

Minutes from meetings in the Council for Development Policy
on 26 November 2020

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Adviser Britt Balschmidt Tramm, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, ELK
- Agenda item 1: Under-Secretary for Development Policy Stephan Schønemann
Ambassador Karin Poulsen, Addis Ababa
- Agenda item 2: Head of Department Henriette Ellermann-Kigombe, Department for Multilateral Cooperation, MUS
Chief Adviser Peter Bøgh Jensen, Department for Multilateral Cooperation, MUS
Special Adviser Mads Wegner Hove, Department for Multilateral Cooperation, MUS
Head of Section Johannes Lech, Department for Multilateral Cooperation, MUS

- Agenda item 3: Head of Department Henriette Ellermann-Kigombe, Department for Multilateral Cooperation, MUS
Chief Adviser Peter Bøgh Jensen, Department for Multilateral Cooperation, MUS
Special Adviser Mads Wegner Hove, Department for Multilateral Cooperation, MUS
Head of Section Johannes Lech, Department for Multilateral Cooperation, MUS
- Agenda item 4: Head of Department Signe Skovbakke Winding Albjerg, Department for Sustainable Investments, Jobs and Equal Opportunities, GJL
Chief Adviser Jane Werngreen Rosales, Department for Sustainable Investments, Jobs and Equal Opportunities, GJL
- Agenda item 5: Head of Department Louise Auken, Department for the Middle East and Northern Africa, MENA
Chief Adviser Kurt Mørck, Department for the Middle East and Northern Africa, MENA
Chief Adviser Jette Samuel Jeppesen, Department for the Middle East and Northern Africa, MENA
Head of Section Natasja Fischer
- Agenda item 6: Head of Department Rasmus Abildgaard Kristensen, Department for Green Diplomacy, GDI
Chief Adviser Dorte Damkjær
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Ambassador John Nielsen, Yangon
Ambassador Winnie Estrup Petersen, Dhaka
Deputy Head of Mission Refika Hayta, the Embassy in Dhaka
Head of Cooperation Lise Abildgaard Sørensen, the Embassy in Dhaka
Ambassador Mette Knudsen, Kabul
Special Adviser Bjørn Blau, the Embassy in Kabul
Ambassador Mette Nørgaard Dissing-Spandet, Dar es Salaam
Deputy Head of Mission Mette Bech Pilgaard, the Embassy in Dar es Salaam

Agenda Item No. 1: Announcements

The Under-Secretary for Development Policy referred to the first days in office of the new Minister for Development Cooperation, Mr. Flemming Møller Mortensen, appointed on 19 November. The Minister was looking forward to meeting the Council for Development Policy.

Ambassador Karin Poulsen, Addis Ababa, briefly informed about the situation in Ethiopia where Government troops were currently moving towards Tigray, with very little information available. Tensions had been mounting for a long time. With refugees in Sudan, this was no longer a local conflict, as confirmed when the Security Council expressed support for the African Union appointment of special envoys from South Africa, Mozambique and Liberia. Under the partnership agreement with UNHCR, the Minister for Development Cooperation had released DKK 20 mil. for Sudan and likewise DKK 20 mil. had been released from the OCHA country fund for Ethiopia. The international community had demanded humanitarian access to Tigray and donors had put all regular activities in Tigray on halt.

Responding to questions from the Council, the Ambassador confirmed that there were reports of unrest in other parts of Ethiopia. The EU had so far focused on humanitarian assistance, taking also second wave COVID-19, grasshoppers and drought into account, but discussions were underway with regard to changing and future engagements. On the other side of this, Ethiopia would likely be another place. This could imply post-conflict support.

Agenda Item No. 2: Danish Support to International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

Department for Multilateral Cooperation, MUS

Summary:

The purpose of the present development engagement with IWGLA (2021-2023) is to contribute to the promotion, respect, and protection of indigenous peoples' rights to land, territories and natural resources. Towards this end, the outcome of the engagement is that indigenous peoples (including indigenous women) exercise their right to land, territories and natural resources, including in climate action, through effective documentation advocacy and empowerment in seven countries, in Africa (Kenya and Tanzania), Asia (Bangladesh, India and Nepal) and Latin America (Bolivia and Peru) and through engagement in international bodies.

<i>The Council for Development Policy recommended Support to the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – IWGLA for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation while raising some concerns as to whether the chosen modality in terms of a development engagement ensured sufficient flexibility for the partner.</i>

Given Denmark's historic commitment and present priority to this agenda, the Council acknowledged the importance and relevance of continued support to the protection and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples.

The Council noted that indigenous peoples were important custodians of natural resources and biodiversity and that the engagement was in line with the increased focus on inequality as indigenous peoples were often poor and marginalised. The Council also noted the considerable potential for partnerships with the private sector and IWGLA's concern for a potential adverse impact from green investments on the land and territories of indigenous peoples, and called for references to the UN's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in the engagement document.

The Council was concerned as to whether the development engagement format was the right one in this case and whether the chosen modality represented a far-reaching shift that would make it hard for IWGIA to continue with its present activities in a strategic and flexible manner. As an alternative, members of the Council suggested that it should be possible to work out a model with an earmarked core-contribution complying with the guidelines of OECD-DAC.

Members of the Council concurred with the increased focus on localisation yet expressed caution against using a particular target-figure in a mechanical way.

Members of the Council asked whether the support had declined over time. Furthermore, the question about the justification for a closer cooperation between MFA and IWGIA on output-based budgets was raised and it was asked whether this implied that there was a problem with the financial management at IWGIA. Members of the Council also asked why Denmark was relatively “alone” as a donor, enquired about financial support from other Nordic donors, and called on IWGIA to mobilise a broader range of donors.

It was discussed amongst members of the Council if support to the rights of indigenous peoples, often a minority, could have adverse effects on the majority in a given country or if indigenous peoples were almost per definition a minority that potentially was subject to discrimination. Finally, the Council inquired about the noted implementation gap in the DED and inquired whether IWGIA needed to strengthen capacity building efforts with local partners in that regard.

The Head of the Department for Multilateral Cooperation (MUS) thanked the Council for the pertinent comments concerning modality and substance. The format was new. The Ministry wanted to harmonise the diverse modalities for organisations promoting human rights and democracy. Different options had been considered. The DED-format had been chosen because it ensured long-term planning and coherence between the theory of change, results-framework and budget. The DED was not a project document but a framework for a range of activities. The format had not been forced upon the partners but the DEDs had been developed in a mutual dialogue. The format ensured increased transparency as to the changes the partners would deliver. The present Danish government did stress the need for Danish organisations to engage in the South and the format made that commitment more visible. Partners had shown appreciation for this ambition and worked constructively with the Ministry on engaging in the South.

The Head of MUS was not aware of any cases where a minority of indigenous peoples had caused adverse effects on the majority. She concurred with members of the Council that localisation was not a question of reaching a particular target-figure but a qualitative drive for engagement in the South. She agreed with members of the Council that the DED should contain a reference to the UN’s Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and concurred with the Council that IWGIA had a clear focus on inequality as indigenous peoples were subject to inequality and discrimination and as far as women were concerned also subject to gender-based discrimination and sexual violence. In relation to a potential adverse impact of some climate action on indigenous peoples’ rights, the Head of MUS gave an example of an energy project in Nepal, where IWGIA had supported partners on claiming their rights.

Furthermore, the Head of MUS informed the Council that the yearly volume of support from the Ministry had declined slightly in terms of 2020-prices from approximately 20 million DKK to 17 million DKK since 2010. She informed the Council that the present DED was based on an out-put based budget and that IWGIA found it useful in order to increase its focus on delivering cost-effective results.

IWGIA had, according to the Head of MUS, employed a fund raising officer in 2018 following recommendations from a review in 2016. This had allowed IWGIA to broaden its thinking in terms of mobilising resources and target new donors like foundations, private charities and the like. Recently, NORAD had not provided a grant to IWGIA because NORAD had selected partners from the South that represented indigenous peoples directly.

Finally, the head of MUS mentioned the important work IWGIA did in terms of documenting the situation of the Indigenous Peoples' across the world in form of the yearbook entitled "Indigenous World". It was a useful reference. This is supplemented by capacity building in and support to indigenous peoples' themselves and their own organizations to advocate and claim their rights as well as to support their organizational capacity and fundraising.

The Under-Secretary for Development Policy emphasised the role of IWGIA in terms of building strong partnerships with Indigenous Peoples in the South and underscored the need for linking IWGIA up with other relevant efforts within the framework of DDD e.g. interventions in agriculture.

The Chair concluded that the Council recommended the development engagement document entitled "Support to the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – IWGIA" for approval by the Minister.

Agenda Item No. 3: Strategy for Denmark's Engagement with DIGNITY –Danish Institute against Torture 2020 – 2021

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

Department for Multilateral Cooperation, MUS

Summary

The purpose of the present engagement with DIGNITY on a World Without Torture is to contribute to that no-one is subjected to torture (prevention) and that torture does not live on in traumatised victims and their families (rehabilitation). There is a strong normative and operational linkage between the fight for survivors of torture and the prevention of human right abuses.

<i>The Council for Development Policy recommended the support to DIGNITY on a World Without Torture for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation, while raising concerns as to whether the choice of modality in terms of a development engagement ensured sufficient flexibility for the partner.</i>
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Considering Denmark's long standing commitment to the anti-torture agenda, the Council acknowledged the importance and relevance of continued support to the fight for a world without torture with DIGNITY. The Council noted that DIGNITY was highly regarded internationally and emphasized that DIGNITY combined prevention and rehabilitation in a sound manner.

The Council questioned the shift in geographic focus towards Africa. This could impede DIGNITY's ability to work as an international network and undermine the organization's work in other regions. Members of the Council pointed to DIGNITY's work in the Middle East, and asked whether the shift in focus from Asia to Africa indicated that the job there had been done. In relation to the geographic shift, members of the Council also asked how "hand-held" the support for a semi-governmental organization should be, and concern was expressed that a shift in government could lead to situations where DIGNITY would have to forge new alliances in other places.

Repeating the concerns raised under the previous agenda item, members of Council questioned the choice of modality. Was it the most appropriate model for a semi-governmental organisation where a large share of its income came from public sources. With a reference to the discussion during the previous agenda item members of the Council found that it was not easy for the organisations to say no to

the MFA. Members of the Council were not convinced that harmonisation of appropriation documents in itself was a sufficient argument for the choice of modality.

Members of the Council found that the results framework was somewhat generic and would benefit from inclusion of indicators relating to women and youth as well as to international advocacy and asked how it was possible to work with both duty bearers and rights holders in the same country on such a sensitive topic as prevention of torture and treatment of victims.

Finally, members of the Council called for a more holistic approach to the fight against torture that would involve efforts on several levels. On a political level, there was a need for advocacy and diplomacy in relation to persecution of e.g. opposition politicians or civil society leaders. At the international and national level, it was important that DIGNITY's work be complemented by efforts by other partners, eg. the European Union.

The Head of the Department for Multilateral Cooperation (MUS) informed the Council that this was the first time the Council had the opportunity to discuss a grant to DIGNITY. It was also underlined that the DED had a 4-year engagement perspective, which was also a possible novelty. She confirmed that DIGNITY worked with both duty bearers and rights holders in the same country e.g. in Tunisia where local authorities, prison management were collaborates as well as inmates and civil society organisations. It was important to consider risks and dilemmas in such a sensitive area. The Head of MUS agreed that indicators on gender, youth and international advocacy should be added to the results framework. MUS would follow up with DIGNITY on this. DIGNITY was in the process of sharpening its focus in a number of ways. Going forward, the organisation would recalibrate the balance between rehabilitation and prevention and focus more on the latter. The geographical out-reach was part of a similar endeavour. DIGNITY had increased focus on Africa.

The Head of MUS agreed that a holistic approach - geographically, across instruments, and in relation to wider efforts on human rights and democracy - to the fight for a world without torture was important. She referred to the evaluation (2018) of "Danish Support to Promotion and Protection of Human Rights" (2006-2016), which underlined that the area has had a high profile for Denmark in foreign as well as development policy. The evaluation pointed out that Denmark has been a key actor in support of freedom from torture promoting and sponsoring resolutions within normative framework of the UN.

Finally, the Head of MUS emphasized that the Council's concerns and reflections about the choice of modality were appreciated. The considerations and work on this within the Ministry had not been easy and had taken time to clarify. The modality was not a straitjacket and it did allow for flexibility and long term planning in the MFA's opinion.

The Under-Secretary for Development Policy emphasised that the Council's concerns and reflections had been heard loud and clear and would be duly reflected in the minutes. A fine balance was required to ensure sufficient oversight of the organisations and provide space for flexibility and long term planning. Development policy was subject to some fundamental framework conditions. DAC-ability was one such condition. Perhaps it would be useful for the Council to have an agenda item about how the DAC-system worked. Political priorities were another condition. The coming strategy would set out a direction in terms of both geography and thematic priorities.

Furthermore, the Under-Secretary for Development Policy emphasized that torture continued to be an issue that should be addressed through a holistic approach that included strategic partners, specialized organisations as well as diplomatic and political pressure.

The Chair concluded that the Council recommended that the development engagement document entitled “Support to DIGNITY – A World Without Torture” be presented to the Minister for Development Cooperation for approval.

Agenda Item No. 4: Danish Organisation Strategy for International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

Department for Sustainable Investments, Jobs and Equal Opportunities, GJL

Summary:

The Danish Organisation Strategy for International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) outlines how Denmark proposes to work with IPPF towards improving access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services, including safe abortion care and comprehensive sexuality education. IPPF operates through Member Associations in each country with a special focus on the most marginalised and under-served populations. IPPF is the world’s largest international civil society organisation in this area and a leading global advocate for sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender equality. During the previous Organisation Strategy, IPPF reached 658.3 mil. people with sexual and reproductive health services, and provided health care to 4.6 mil. in emergency settings. Furthermore, IPPF reached 122 mil. young people with comprehensive sexuality education. The proposed Danish support for IPPF is a commitment of 50 million DKK yearly from 2021-2025.

The Council for Development Policy recommended the Organisation Strategy for IPPF for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation.

The Council expressed broad support for the strategy, highlighting the coherence with Danish priorities regarding gender equality and women and girls’ rights and, in particular, commended the focus on the most marginalised, vulnerable and young people. The Council noted that the IPPF is an important organisation for which core support is highly relevant, and that the support for sexual and reproductive health and rights is needed, especially in the global context where a serious pushback on women and girls’ rights is gaining momentum. The Council wished to know more about how Denmark works with IPPF and like-minded countries and organisations to counter the opposition. The Council also wished to know more about how the programmes are implemented and co-ordinated, including in terms of Denmark’s bilateral cooperation, and how the most vulnerable parts of the populations were served by IPPF.

Members of the Council asked about the nature of the recent organisational governance challenges in the IPPF. Further, it was noted that the needs of women and girls in humanitarian settings could have been more clearly described and that a holistic approach including women’s economic empowerment could be beneficial. Members of the Council encouraged the collaboration between IPPF and like-minded religious organisations at the grass roots level and enquired about the connections between climate change and population growth.

The Head of the Department for Sustainable Investments, Jobs and Equal Opportunities (GJL) thanked the Council for the support for the strategy and for all the questions. Denmark is working hard with like-minded countries to push back on the generalised pressure on women and girls’ rights, which had become even stronger over the past four years, with the Mexico City Policy in place under the Trump Administration. Specific coordination mechanisms had been established to ensure timely exchange of knowledge and news. IPPF was an important player in multilateral fora, as the Federation relied on an extensive network of member associations all over the world and therefore had access to in-depth knowledge of the situation on the

ground. This was an important advocacy tool. GJL was coordinating very closely with Danish missions on SRHR, and SRHR remained very high on the development policy agenda. SRHR constituted a strong component in the Danish bilateral health programmes in Kenya and Tanzania. In other bilateral programmes, gender equality and SRHR were integrated and mainstreamed. IPPF had succeeded with impressive outreach to the most vulnerable groups, and eight out of 10 of their beneficiaries were persons in a vulnerable situation. This was implemented through IPPF's member associations and local networks.

Furthermore, the Head of GJL addressed IPPF's recent governance challenges informing that a reform process had been initiated last year to improve transparency and accountability, and to ensure that the funds reached the most vulnerable populations, mainly in low-income countries. The reform was still ongoing but the results so far include a more lean and efficient organisation supported by the great majority of member associations, including The Danish Family Planning Association (DFPA). DFPA was a close and trusted partner in the work with SRHR and their input during the reform process had been of great value. IPPF was a very active organisation in humanitarian and emergency settings and this would be part of the collaboration with Denmark. In terms of the holistic approach, it was recognised that economic empowerment is important for women's rights, however, IPPF is a provider of specialised sexual and reproductive health and rights services and should stay an expert in this field and not divert too much from its core mandate. The connections between climate change and family planning are relevant to keep in mind but also a sensitive issue, and it was important to keep in mind how high income countries and low-income countries contributed to emission when considering the connections.

The Chair of the Council thanked the members for good and relevant comments and questions, and concluded that the Council recommended the Danish Organisation Strategy for International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation.

Agenda Item No. 5: Danish Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP) – Midterm Review

For information

Department for the Middle East and Northern Africa, MENA

Summary:

The midterm review (MTR) generally found the Danish Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP) to be progressing well albeit with some delays and under-expenditure. Some strategic partners faced difficulties in delivering, and their change theories and results frameworks were seen as too optimistic. Although coordination had been complicated and time-consuming in engagements with many partner organisations, adaptation to Covid-19 limitations and difficult political contexts had generally gone well. While being a development programme, the MTR noted that DAPP served a relevant foreign policy function. The MTR recommended that programming of a new phase (2022-2027) of DAPP be initiated in early January 2021 aiming for fewer and larger engagements based on the lessons learned and Danish comparative advantage.

The Council noted that the programme was largely on track and many results had been achieved. It was emphasized that human rights efforts with local civil society were progressing well in spite of some activities being against the political orientation of governments. It was suggested that work on human rights appeared to be more difficult than job creation.

The Council noted that some of the report findings seemed to flow directly from single source evidence without much triangulation. The flow from findings to recommendations could be better justified.

Furthermore, the Council questioned the reasoning behind recommending a next phase of DAPP arranged under two engagements i.e. human rights/inclusion and jobs for young people and with fewer Danish and local partner organizations. The Council asked whether this was simply a matter of administrative efficiency.

Members of the Council furthermore questioned whether youth would be adequately addressed in a future DAPP and suggested that involvement of youth was more than just job creation. It was also questioned whether DAPP was the right programme for creating green jobs. Members of the Council also asked about possible coordination with like-minded donors under a new DAPP.

The representative from the Department for the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) responded that progress on the human rights and free media portfolio was partly due to long-standing partnerships between some of the Danish organizations and their MENA counterparts. He explained that work on human rights with civil society was in fact easier than job creation because of the current difficult macro-economic contexts. In response to the Council question on methodology, he acknowledged the weaknesses of the report and explained that triangulation was a part of the field methodology in the visit to Jordan prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The review of the remaining three countries (Egypt; Tunisia and Jordan) had been conducted online, severely affecting the methodology.

Regarding the rationale behind recommending fewer and larger organizations in a next DAPP phase, the representative from MENA explained that some partners had either not performed well, had mandates somewhat outside DAPP's focus areas or were not well anchored in Denmark. Focusing a new DAPP under two engagements was the outcome of lessons learned, relevance of programme contents and organizational mandates and not a matter of administrative efficiency. Further focusing would also enhance synergy between Danish partners and thus strengthen the overall Danish contribution.

Concerning youth and job creation the representative from MENA responded that youth would have a more prominent role in a new DAPP as youth would be addressed in terms of both their human rights contexts and the need for securing jobs. Jobs for young people would have to be accompanied by improved civil rights and societal inclusion in order to create better future lives and mitigate migration.

Regarding donor cooperation in a new DAPP, the representative from MENA explained that donor cooperation would be explored particularly in the design of the engagement on job creation for young people. The current thematic programme on economic opportunities would undergo an overhaul including its composition of Danish partners in which a role for the private sector and other new partners in job creation, including other donors, would also be considered.

The Chair closed the meeting by stressing that DAPP was a very relevant and interesting programme that carried a lot of learning from implementation under difficult circumstances.

Agenda Item No. 6: Support to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) Partnership

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

Department for Green Diplomacy, GDI

Summary:

The objective of the Danish engagement with the NDC-Partnership is to support the 2021 – 2025 work programme that aims to strengthen ambition and implementation of the National Determined Contributions (NDCs) of developing countries while promoting long-term sustainable development. Denmark will commit DKK 35 million for a 3-year period (2020-2022) as earmarked support for ODA eligible countries.

The Council for Development Policy recommended the proposed Danish engagement with NDC-P for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation.

The Council found the engagement highly relevant, highlighting that the NDC-P served as a learning platform and highlighting the support for operationalizing climate change objectives in developing countries related to both mitigation and adaptation while taking the relation to poverty eradication into account.

Members of the Council considered it important to support the capacity of developing countries to develop realistic NDCs, fund and implement them, as they are cornerstones of the Paris Agreement. Council members noted the assumption about political commitment and member-country capacity and resources for NDC implementation in the Theory of Change and asked whether these were realistic assumptions. Sharing knowledge on attracting internal and external climate finance was key. NDC-P could be a forum for learning regarding linking green transition and poverty as inspiration to Danish development assistance and a new development policy. Members of the Council noted the alignment with the Government's new climate strategy.

Furthermore, members of the Council requested additional information on the results achieved, on funding for the poorest countries, on geographic focus, and on the number of NDC-P Partners. They noticed the quite generic and 'fluffy' character of the PD and asked whether the partner WRI could deliver on activities. Members of the Council also pointed out that while there was a focus on gender in the proposal, the rights agenda was not well described. Further, members of the Council asked about the potential for synergies with other bilateral and multi-lateral Danish engagements and whether the NDC-P was well hosted by the World Resources Institute (WRI).

Finally, members of the Council asked about the timing of the up-coming evaluations of Danish assistance to adaptation and evaluation and pointed to a possible future thematic discussion in the Council for Development Policy.

The Head of the Department for Green Diplomacy GDI thanked for the overall endorsement of the Danish engagement. On the geographic focus, outreach to Major Emerging Economies was a new endeavour to ensure impact on the level of global emissions. So far, the NDC-P had focussed on LDCs. Synergies with Danish bilateral engagements in Indonesia, South Africa and Mexico as well as Uganda, Kenya and Mali were being explored and would be supported by a Danish secondment. Assumptions were addressed by ensuring basing activities on country demand and ownership, building capacity and by facilitating integration of NDCs into national development plans and engaged directly with local economic ministries to strengthen national

coordination on both mitigation and adaptation and on mobilizing capital for both purposes, including from the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund. Emission reductions were also important in an African context as energy production was expanded.

On WRI as host, the Head of GDI noted that UNFCCC was a co-host to NDC-P, and informed that a Danish review of WRI, including its various hosting-roles, was scheduled for 2021. A right-based approach was underpinning the NDC-P methodology, supported by implementing partners such as the UN organizations and NGOs. On results, 50 countries had received NDC-assistance, 500 million USD had been mobilized in climate finance and NDC-P had had success as a clearing-house, which was impressive for a 3-year old Partnership. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), will be improved to measure CO2 reductions and adaptation targets.

Regarding the timing of the up-coming evaluations, the Head of the Department for Evaluations, Learning and Quality (ELK), informed that the evaluation of Danish support for adaptation would be available by end December, while the evaluation of Danish support for mitigation would be available in Spring 2021.

The Chair concluded that the Council recommended the Danish contribution to NDC-P to the Minister' for Development Cooperation for approval.

Agenda Item No. 7: Bridging of Country Programmes for Myanmar, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Tanzania

For information

The Under-Secretary for Development Policy informed that the purpose of the agenda item was to inform the Council about the extension of four country programmes while a new overall development strategy is being developed. The extensions had been granted to gain time, absorb mid-term reviews etc. The new strategy would be the focus of a future meeting with the new Minister for Development Cooperation.

The Council welcomed the opportunity to discuss the extensions.

Myanmar

The Council was positive towards the proposed extension of the Country Programme and found that the activities proposed were relevant and appropriate within the current context of Myanmar.

The Ambassador welcomed the remarks made by the Council and further explained that all activities had been very successful as assessed by the Midterm Review and were activities that would be included in a possible second phase of the Country Programme.

Bangladesh

The Council found the chosen engagements relevant for the context and expressed interest in a better understanding of the Ready Made Garment industry and the impact of Covid-19.

Members of the Council also reflected on the need to work towards a more diversified production given that the garment industry could migrate to other countries in future.

Furthermore, members of the Council were pleased to see the continued focus on Chittagong Hill Tracts in the UNDP project, but questioned how this would relate to a possible future 'from aid to trade' approach.

Finally, members of the Council highlighted the importance of not only addressing climate change through a greener industry, but also through climate adaptation, which was in particular relevant to a country like Bangladesh.

The Ambassador replied to the question of the unsecure situation of the garment industry, which, while presently picking up after the negative impact of Covid-19, might get re-constrained depending on how the market situation in the receiving end evolves. She further emphasised the need to support the sector to enable them to remain competitive through introduction of new technologies.

Regarding UNDP's project complementing the international humanitarian response to the Rohingya refugees, the Ambassador explained that it was designed to address the need for synergies between humanitarian and development assistance in an area with growing resentments and potential outbreak of conflicts. While not linking to 'trade' directly, the importance of stability at this stage of the country's development should not be underestimated.

Furthermore the Ambassador explained that UNDP's project was designed to also address climate adaptation through its engagement with farmers, just as another of the Embassy's projects, implemented through IFAD, was looking at good practices and scaling up of adaptation and mitigation responsiveness.

Afghanistan

The Council asked whether there was any basis for hope or new possibilities for Afghanistan and if there were relevant political actors other than the government and the Taliban.

The Ambassador replied that - first and foremost- it was the ongoing armed conflict that set the parameters for the country's further development. In parallel with peace talks in Doha, there were ongoing clashes between Afghan security forces and Taliban, resulting in daily casualties. The US has reduced their troop presence and, as per the agreement between the US and Taliban, there were plans to complete a full withdrawal of international troops by May 2021. Reasons for optimism could be found in a strong civil society, a free press, and from numerous strong women that were able to set their mark, including as members of the Government's delegation to the peace talks. Despite numerous uncertainties about the country's future, the Afghanistan Conference in Geneva on 23 and 24 November 2020 went well. Pledges for the coming years exceeded expectations, with international support for 2021 amounting to USD 3 Billion. At the conference, donors emphasised a number of conditionalities for maintaining the support, including in relation to good governance, anti-corruption, democracy, human rights, etc.

Tanzania

Members of the Council noted the challenging democratic and political situation in Tanzania, especially in the aftermath of the presidential and parliamentary elections in October, which made it increasingly difficult to justify channelling support through the public systems. However, at the same time, looking at the specific support suggested (support to the joint donor health basket fund) members of the Council also found it difficult to argue against support intended for the most vulnerable – funding, which was very unlikely to substitute government funding. Members of the Council supported the phasing out of sector budget support to the Ministry of Finance and Planning and the move towards more support to civil society and at the same time recognised that future development cooperation with Tanzania would be full of dilemmas, when it came to making decisions on whether to support the Government directly.

Concerning the suggested support for the Private Agriculture Sector Support (PASS TRUST) members of the Council asked if it was realistic to expect that 3,500 loans could create 14,000 jobs and asked for examples of green interventions. Moreover, members of the Council stressed the importance of building skills development efforts on the findings of the White Book on Jobs Creation and Skills Development in Africa. They asked if there was any direct linkage to the NGO Call for Proposal on skills development.

The Ambassador replied to the questions concerning PASS that an impact study showed that each loan guaranteed through PASS Trust on average created four jobs and the Embassy gave examples of green PASS interventions e.g. use of drip irrigation, solar power for drying and use of waste from the processing to produce energy. Furthermore, the Ambassador informed that the findings of the White Book would be the foundation for the intervention in Tanzania and the hope was to create synergies with other interventions funded by Denmark.

The Chair thanked the Ambassadors for the information about the bridging programmes.

Agenda Item No. 8: AOB

No subjects were raised.