

## Minutes from meeting in the Council for Development Policy 29 October 2019

### Present:

- Members:
- Professor Emeritus Georg Sørensen, University of Aarhus (Chair)
  - International Director Gunvor Bjerglund Thomsen, The Danish Youth Council (Vice Chair)
  - Head of Projects Tine Bork, SMEdenmark
  - Director Jan Laustsen, The Danish Agriculture & Food Council
  - Associate Professor Michael Wendelboe Hansen, Copenhagen Business School
  - Partner Marina Buch Kristensen, Nordic Consulting Group
  - General Secretary Rasmus Stuhr Jakobsen, CARE Danmark
  - Director Mads Bugge Madsen, The LO/FTF Council
  - Senior Researcher Lars Engberg-Pedersen, Danish Institute for International Studies
  - General Secretary Birgitte Qvist-Sørensen, DanChurchAid (except agenda item 5-8)
- MFA:
- Under-Secretary for Development Policy Stephan Schönemann
  - Head of Department Mikael Hemniti Winther, Technical Quality Support
  - Head of Department Lotte Machon, Africa, Policy and Development
  - Adviser Mette Brink Madsen, Department for Technical Quality Support
- Agenda item 2:
- Head of Department Mette Thygesen, Chief Adviser Thomas Thomsen and Chief Adviser Jakob Rogild Jakobsen, Department for Humanitarian action, migration and civil society
  - Head of Department Anders Tang Friborg and Special Adviser Astrid Folkmann Bonde, Department for The Middle East and Northern Africa
- Agenda item 3:
- Head of Department Henriette Ellermann-Kingombe and Head of Section Bo Jul Jeppesen, Department for Multilateral Cooperation and Climate Change
- Agenda item 4:
- Head of Department Lotte Machon, Chief Adviser Line Baagø Rasmussen and Head of Section Siv Behrendt, Department for Africa, Policy and Development
- Agenda item 5:
- Head of Department Ole Thonke and Deputy Head of Department Lis Rosenholm, Department for Sustainable Growth and Employment
- Agenda item 6:
- Head of Department Ole Thonke and Chief Adviser Jørn Olesen, Department for Sustainable Growth and Employment

## **Agenda item no. 1: Announcements**

There were no announcements.

## **Agenda item no. 2: Support to Syria and Syria's neighbourhood - Lebanon and Jordan, 2019 - 2020**

*For discussion and recommendation to the Minister*

DKK 400.0 million

(Department for Humanitarian Action, Migration and Civil Society, HMC & Department for The Middle East and Northern Africa, MENA)

*Summary:*

*Support to Syria and Syria's neighbourhood – Lebanon and Jordan, 2019 – 2020, is aimed at an agile, solution oriented and coherent Danish development engagement across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus for refugees, internally displaced and affected host communities in and around Syria. The engagement seeks to achieve the overall objective of 'Achieving sustainable solutions for refugees, internally displaced and affected host communities in and around Syria'. The support is part of Denmark's continuing efforts to strengthen assistance in areas and countries neighbouring crisis and conflict, targeting internally displaced people (IDPs), refugees and affected local communities in accordance with the priorities in the 'the World 2030' and New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants of 19 September 2016.*

The Council for Development Policy recommended the suggested support for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation.

In HMC's introductory remarks, it was noted that the proposed engagements had been prepared jointly between several units in an attempt to obtain a more coherent and longer-term approach to engagements in Syria and Syria's neighbourhood. The MENA Department furthermore briefed the Council about recent developments in Syria and Lebanon.

The Council found that the documentation provided a good overview and that the suggested engagements seemed justified and relevant. The Council found it positive to continue supporting existing initiatives and was pleased to see the focus on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The Council underlined the importance of working through existing governments in neighbouring countries, e.g. supporting the national health systems instead of setting up parallel systems.

The Council asked for clarification on issues related to other engagements in Syria, e.g. synergies with engagements under the Danish Arab Partnership Programme and the Peace and Stabilisation Fund. The Council further requested clarification in relation to the studies to be conducted by UNDP and whether activities by Syria Resilience Consortium would comply with the EU line, including not providing support to reconstruction and not supporting the Syrian authorities. The Council underlined the principle of 'do no harm' and the importance of supporting the local population just as well as refugees and IDPs.

The Council called for a stronger focus on the localisation agenda, in particular under the collaboration with the Madad-fund. The Council recommended enhancing the focus on issues related to gender, in particular issues of boys and men at risk, and further recommended considering the mental and psychological health as a priority. The Council asked about considerations regarding inclusion of 'green ambitions' as well as mental health and psycho-social support in the programme. The Council called for inclusion of education, and recommended in particular promoting vocational training during future selection of activities.

The Council also sought clarification about the size of the unallocated amount set aside for 2020. While some Council members noted that the unallocated amount constituted a rather high percentage of the total funds, other members applauded the flexibility that such unallocated funds provided, a flexibility, which seemed very relevant in a volatile situation such as Syria.

The Council asked about the overall management and long-term perspective for MFA engagements regarding Syria, as this programme was only to cover 2019-2020. Finally, the Council questioned the choice of employing advisers instead of managing the engagements from the Embassy in Beirut. The Council found that knowledge could easily be lost with advisers instead of anchoring activities at the Embassy.

HMC underlined that a new Syria-budget line in the Danish Finance Act would finance the proposed engagements. The new budget line was included to provide a more coherent approach to all engagements in and around Syria. The budget line would finance activities dedicated to an agile, solution oriented and coherent Danish development engagement across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus for refugees, internally displaced, and affected host communities in and around Syria. DKK 200 million had been reserved for this engagement in 2019. MENA noted that in the Syrian context an engagement with a two-year duration was quite a long-term engagement in light of the volatile situation on the ground. MENA furthermore highlighted synergies with the ongoing Peace- and Stabilisation Programme and the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme. MENA also elaborated on the security and political framework conditions, including recent development in North East Syria and in Lebanon.

HMC further responded that MFA would promote priorities such as localisation, vocational training, and green/environmental sustainable solutions. The key entry point would be in steering committee meetings. The Under-Secretary for Development Policy further responded that the Embassy in Beirut was not an authorised development Embassy and was not equipped to manage development programmes, which was why management of the initiatives was placed with the MFA in Copenhagen and which merited the proposed new advisers.

Regarding unallocated funds, the Department for Technical Quality Support responded that under normal circumstances, unallocated funds should not exceed 10 pct. of total budget. However, under certain circumstances it could amount to up to 25 pct. of the total budget.

In conclusion, the Chairman found that the Council could support the proposed support to Syria and Syria's neighbourhood and recommend it for approval by the Minister. The Chair noted the recommendation to pursue the localisation agenda, include vocational training and consider the

trade-off between locally managed activities vs. Ministry of Foreign Affairs control. Finally, the inclusion of a green approach and the difficulty to provide a longer-term perspective beyond 2020 was noted.

### **Agenda item no. 3: Replenishment of Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa, SEFA**

*For discussion and recommendation to the Minister*

DKK 300.0 million

(Department for Multilateral Cooperation and Climate Change, MKL)

#### *Summary:*

*The Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa (SEFA) contributes to universal access to sustainable, reliable and affordable energy services and reduces greenhouse gas emissions stemming from the energy sector. The Danish contribution of DKK 300 million is provided as a core contribution to SEFA, which supports the sustainable energy transition of countries in Africa, with a particular focus on fragile countries. The Fund's work programme consists of three thematic components: 1) green baseload, 2) green mini-grids, and 3) energy efficiency. SEFA will deploy resources through two financing windows: 1) technical assistance and 2) concessional investments. As part of the replenishment of SEFA, the Fund will change to a 'special fund' to expand the available financing mechanisms under the concessional investment window.*

The Council for Development Policy recommended the Replenishment of Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation.

In its introduction, the Department for Multilateral Cooperation and Climate Change (MKL) emphasised the substantial energy access deficit in Africa, where 640 million people live without access to modern energy sources. The Fund works to improve the effectiveness of national energy grids and the delivery of energy to remote areas through mini-grids. The replenishment of SEFA and the focus on scaling up renewable energy and mobilising investments would also mitigate the issues of the African continent only receiving 4 pct. of global climate financing and having a low share of renewable energy. SEFA's unique focus on fragile countries makes it particularly relevant for combating poverty.

The Council noted that the proposed replenishment of SEFA was well in line with the Government's priorities, in particular the green ambitions. The Council asked how avoided CO2 emissions were estimated and whether MKL could mention some project examples from the existing SEFA portfolio. The Council enquired on the outstanding issues in the special fund structure, which were still to be finalised. Some Council members were particularly interested in achievements of the first phase of SEFA, particularly concerning disbursement of funds.

The Council questioned the link to other SDGs, particularly how the initiative's components addressed gender inequality and involved civil society. In this regard, some Council members recognised the quantitative focus on gender equality in SEFA's results framework and the African Development Bank's (AfDB) mainstreaming of gender issues. The Council recommended including civil society in the stakeholder analysis and further recommended an increased focus on the inclusion of youth.

The Council raised the issue of the situation of SEFA within the structure of the AfDB and in this regard questioned the capacity of the AfDB. The Council called for information on whether the work of SEFA rubbed off on the AfDB in relation to investments in fossil fuels. With Denmark being among the biggest donors to SEFA, the Council asked about Denmark's influence in SEFA and possibilities for monitoring the functioning of SEFA. The Council called for inclusion of the UN guiding principles for business and human rights. Some Council members had particular concerns regarding the risks associated with working in fragile countries in terms of monitoring and achieving results. The Council further noted that anti-corruption was not mentioned in the documentation.

While the Council welcomed the Fund's focus on reducing CO2 emissions through increasing the share of renewable energy and energy efficiency, the Council highlighted the important links to other sectors as well as SDG-12 regarding responsible consumption and production.

Responding to the issues raised, MKL explained that the existing governance structure would be maintained and that Denmark and others would require veto powers for changes to the governance structure and legal agreement. SEFA would also follow AfDB's governing principles, which Denmark was actively working to improve. The EU institutions had also reviewed AfDB before contributing funds in 2017. Concerning estimated CO2 savings, MKL highlighted the Fund's focus on replacing polluting energy sources with renewable energy, thereby eliminating future emissions. A project in Mauritius, where freshwater from the Indian Ocean was used for air conditioning, was mentioned as an example of an innovative energy efficiency project. MKL highlighted that SEFA's results framework had a target of 50 pct. women in direct employment and 50 pct. women in training activities. The potential for further cooperation with civil society was noted and would be considered going forward. SEFA was considered a good performing organisation, given the results and the low amount of funds to be transferred to the second phase.

The Chairman concluded that the support to SEFA was relevant and well received. Further, the Chairman noted that the Council was aware of the high potential and high risks associated with focus on fragile countries. A number of questions had been raised, e.g. the capacity of AfDB, as well as focus on gender equality, human rights and civil society. The questions had been adequately answered and the Chairman found that the Council could recommend the programme to approval by the Minister.

#### **Agenda item no. 4: Organisation Strategy for Education Cannot Wait, ECW**

*For discussion and recommendation to the Minister*

(Department for Africa, Policy and Development, APD)

##### *Summary:*

*Education Cannot Wait (ECW) is a global fund to support quality education to children and youth in areas affected by conflict, disaster, and protracted crisis. The new organisation strategy outlines strategic considerations and specific goals for Denmark's engagement with ECW from 2019 to 2022. It forms the basis for the Danish*

*financial contributions and is the platform for dialogue with ECW. It outlines four Danish priorities for ECW performance: 1) Hum/Dev Nexus and joint collaboration, 2) Gender equality, 3) Education quality, and 4) Resource mobilisation. The strategy has been developed as a pilot for a new, leaner and operative format for Danish organisation strategies.*

The Council for Development Policy recommended the organisation strategy for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation. The Council furthermore endorsed the new format for organisation strategies, while providing some input for further improvement.

The Department for Africa, Policy and Development (APD) explained that the format used for the draft organisation strategy aimed at an operational and less descriptive focus compared to previous organisation strategies. Designing a new format was part of the broader Doing Development Differently (DDD) process, which aimed at supporting a more strategic and holistic approach to development engagement.

Introducing the engagement with ECW, APD stressed that Denmark had supported ECW from the outset after the Fund was established during the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. Denmark had been the largest donor until recently and was now the second largest. This role had enabled an ideal opportunity for Denmark to influence the Fund. In supporting both the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and ECW, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs focused on promoting positive synergies and coordination, and avoiding duplication between the two initiatives. In 2019, the Minister for Development Cooperation had decided to increase the support to ECW by proposing a four-year grant of DKK 250 million (2019-2022). An evaluation of ECW was scheduled for 2021 and would provide needed documentation to inform Denmark's engagement going forward.

The Council generally appreciated the format for the organisation strategy stating that the short presentation was focused and clear, Danish priorities stood out clearly and the overview of 'monitoring and Danish influence' was relevant. Some suggestions were made including strengthening linkages between the section on 'monitoring and Danish influence' and the results framework, as well as elaborating on the results framework.

The Council supported the Danish engagement in the field of education in general and found the key priorities for Danish engagement with ECW to be relevant. The plans for monitoring and influencing the Fund required relevant human capacity within the Ministry and the Council hoped that this would be sufficiently available.

The Council found that reflections on links with Danish stakeholders, including civil society and Danish teachers' associations, could be further elaborated. The Council further noted that vocational training and tertiary education were important areas, which were not covered by ECW. In that regard, one member underlined that 'occupational education cannot wait' either. The Council noted that individual organisations, such as ECW, could not do everything, and encouraged the Ministry to consider alternative ways to support these areas. While stressing the relevance of ECW's role, the Council had some general concerns in relation to supporting trust funds. The Council asked whether ECW had the capacity to support coordination at country level given the

very lean secretariat. The Council called for more information about what had worked well to make ECW engagements at country level successful.

The Council noted that the ECW focus on incentivising collaboration across sectors was commendable and something that Denmark could stress more. The Council underlined the need to avoid silo engagement as the architecture today was composed of several education initiatives, and appreciated the Ministry's focus on promoting synergies between GPE and ECW. The Council called for more information on how these synergies would be implemented in practice. Finally, the Council stressed that support to privatisation in the education sector should be avoided.

APD appreciated the Council's reflections and underlined that the comments on the format would provide insights to the Ministry's further work on the DDD approach, which the Council would discuss at its next meeting.

APD confirmed that the recruitment of a development specialist to the Human Capital team aimed at ensuring the needed capacity to follow up on the strategy. The engagement with ECW was informed by ongoing dialogue with Danish actors, especially civil society organisations (such as Oxfam IBIS and Save the Children), which also sought to ensure synergy and utilise the expertise of Danish actors. The recommendations on considering alternative ways to support vocational training were appreciated. Regarding trust funds, APD considered this a relevant way to ensure coordinated approaches and reduce administrative burdens.

APD stressed that ECW offered a particular potential for working in the humanitarian-development nexus and could have impact - despite the lean secretariat - through the dedicated focus on bringing together existing humanitarian and development actors and structures. The experience was that building on existing structures was a successful approach. However, APD looked forward to the review of ECW to provide further evidence.

APD explained that cross-fertilisation between different education-related initiatives was supported through the Ministry's organisation as the same staff was engaged in the governance structures of both ECW and GPE. ECW's focus on collaboration with other sectors was important and would be well supported by the Ministry's Human Capital approach. APD stressed that ECW supported free and inclusive education. Finally, APD underlined that the question of privatisation was more relevant in relation to other education initiatives, were Denmark was a strong voice against privatisation of education.

The Chair concluded that the Council could recommend the Danish engagement with ECW for approval by the Minister. The Council noted that a relevant discussion on what an organisation strategy should encompass had taken place, and suggested some areas for further attention and improvement.

## **Agenda item no. 5: Thematic discussion - Private Sector involvement**

*For discussion*

(Department for Sustainable Growth and Employment, BVB)

The Department for Sustainable Growth and Employment (BVB) briefed the Council on the Ministry's efforts to mobilise the private sector for development. BVB noted that using development funds as a means to mobilise the private sector in structured public-private collaboration remained a relatively new and uncharted territory. BVB also underlined that while Denmark had been at the forefront and had tested new ways and models for public-private collaboration, it remained a daunting and complex task without any of the newer approaches fully proved yet. BVB noted that there was international consensus about the crucial role of the private sector in achieving the SDGs and it would continue to seek new and still more impactful ways to do it, including enhancing synergies at country level. In this regard, BVB mentioned that initiatives related to green transition and the fight against climate change would be given a stronger emphasis going forward.

The Council underlined that it was not a question of whether the private sector should be part of development cooperation but a question of how best to engage the private sector and how to ensure broad participation from all relevant stakeholders. The Council also pointed to the importance of ensuring synergies with other development engagements and linking up the discussion to broader issues of significant importance to development, including tax havens, illegal financial flows, CO2 quotas, etc.

The Council underlined that the Danish business sector was well positioned to deliver on the SDGs, noting that it is largely dominated by SMEs. Some Council members noted with regret that this segment currently only had little possibility to participate in the Ministry's programmes given an apparent prioritisation of larger companies. The Council noted the Trade Council's SME programmes, but recommended to explore how better to capture the SME and start-up segments in development programmes. Some Council members further found that it might be worthwhile considering tying parts of the engagements to Danish partners.

The Council noted that 'additionality' was less evident when working with larger companies. While recognising that private sector partners should be able to make profit, the Council pointed to the importance of finding an appropriate balance between development impact and profit. The Council underlined that measuring development impact remained crucial, and further recognised that it was not always easy.

The Council complemented the Ministry's ability to be at the forefront of public-private collaboration. In this regard, it was underlined that 2-3 years to roll out and test new initiatives was not much. The Council agreed that working across sectors was challenging as many goals and objectives should be balanced. The Council asked if more could be done to facilitate collaboration and learning.

The Council underlined the importance of framework conditions as a crucial aspect of engaging the private sector. Finally, the Council noted that private sector development was a core element

of many country programmes and not limited to HQ activities. The Council further noted the lack of resources and incentives at embassy level to ensure synergies between the various private sector initiatives and suggested that there should be a focal person at embassy level in charge of coordinating the efforts.

In response, BVB noted that private sector development and mobilising the private sector were two different modalities. Going ahead, exploring further synergies between HQ programmes and investments and in-country activities implemented as part of the bilateral programmes would be critical and an integral part of the DDD process. In terms of the size of companies participating in the Ministry's development programmes – notably Danida Market Development Partnerships and Explorer - BVB recognised the importance of including SMEs and pointed to a recent review of DMDP, which showed good representation of SMEs. BVB informed the Council that work to better capture innovation and the start-up community was in progress. Financial innovation, i.e. guarantee schemes, was also in the pipeline.

Summing up, the Chair noted the complexity of working with the private sector and noted the Council's interest in discussing the issue. The Chair would have liked to include a discussion on how Denmark promoted private sector development in developing countries, including the informal economy. However, the issue of private sector involvement would without doubt be relevant to revisit at future Council meetings.

**Agenda item no. 6: Contribution to IFU for High Risk – High Impact Investment in Africa. Capital contribution to IFU to engage in concessional blended finance**

*For discussion and recommendation to the Minister*

DKK 200.0 million

(Department for Sustainable Growth and Employment, BVB)

*Summary:*

*The policy and investment context of IFU has changed considerably in recent years, and IFU has assumed an important role in Danish international development effort. This raises the stake for the alignment and appropriateness of IFU's strategies and instruments to deliver on development priorities. The recently published evaluation of IFU concluded that IFU's investments in lower income countries are insufficient, and recommended IFU to do more. IFU's new untied mandate provides better opportunities to identify interesting investment opportunities and partners in these challenging countries, but an unfavourable risk-return balance has been an obstacle for expansion. The MFA capital contribution of DKK 200 million will enable IFU to implement a blended concessional finance initiative in order to increase investments with a challenging risk-return balance in projects with high development outcomes in lower income countries in Africa. The first two to three years of the implementation will be a test period in order to gain experience and adapt approaches and procedures if required. The initiative will be monitored carefully, and special mid-term and ex-post studies will be prepared for a selected part of the investment projects.*

<p>The Council for Development Policy recommended the project for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation.</p>
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The BVB Department briefly presented the background of the investment initiative. The IFU managed public-private partnership investment funds required a satisfactory risk adjusted return. The present initiative would allow IFU to increase investments with a challenging risk-return balance in lower income countries.

The Council appreciated the proposal to allocate specific funds for promotion of risky impact investments in the concerned countries. The Council noted that the initiative would enable IFU to test new approaches with blended financing, which could promote investments with strong development outcomes, and further noted that the initiative could include markets and stakeholders, that were not currently reached. While some members found it ambitious to set aside DKK 200 million for the initiative, other members questioned the amount and found it too high, considering the fact that the initiative was also merely a test.

The Council appreciated the fact that the criticism and evaluation of IFU had been taken seriously and had informed the proposed initiative, not least regarding development impact. The Council emphasised the importance of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of the initiative in order to gain experience, ensure transparency, and document performance and impact. The Council questioned whether the initiative was sufficiently ambitious, e.g. in relation to the stated investment targets, including whether the initiative would in fact lead to further investments in low-income countries when the initiative could invest in Funds that covered all of Africa. The Council also suggested reserving funds for specific analyses of IFU's capacity and the outcome of the investments.

The Council asked whether IFU had the required capacity to manage and implement the initiative, e.g. in relation to results measurement, project preparation, and investments in more challenging countries. The Council indicated that it might be necessary to strengthen IFU's capacity in certain areas in order to ensure an adequate implementation of the initiative. Some members questioned whether IFU would be able to manage the implementation of the initiative adequately.

The Council discussed dilemmas between private investments, sustainable development, and commercial interests, such as return of investments. The Council asked whether the initiative would divert resources from IFU classic in relation to the concerned countries, and whether the initiative might prioritise indirect investments through investment funds rather than with Danish companies. The Council further expressed concerns regarding tender processes related to these blended finance initiatives and that they were not sufficiently transparent. In that regard, the Council encouraged IFU to ensure that all tenders (whether international, national or local) were publicly announced with clear indication of how to bid.

BVB informed the Council that it was a new and complex investment initiative, and a number of issues needed to be tested in order to gain experience. It was emphasised that a challenging risk-return balance concerned investments with high risk and/or relatively low return. The IFU investment in African Guarantee Fund was an example of an investment that would only generate a very modest return, but had a significant impact.

BVB acknowledged the importance of IFU having the required capacity to implement the initiative, and that it would consider whether resources should be reserved for special analyses of capacity needs and development outcome. BVB informed the Council that IFU to some extent would invest through investment funds, which might be particularly qualified due to local presence and ability to work with small local investors.

While noting that the project was indeed high risk, but also with expectations of high gains, the Chairman concluded that the project - in spite of certain critical questions and comments - could be recommended for final approval by the Minister.

### **Agenda item no. 7: Meeting with the Minister for Development Cooperation - Priorities within Danish Development Cooperation**

*Information from the Minister for Development Cooperation*

The Minister for Development Cooperation expressed his appreciation of the guidance and advice provided by the Council. The Minister presented the Government's Priorities for Danish Development Cooperation as laid out in the Finance Act proposal for 2020.

The Minister noted that Denmark's development cooperation was still based on the Strategy for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Action, 'The World 2030', which reaffirmed Denmark's long-standing commitment to the UN target of contributing minimum 0.7 pct. of the gross national income to development assistance. While an increase in the percentage over the coming years was something that the Minister would like to see, this would, among other things, require a strong commitment from other political parties in Parliament given that the current Finance Act negotiations focused on other – and competing – topics, such as welfare. Moreover, Denmark was one of very few countries in the world to reach the 0.7 pct. target in 2020, which was something to be proud of. Furthermore, rather than only focusing on the amount, emphasis should be on quality and on how the money was spent in the best possible way.

A key priority on the Finance Act proposal for 2020 was a clear green ambition. Denmark should take leadership in the global green transition, including by accelerating private sector investments in green energy and infrastructure projects in developing countries. Regarding criticism, which had stated that an increased focus on climate change and green transition would come at the expense of poverty reduction, the Minister underlined that these efforts were interlinked and that fighting climate change was also fighting poverty and was an important way to improve living conditions among the poorest population.

Another important priority was to strengthen efforts in countries and areas affected by conflict and displacement. The Minister underlined that an increase in humanitarian support was not contradictory to more long-term development efforts, since an important focus of Danish development assistance was on finding long-term solutions for humanitarian and protracted crisis. As an example, by focusing on education, refugees would have a better chance of becoming self-

sufficient and creating a life for themselves - also when returning to their home countries. Similarly, the rights of women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, was a key priority in Danish humanitarian action and development cooperation in general.

Lastly, the Minister highlighted Africa as a key priority, where the Government had a clear ambition of directing more focus towards activities in Africa over the coming years. The Minister, however, emphasised that such a transition should and could not be rushed and that it was crucial to allow time for sufficient dialogue with relevant actors, including civil society and members of Parliament. As a next step, discussions with other political parties in Parliament should address the question of how to move forward with preparations for a new strategy for development cooperation (to be finalised during the course of 2021), including discussion of how to ensure a strong focus on Africa.

The Council welcomed the presentation and thanked the Minister for taking the time to address the Council. In general, the Council supported the priorities highlighted by the Minister. The Council agreed that there was not necessarily a contradiction between green ambitions and poverty reduction. The Council commended the fact that the Government would take a pragmatic approach towards an increased focus on Africa over the coming years and to allow sufficient time for dialogue with relevant parties, including the Council. Furthermore, the Council applauded the Government for maintaining its focus on key priorities and principles, including gender equality and civic space.

Regarding long-term versus short-term, the Council noted that the balance seemed to have shifted towards more short-term humanitarian support at the expense of longer-term development assistance and encouraged the Minister to consider, whether this was the right approach. Along the same lines, the Council noted a shifting balance towards multilateral rather than bilateral assistance and underlined that there was a risk of missing out on important learning opportunities by being less present on the ground.

The Council applauded the Minister's ambition of increased public engagement and recommended as a first step to provide more easily accessible information about Danish development cooperation, which was currently difficult to obtain via Danida OpenAid, etc. Better access to information was necessary if the public should be further mobilised. Moreover, specific attention to the involvement of the youth was recommended.

The Council underlined that Danish companies possessed valuable competences within areas such as green technology, and emphasised the importance of taking a partnership approach involving Danish companies, including SMEs.

The Council underlined the importance of vocational and occupational training as part of Danish development cooperation as this was a prerequisite for ensuring sustainable growth and employment. The Council furthermore underlined the need for job creation, in particular in Africa, and pointed towards the need to create a more complex and differentiated business environment. Support was needed if people were to move from the informal sector to formal businesses, which could generate employment opportunities.

The Council noted that additional financial resources for development cooperation were not necessarily the only answer, and that a key focus area should be the quality of existing development assistance. In that regard, the Council pointed towards making sure that enough qualified human resources were available in the Ministry, including the number of development specialists, which had been decreasing for a number of years.

Finally, the Council called for reflections on how the Minister would obtain the best guidance and advice from the Council, including in the development of a new strategy for development cooperation. In that regard, the Council called for involvement at an early stage in decision-making processes.

Summing up, the Minister underlined his emphasis on solidarity and public engagement, including youth. Moreover, the Minister took note of comments and recommendations made in relation to vocational training, the Ministry's resources, the balance between multilateral and bilateral assistance, focus on partnerships, and inclusion of smaller enterprises.

**Agenda item no. 8: AOB.**

No points were raised.