHange of Culture and the Arts (ARCH)**

*For discussion and recommendation to the Minister*

DKK 160 million

The Department for Africa, Development Policy and Financing (AFRPOL)

The Department for Public Diplomacy, Press and Communication (KOM)

*Summary:*

*The Fund for African-Danish Relations through mutual Exchange of Culture and the Arts (ARCH) has been developed as part of the operationalisation of Denmark’s commitment to promote cultural cooperation with African countries and partners under ‘Africa’s Century: Strategy for strengthened Danish engagement with African countries’ (2024) . ARCH is in line with the focus on promoting equal partnerships based on mutual understanding and people-to-people relations in Denmark’s Strategy for development cooperation and will be implemented in countries in Africa where Denmark is represented by a Danish Embassy or through major initiatives.*

*The Council for Development Policy recommended The Fund for African-Danish Relations through mutual ExCHange (ARCH) for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.*

**Key observations and recommendations from the Council:**

- The Council welcomed the new support to cultural cooperation with African countries after a decade where funding for such cooperation had been very limited. It was strongly advised to avoid making a direct link between individual cultural activities and the overall objective of contributing to a better geopolitical dialogue between Denmark and African countries. Cultural initiatives should have the autonomy to unfold on artistic premises, and the link to political priorities should result from this - not drive the initiatives. Equal partnerships between Danish and African partners were highlighted as essential, and Members of the Council asked if the chosen governing structures for the programme would be conducive to this.
- Members of the Council underlined the value of supporting smaller, organic collaborations, which were viewed as crucial for fostering co-creation and artistic diversity. It was strongly recommended not to spread the funds equally among all eligible countries but to support the most promising initiatives only. Members of the Council mentioned that grants of DKK 250,000 were huge for small organisations and artists who often did not receive a regular salary.

- Members encouraged flexible implementation that allowed space for artistic diversity and community-based participation. Communication and outreach should take place on relevant cultural platforms. Embassies were encouraged to play an active, supportive role in the cultural sphere. The initiative should also consider how it complements other existing cultural support mechanisms.
- Members of the Council asked which definition of culture had been applied. Since religion was an integral part of cultural life in many African contexts, it was asked why this had not been included.
- The Council welcomed the project's focus on job creation in the creative industries but questioned the weight put on this in a programme supporting cultural cooperation. It was noted that employment in donor-funded small projects may not always be sustainable.

*Other issues mentioned by the Council included risks such as censorship and harassment and the need for mitigation strategies, the high administration costs of the programme, the choice of indicators, the involvement of Danish companies and how business partnerships could meaningfully contribute to cultural cooperation.*

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

- The Head of AFRPOL stressed that since the initiative was a key deliverable under the Africa Strategy, equality and mutual ownership were fundamental principles. He recognised the need to maintain a careful balance between cultural and political dimensions. While the initiative supported Denmark's foreign policy objectives, the Head of AFRPOL assured Council Members that cultural cooperation remained inclusive, independent, and driven by artistic and societal value. Efforts would aim at involving a wide range of cultural actors, including local communities and grassroots initiatives. Anchoring the initiative with African partners was essential, while administrative processes would ensure appropriate compliance measures.
- the Head of AFRPOL further explained that the project portfolio was expected to contain a mix of short- and long-term activities, designed to operate both as standalone projects and within a broader strategic framework. There would not be a uniform distribution of resources, but a competitive approach would ensure that funding was allocated where it could achieve the greatest impact. In addition to ARCH, the support to cultural cooperation would also include initiatives under the SDG Facility's Culture Window, and larger flagship projects such as the Karen Blixen House in Nairobi.
- Regarding communication and visibility, the Heads of AFRPOL and KOM pointed out that outreach should take place through relevant cultural platforms, social media, and influencers to ensure a broader and more contemporary reach.
- On the understanding of culture in ARCH, the Head of KOM explained that a broad UNESCO definition of art and culture had been applied to capture the diversity of

creative expression. This did not include religion. A bottom-up approach was promoted, with co-creation as a core part, reflecting both local priorities and opportunities for mutual learning between Denmark and African partners.

- With regard to job creation, the Head of AFRPOL noted the significant potential of Africa's rapidly expanding creative industries, including film, design, and food sectors. The initiative sought to foster opportunities for youth employment and explored synergies with relevant Danish companies.

The Chair of the Council concluded that the Council recommended The Fund for African-Danish Relations through mutual ExCHange of Culture and the Arts (ARCH) for approval by the Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Agenda item no. 7: Any Other Business**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.