

Minutes from meeting in the Council for Development Policy
on 30 June 2022

- Members: Professor Anne Mette Kjær, University of Aarhus (Chair)
International Director Jarl Krausing, CONCITO (Vice Chair)
Senior Researcher Lars Engberg-Pedersen, Danish Institute for International Studies
General Secretary Birgitte Qvist-Sørensen, DanChurchAid
Interim International Director Nina Christine Holm-Lundbye, The Danish Youth Council
Director for Global Development and Sustainability Marie Gad, Confederation of Danish Industries
Head of International Department Jens Kvorning, SMEdenmark
- Vice Chair Bente Sorgenfrey, Danish Trade Union Confederation, and Head of Department Kenneth Lindhardt Madsen, The Danish Agriculture & Food Council, were not present but submitted written comments prior to the meeting.*
- MFA: State Secretary for Development Policy Lotte Machon
Under-Secretary for Development Policy Stephan Schönemann (Agenda item 4-8)
Head of Department Tove Degnbol, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, ELK
Special Advisor Anne Marie Sloth Carlsen, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, ELK
Head of Section Josephine Mittag, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, ELK
- Agenda item 2: Ambassador Winnie Estrup Petersen, Dhaka
Deputy Head of Mission Lise Abildgaard Sørensen, Dhaka
Head of Department Thomas Lehmann, Department for Asia, Latin America and Oceania, ALO
Head of Section Pernille Dueholm, Department for Asia, Latin America and Oceania, ALO
Chief Advisor Hanne Carus, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, ELK
- Agenda item 3: Ambassador Anders Carsten Damsgaard, Rome
Counsellor Jette Michelsen, Rome
Head of Section Anna Søndergaard Kiel, Department for Multilateral Cooperation, MUS
- Agenda item 4-5: Head of Department Marianne Kress, Department for Migration, Stabilization and Fragility, MNS
Chief Advisor Nille Gry Olesen, Department for Migration, Stabilization and Fragility, MNS
Chief Advisor Troels Gauslå Engell, Department for Migration, Stabilization and Fragility, MNS

- Chief Advisor Marina Buch Kristensen, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, ELK
 Head of Section Anna Søndergaard Kiel, Department for Multilateral Cooperation, MUS
- Agenda item 6-7: Ambassador Steen Sonne Andersen, Ouagadougou
 Deputy Head of Mission Dorrit Skaarup Jensen, Ouagadougou
 First Secretary Leif Thorenfeldt Kokholm, Ouagadougou
 First Secretary Tina Retz Jespersen, Ouagadougou
 Deputy Head of Department Katrine From Høyer, Department for Africa, Policy and Development, APD
 Chief Advisor Kristian Kirkegaard Edinger, Department for Africa, Policy and Development, APD
 Chief Advisor Anne-Catherine Legendre, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, ELK
 Chief Advisor Marina Buch Kristensen, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, ELK
 Chief Advisor Susanne Wendt, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, ELK
- Agenda item 8: Ambassador Nathalia Feinberg, Department for Asia, Latin America and Oceania, ALO
 Head of Department Thomas Lehmann, Department for Asia, Latin America and Oceania, ALO
 Head of Section Samuel Frimand-Meier, Department for Asia, Latin America and Oceania, ALO
 Chief Advisor Jakob Rogild Jakobsen, Department for Migration, Stabilization and Fragility, MNS
 Chief Advisor Anne-Catherine Legendre, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, ELK
- Agenda item 9: Deputy Head of Department Henrik Winther, Department for European Neighbourhood, EUN
 Chief Advisor Mogens Blom, Department for European Neighbourhood, EUN
 Chief Advisor Karin Nielsen, Department for European Neighbourhood, EUN
 Merete Villum Pedersen, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, GDK

Agenda Item No. 1: Announcements

The State Secretary informed the Council that that the Minister for Development Cooperation had approved a loan guarantee of DKK 280 million to the World Bank, which enabled Ukraine to obtain a loan of € 30 million (approximately DKK 223 million). If Ukraine was unable to repay the loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the losses would be covered by the Danish guarantee and financed by the development assistance. The Minister for Development Cooperation was also expected to approve a contribution of DKK 100 million to the Nordic Green Bank (NEFCO) to rebuild Ukrainian cities, including Mykolaiv when possible. The State Secretary also informed the Council that the fast track procedure for

approval of Danish support to Ukraine which had been used three times would be suspended by 1 July 2022.

In relation to the engagements which had been put on hold due to the evolving situation in Ethiopia, the State Secretary for Development Policy informed the Council that the Embassy expected to resume the implementation of the Enhanced Danish-Ethiopian Energy Partnership (DEEP) 2021-2026. There had been a change of partners. The energy project would be implemented directly by the national electric company, while the water project would be implemented by local city officials. Moreover, the Embassy would look into potential cooperation with regional organisations such as the African Union.

Finally, the State Secretary for Development Policy informed the Council that the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) in Uganda would resume its functions following the recent visit to Uganda by the Minister for Development Cooperation. The decision had been proclaimed by President Yoweri Museveni who suspended the DGF in early 2021 in the run-up to the elections in mid-January 2021.

The Chair of the Council thanked the State Secretary for the information.

Agenda Item No. 2: Bangladesh Strategic Framework 2022-2027

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

DKK 250 million

Embassy in Dhaka

Summary:

The new Bangladesh Strategic Framework (2022-2027) forms the basis for the Danish partnership with Bangladesh. The vision is to contribute to a sustainable, green and socially just transition through a commercial and political partnership. This will be done by focussing on two strategic objectives: (1) promoting a green and socially sustainable economic transition and (2) reducing inequality and improving social cohesion and resilience in fragile communities. Gender equality, empowerment of youth and the preservation of democracy and human rights will be cross-cutting priorities. As one of several instruments, the Strategic Framework includes a bilateral development programme of DKK 250 million, which will be the last of its kind in Bangladesh as the cooperation transitions into a “targeted partnership” with an increased focus on trade and strategic sector cooperation. The bilateral development programme for Bangladesh will support the two strategic objectives through: (i) supporting green and socially just economic growth in urban industrial sectors as well as the food and agriculture sector, (ii) greening the industries, including the fashion industry, (iii) supporting initiatives to strengthen labour standards and ensure decent work, primarily within the garment sector, (iv) strengthening adaptation and climate resilience in vulnerable communities, and (v) facilitating access to basic services for Rohingya refugees and deescalating conflict potential in Cox’s Bazar through investments in the water and sanitation sectors.

The Council for Development Policy concluded that it could not recommend the Bangladesh Strategic Framework 2022-2027 for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation.

The Council commended the very well-written Strategic Framework for the clear context analysis and good overview both of the progress made by Bangladesh, including with significant support from Denmark, and of the continued and very serious challenges facing the country. However, the Council did not find that the outlined priorities and the rapid phase out of a much reduced

bilateral programme matched these challenges. While the Council recognised Bangladesh's expected graduation from being a Least Developed Country (LDC) in 2026, the Council was not convinced that this was a relevant trigger for phasing out the Danish bilateral development cooperation in a country with widespread poverty, inequality, facing exceptional climate challenges, and hosting approximately one million refugees from Myanmar.

Members of the Council asked for information about the specific areas that Denmark would no longer support in Bangladesh due to the phasing out. More specifically, Members of the Council enquired about the past engagement in the greening of the food security sector and what would happen to this engagement given that Bangladesh was one of the countries in the world hardest hit by global warming. Continued support for the agricultural sector to strengthen resilience would be important in this regard.

Regarding trade, Members of the Council noted that the Embassy was engaging very well on the commercial side, and the recently signed Green and Sustainability Framework Engagement was acknowledged for its potential to also create opportunities for enhanced trade relations. Members of the Council further highlighted that there was great potential for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in the Information Technology (IT) and garment sectors. The garment industries in Denmark saw a shift from China to Bangladesh, and the continued work for skilled development was worth investing in. However, at the same time Members of the Council pointed out that the serious challenges facing Bangladesh, such as inequality and consequences of climate change, could not be lifted by the private sector but needed more diversified support, including strategic sector cooperation. In addition, Members of the Council pointed out that Bangladesh' prospects for economic growth through trade might be hampered by the new EU due diligence regulation which could make it too risky for European companies to import goods from Bangladesh and other countries in the same situation. In that context, Members of the Council reminded that the EU rules clearly stated that countries who tightened their rules also had a responsibility for assisting exporting countries' efforts to raise their standards. Members of the Council therefore appreciated the considerations with regard to Denmark's continued engagement on decent jobs. It was further emphasised that the scale-up of sector advisors would be a good investment in Bangladesh. The water sector was mentioned as a specific sector where value could be added.

Members of the Council highlighted the close relationship explained in the Strategic Framework between Denmark and Bangladesh in the international climate negotiations where Bangladesh played a leading role in the group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

Regarding migration, Members of the Council stressed that good governance and meaningful participation in decision-making processes were vital for youth and could be a contributing factor to prevent migration and stimulate employment opportunities. Continued capacity building of institutions was of particular relevance to ensuring sustainability.

Finally, Members of the Council reflected on the mandate of the Council for Development Policy to give strategic and expert advice to the Minister for Development Cooperation. In relation to the Strategic Framework for Bangladesh, the concern was that phasing out of the bilateral cooperation was not well in line with the law and the strategy on development cooperation because Bangladesh very well fitted the criteria in the strategy concerning poverty, climate, and area of origin for refugees. The concern was therefore the lack of proper arguments for phasing

out. While Members of the Council expressed disagreement with the Danish Government's decision to phase out, other Members of the Council expressed disagreement with the speed of the phasing out process.

The State Secretary for Development Policy took note of the Council's comments relating to the political decision to scale down Denmark's development cooperation in Bangladesh. She explained that the decision was part of the changes to the Foreign Service following adoption of the new foreign policy strategy and the new development cooperation strategy. The decision had been approved by Parliament. According to the strategy for development cooperation, Denmark would mainly focus its development cooperation in Africa and invest in the poorest and most fragile countries. The decision to phase out of some developing countries, including Bangladesh, was based on where Denmark could make the biggest difference with the funding that was available. The State Secretary emphasised that the phasing out of the traditional bilateral development programme in Bangladesh would be gradual. The Embassy would be maintained and other instruments would be used, including humanitarian aid, multilateral support (including the Green Climate Fund), strategic sector cooperation, business instruments, etc.

The Ambassador noted that several development partners were taking the same steps to move from aid to trade in their partnerships with Bangladesh. This underpinned how Bangladesh viewed itself as a country which no longer relied on development cooperation but would like partners to transfer technology and give access to know-how, for example in the area of climate change and their interest in strategic sector cooperation was growing. Official Development Assistance (ODA) constituted a very small part of the national economy.

The Ambassador underlined that the Embassy had focussed on the importance of creating synergy between the bilateral development programme and other tools mentioned in the Strategic Framework. For instance, Denmark worked to strengthen labour rights through a sector counsellor whose work should be seen in connection to Denmark's contribution to the International Labour Organization (ILO) as well as Denmark's active role in the Team Europe Initiative for Decent Work, which brought development projects and political dialogue related to trade agreements together. The Embassy and likeminded EU Member States saw a future General Scheme of Preferences (GSP+) agreement as an important means to make a business case for Bangladesh to lift this broader agenda.

On the question of what Denmark did no longer do, the Ambassador informed that a number of grants to human rights organisations had already been closed based on a proper exit strategy. Denmark was a small partner in the political landscape in Bangladesh, dominated by major players such as EU, China, India, and Russia. The Council was also informed that the Embassy had an existing partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which would address climate smart agriculture in tandem with the upcoming bilateral development programme.

Members of the Council asked if Parliament and the public had been properly informed about the implications of phasing out of Bangladesh and the actual situation in the country. The State Secretary confirmed this and stressed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was very conscious of the importance of informing the public and Parliament. Finally, she noted that Denmark and Bangladesh had achieved significant results together through the many years of traditional

development cooperation, and that it was now time to continue the cooperation based on other instruments.

The Chair of the Council for Development Policy noted the concerns raised by the Council and concluded that the Council did not find the rapid phasing out of the Danish bilateral development cooperation and transition to new instruments sufficiently justified. Therefore, the Council could not recommend the Bangladesh Strategic Framework (2022-2027) for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation.

Agenda Item No. 3: Organisation Strategy for the World Food Programme (WFP) 2022-2025

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

DKK 630 million

Embassy in Rome

Summary:

The World Food Programme (WFP) has a double humanitarian and development mandate, delivering food assistance in emergencies and enabling governments and communities to improve nutrition and build resilience. WFP works in 117 countries fighting food insecurity and supporting local and government structures to strengthen capacities for food emergency preparedness and response to food crises. WFP works both short-term in acute food insecurity crises and addresses the structural drivers of food insecurity and hunger through long-term development-oriented interventions, in partnership with other actors. The organisation strategy outlines Denmark's strategic approach to our collaboration with WFP with a focus on fighting food insecurity, advancing climate adaptation and anticipatory action, rolling out the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus approach to food security and enhancing organisational effectiveness, while scaling up innovation. The strategy also ensures cross-cutting results on gender equality and localisation.

The Council for Development Policy recommended the Organisation Strategy for the World Food Programme (WFP) 2022-2025 for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation.

The Council expressed its appreciation for a well-written strategy for the World Food Programme (WFP) and stressed that with the current global food crisis, the issue of food security was more important than ever. The Council commended that the strategy highlighted the inter-linkages between the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus, climate change and the need to build resilience.

Members of the Council asked whether WFP should focus its work on its comparative advantage in providing food assistance in acute food emergencies and hunger crises, or whether WFP should extend its work towards longer-term development efforts to build food security. Was the current 80/20% ratio between the two the right balance? Members of the Council also asked about the role of WFP in the HDP nexus and within the area of food and agriculture, and enquired whether there was duplication with the work of other UN agencies, e.g. the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Members of the Council commended WFP's capacity for innovation and emphasised the importance of not holding WFP back from engaging in innovative solutions to food insecurity.

Members of the Council noted the importance of anticipatory action and requested examples of concrete WFP initiatives. They also noted the positive impact of WFP's school feeding programmes, which helped ensure that children attend school.

Members of the Council commended the high level of Danish core contributions to WFP compared to the level of core contributions to other organisations as discussed in the Council's meeting on 24 June 2022. Members of the Council enquired about the underlying considerations in the case of WFP.

Finally, Members of the Council enquired about the rationale for selecting the four Danish key priority areas, including the priority area related to organisational effectiveness.

The Ambassador thanked the Council for the constructive comments and noted that the discussion was timely, given the significant aggravation of the global food situation caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The prices of food, fertilizer and energy were rising sharply, and food supply chains were interrupted. Food crises in vulnerable countries and regions with existing crises, such as Syria, Yemen, the Horn of Africa and Sahel were worsening. But food insecurity was also increasing in middle income countries. These challenges had been key issues at the WFP Annual Meeting on 20 – 24 June 2022.

Regarding Denmark's funding to WFP, the Ambassador explained that approximately 90% of Denmark's annual contribution of DKK 210 million was core funding which supported WFP to adjust rapidly and be agile in crises. In addition to the Organisation Strategy, Denmark provided humanitarian funding for WFP's interventions in acute food security and hunger in crises-affected countries. In the 1st half of 2022, DKK 113 million for food crises in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Somalia, Ukraine and Yemen. Moreover, multilateral-bilateral support to WFP's resilience work was also part of Danish bilateral country programmes. Overall, there was a balance between core and earmarked contributions to WFP.

The Ambassador acknowledged that there was a built-in dilemma in WFP's dual mandate between the short-term humanitarian food assistance and the longer-term development work. However, WFP generally struck a good balance. It was Denmark's expectation that WFP would work in partnership with relevant actors, including FAO and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in the areas of food and agriculture, the HDP nexus, climate action and in capacity building of national and local actors.

On the rationale for the selection of the Danish priority areas, the Counsellor emphasised that area 1 on fighting food insecurity was WFP's key competence and crucial given the current number of hunger hotspots where food crises were expected to escalate. Priority area 2 on advancing climate adaptation was also a key priority for Denmark, given that climate change was becoming a key driver of food insecurity. WFP's mandate on addressing food insecurity made it crucial to integrate climate resilience and anticipatory action to climate shocks in operations and programmes, as WFP was doing with success in East Africa. On priority area 3, the operational roll out of the HDP nexus was key to WFP, given that two-thirds of WFP's operations took place in conflict-affected settings, and that silo approaches were inefficient. On priority area 4 on organisational effectiveness, the Counsellor noted that WFP was assessed to be one of the most effective UN agencies, with a deep operational footprint in more than 100 countries and with a

decentralised set-up that worked. WFP's Executive Board worked proactively and efficiently and there was a close dialogue with WFP regional and country offices on the strategic direction of WFP's work. WFP's oversight, evaluations and knowledge management was also commendable.

Finally, the Ambassador noted that beyond the immediate life-saving food assistance, Denmark's overall focus was systemic, i.e. to promote long-term solutions and sustainable food systems in the global food crisis. This went beyond WFP's role. Denmark was part of the UN Secretary-General's Global Crisis Response Group for Food, Energy and Finance for which the Danish Prime Minister had been appointed Champion as one of six global leaders. Denmark had also joined the Global Alliance for Food Security, initiated by the G7.

The Chair of the Council for Development Policy concluded that the Council could recommend the Danish Organisation Strategy for the World Food Programme 2022-2025 for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation.

Agenda Item No. 4: Approach Note: Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus

For information and discussion

Department for Migration, Stabilization and Fragility, MNS

The Chair introduced the item by stressing the valuable endeavour of the MFA to develop a set of 'how-to-notes' and 'approach-notes' to be used as tools in implementing Denmark's development cooperation strategy. She listed all the How-to-Notes, including the eight that had already been discussed and commented by the Council.

The Council then discussed and commented on the internal Approach Note on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus intended to guide the implementation of the new strategy "The World We Share" as part of the set of 'how-to-notes' and 'approach-notes'.

Overall, the Council found the Note to be well-crafted and useful, although quite densely written. Members of the Council suggested revisiting the draft to ensure: (i) that the political dimension of conflicts was further emphasized as an obstacle to the nexus approach and that considerations about Denmark's possible role as a part in a conflict were added, (ii) that the role of diplomacy was highlighted (iii) that the importance of local dialogue and dialogue between the pillars was elaborated on and distinguished from coordination, (iv) that the importance of Denmark's vast experience with development work was mentioned in the section on the Development Pillar, (v) that the time perspective was elaborated on in terms of how relevant the different pillars were at different times and how the pillars interacted in different stages and (vi) that it was clarified that the formulation of collective outcomes did not prevent agents in the different pillars from formulating individual outcomes as well. Finally, it was suggested to add more examples for instance on the different approaches to the hosting of refugees by Jordan and Lebanon, recently witnessed by the Council during its visit.

Agenda Item No. 5: How-to-Note: Peace Building and Stabilisation

For information and discussion

Department for Migration, Stabilization and Fragility, MNS

The Council discussed and commented on the internal How-to-Note on Peacebuilding and Stabilisation intended to guide the implementation of the new strategy “The World We Share” as part of a set of ‘how-to-notes’ and ‘approach-notes’.

Overall, the Council found the Note to be a useful and accessible guidance tool. Members of the Council suggested revisiting the draft to: (i) clarify the definitions on stabilisation and peacebuilding, which were found to be unclear and difficult to distinguish from one another, (ii) highlight the role of diplomacy, (iii) elaborate on the potential pivotal role of the private sector/private sector organisations in peacebuilding, (iv) further emphasise the geopolitical dimension of many conflicts and how this could be addressed, including how to operate in a setting with open violent conflict, (v) elaborate on the dilemma between pragmatism and idealism in mediation and peacebuilding e.g. in a dilemma box, (vi) include a distinction between violent and non-violent situations, (vii) take note of the additional reflections to be made if Denmark is seen as part to the conflict, and (viii) include bilateral engagements at the country level in the matrix. While Members of the Council found the inclusion of corruption, climate security and youth, peace and security in the approach section useful, it was suggested that the role of root causes, such as poverty and inequality, should be supplemented by a focus on more immediate causes in the political economy.

The Council suggested that after a reasonable time, a presentation should be given to them on the practical experience of applying the various notes.

Agenda Item No. 6: Niger Strategic Framework 2023-2027

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

DKK 800 million

Embassy in Ouagadougou

Summary:

The new Denmark-Niger Strategic Framework will form the basis for Denmark’s partnership with Niger for the period 2023-2027. The vision is to prevent violent conflict and support peacebuilding and stability in respect of good governance and human rights, and to reduce poverty and inequality by enhancing resilience and accelerating inclusive, sustainable growth. This will be done through three strategic objectives: (1) Strengthen stability, prevent conflicts, displacement, and irregular migration, (2) adaptation to climate change and strengthening resilience, and (3) promote good governance, human rights, and gender equality. The Strategic Framework includes a bilateral development programme of DKK 800 million.

The Council for Development Policy recommended the Niger Strategic Framework 2023-2027 for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation.

The Council thanked the Embassy in Ouagadougou for the informative and well-written Strategic Framework. The Council noted the difficult Nigerien context, which was well-described in the context analysis, including the armed conflict and high poverty, population growth, food insecurity and gender inequality. The Council also noted the high level of ambition of the very sizeable new country programme. Under such circumstances, the Council questioned that a ‘laptop office’ would suffice to implement and monitor the new bilateral programme.

Members of the Council suggested to include more information about the history of the Danish engagement in Niger in the Strategic Framework given that a continuous engagement was considered important for the effectiveness of development assistance. Members of the Council recalled the decision in 2003 - which Danida's Board had objected to - that Niger would no longer be a sector programme country and the re-engagement in 2011 which had then been followed by the closure in 2014 of the Danish Cooperation Office in Niamey. All along, embassy and headquarter staff had done their best within the given, albeit insufficient institutional framework.

Members of the Council appreciated the broad strategic objectives of the proposed bilateral development programme while at the same time suggesting that the programme was perhaps too ambitious given the many entry points and lack of a permanent Danish representation in Niamey. Members of the Council also noted that the reference to Niger's own priorities could be clearer and more explicitly stated, including with regard to Niger's national climate plan, as concern for ownership by Nigerien authorities should underpin Danish-supported development activities.

Members of the Council highlighted that the link between the analysis, the strategic objectives and the bilateral programme could be strengthened, for example in relation to governance and the need for capacity development notably in state institutions which appeared somewhat overlooked compared to CSOs and independent organisations. Members of the Council also asked how governance problems in relation to the extractive industries (i.e. mining and oil) would be addressed in terms of sustainability and income. Furthermore, Members of the Council questioned whether conflict prevention by CSOs and the military would be the way to handle self-defence groups and requested the Embassy to elaborate on the reasons for continued Danish support to the government High Authority for Peace Consolidation (HACP).

In relation to other engagement areas, Members of the Council commended the inclusion of job creation in the Strategic Framework, but asked for more concrete examples on how this would be achieved. Members of the Council also requested the Embassy to elaborate on the choice of partners for the Danish engagement in the water sector and on the engagement with civil society, particularly the reason for using 'call for proposals' which was seen as less hands-on compared to the way Denmark usually supported civil society.

The Ambassador thanked the Council for the positive remarks and comments and underlined that close consultation had taken place between the Embassy and the Nigerien Government as well as with Nigerien civil society. He emphasised that the Danish and Nigerien priorities were aligned, including the new Nigerien Plan for Economic and Social Development (PDES) 2022-2026, which was yet to be published. Alignment with the national climate plan had also been ensured which should be made more explicit in the document. Furthermore, the Embassy would elaborate on the history of Denmark's partnership with Niger.

The Ambassador noted that good governance in the state apparatus would be a priority for the bilateral programme with all government partners, such as the HACP, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Water, migration authorities, etc. Good governance would also be promoted via civil society engagements and, potentially, with independent national institutions such as the Nigerien Human Rights Commission (CNDH).

The Ambassador emphasised that the bilateral programme should be seen in synergy with other development policy instruments, for example multilateral support to education. However, more concrete multilateral activities were difficult to plan or describe in a strategy document. Synergies had been highlighted where possible.

The Embassy had established a good partnership with HACP over the years. Therefore, the Embassy would work directly with HACP under the new bilateral programme instead of through a delegated partnership. The HACP would be a key partner to address and help manage the emergence of self-defence groups.

In the water sector, the Embassy had been satisfied with the collaboration with Luxembourg on water infrastructure, but other priorities had been more challenging to pursue in that partnership. Given the strong Danish priorities on integrated water resource management and the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus, the formulation of the bilateral programme would therefore also explore other potential partnerships in the water sector.

On the engagement with civil society, the Embassy planned to recruit a fund manager to help manage the broad support to civil society. Targeted calls for proposals were a good way to identify partners and develop new models on specific priorities, like Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). There was a need for different modalities and partners to create a robust and flexible programme that could adapt to unforeseen events.

The Ambassador noted that support to the private sector and job creation would be focused on the agricultural sector, which employed 80% of the working population, and where Denmark would engage at both the national and the local level. The mining and oil industries were complex sectors to engage in. Multilateral stakeholders with a stronger presence and capacity in the extractive sectors, such as the World Bank, were better placed to engage here. However, support for more systemic anti-corruption initiatives could be explored.

Lastly and in relation to the institutional set-up, the Ambassador highlighted that the human resources of the Embassy in Ouagadougou had been strengthened. In Niger, there were plans to increase the use of locally-based technical assistance to support the implementation, monitoring and coordination of the programme building on the positive experiences from the past three years. The new 'laptop office' at the EU Delegation in Niamey would enable better interaction with the EU Delegation and its experts. The Ambassador underlined that the proposed bilateral programme would be manageable based on the Embassy's experience.

The Chair of the Council for Development Policy thanked the Embassy in Ouagadougou for a constructive dialogue and concluded the Council could recommend the Niger Strategic Framework 2023-2027 for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation.

Agenda Item No. 7: Annual Stocktaking of the Development Cooperation with Burkina Faso

For information and discussion

Embassy in Ouagadougou

Summary:

The Stocktaking Report for Burkina Faso 2021-2022 summarises the key findings of the annual review of the Denmark-Burkina Faso Country Programme. It highlights the difficulties of implementing the bilateral development programme in such a fragile context. The bilateral development programme is proving robust in the face of multiple challenges on security and politics. The military coup in January 2022 led to temporary suspension of two projects. The Embassy has prioritised learning across thematic teams.

The Council found the Stocktaking Report well-written and welcomed its honesty. The difficulties of implementing the bilateral programme in such a fragile context and difficult security situation were obvious. The Council commended the Embassy for handling the difficulties by applying the flexibility of the bilateral development programme, and for establishing internal learning mechanisms.

Regarding the security situation, Members of the Council enquired about the military junta's decision to temporarily 'depopulate' two large areas to make room for military operations. Members of the Council also asked about the role of the Wagner-group in the Russian disinformation campaigns in Burkina Faso and what could be done to counter it.

Regarding relations with the Government, Members of the Council commended the pragmatic approach whereby a certain level of cooperation with state institutions was maintained allowing the Embassy to keep the line open to good contacts. Members of the Council asked which projects were challenged in their implementation due to the military coup in January 2022 and the security situation in general. Was the governance programme with the Ministry of Justice challenged due to the situation?

Finally, Members of the Council asked about the consequences of postponing a commitment of DKK 200 million from 2022 to 2023, and Members of the Council also asked what it would take to alleviate the situation in relation to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The Ambassador thanked the Council for the positive remarks and the questions. The bilateral programme had had a rough start, when the situation had moved towards the worst-case scenario of the Strategic Framework faster than could have been anticipated. However, it had also shown the robustness of the programme thanks to the varied types of partnerships and modalities in the portfolio. For example, shortly after starting the implementation of the resilience projects, the Embassy had been forced to partially shift to new geographical areas due to a deterioration of the security situation. The coup had not directly affected the implementation with the Ministry of Justice, but it had indirectly slowed down implementation through lower decision-making capacity due to changes in the Government and senior officials.

The Ambassador clarified that the postponement from 2022 to 2023 of DKK 200 million (i.e. half of the planned commitment for 2022) was considered a question of liquidity management. The actual implementation of activities would not be impacted.

The Ambassador specified that two projects were on standby due to the coup: (i) the budget sector support to the Water Ministry and (ii) the partnership with the Ministry of Security. Denmark and other partners were awaiting clarity on the political direction after the coup and an agreement with ECOWAS, before a Danish decision on how to proceed with the two projects

could be made at the political level. Regarding the water sector beyond budget support, a recent inception review report had given green light to continue investments in this sector. In addition, a project with the Danish Sustainable Infrastructure Finance (DSIF) was underway with a focus on major infrastructure investments.

Finally, the Ambassador confirmed that Russian disinformation was widespread in the Sahel-region, most significantly in Mali, but also increasingly in Burkina Faso. The Embassy did not intend to start a counter-propaganda programme but rather to use funding from the adaptability reserve for activities with a focus on access to information through support to civil society organisations, journalists and lawyers.

The decision to temporarily depopulate two areas for military operations were deeply worrying from a human rights perspective as a notice of only 14 days had been given and the population either could not or would not leave the areas in question.

The Chair of the Council for Development Policy thanked the Council and the Embassy for a constructive discussion based on the Embassy's very first annual Stocktaking Report.

Agenda Item No. 8: Afghanistan Transition Programme 2022

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

DKK 153.4 million

Department for Asia, Latin America and Oceania, ALO

Summary:

The Danish Transition Programme on Afghanistan for 2022 builds on solid partnerships from the former Afghanistan Country Programme 2018-2021. The programme aims to serve as a bridge between humanitarian relief and longer-term development, with a focus on high impact in the short-term but going beyond a purely needs-based approach. The Transition Programme has a time frame of 12 months, i.e. until mid-2023, and comprises a focus on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus. A Strategic Framework, on which work will be initiated in the second half of 2022, will guide the programming of new activities, expected to start implementation by mid-2023.

The Council for Development Policy recommended the Afghanistan Transition Programme 2022 for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation.

The Council thanked the Ambassador and her team for the well-written Transition Programme and acknowledged that the programme was to be implemented in a very complex and difficult context after the Taliban take-over. The Council expressed support for the general reflections on central dilemmas outlined in the document. Thus, the question was not *whether* Denmark ought to be actively engaged prospectively, but *how*.

Members of the Council noted that the document touched upon an interesting discussion on how to act strategically and long-term in a context that was inherently short-term and fraught with uncertainty. In this regard, the current situation would be a litmus test as to how much the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus would be able to achieve in such a context. The strength of the approach and of the aid-architecture was that it was robust, but difficulties in areas such as coordination and overlap in engagement efforts might constitute weaknesses.

Regarding education, Members of the Council appreciated the support for community-based education as a means to circumvent the government structures of the Taliban *de facto* authorities and found it interesting that such a system of community-based education was already in place. However, the division between community-based schools and public schools, which were controlled by the Taliban, seemed artificial. Would the Taliban not be able to close down the community-based schools if they wanted to? Furthermore, Members of the Council enquired about the ability to safeguard long-term educational gains, which had been a key Danish priority in Afghanistan over the years. Was this still realistic? Members of the Council also highlighted the need for initiatives that would give students a higher degree of engagement and ownership in their own education also as a way of stimulating bottom-up democratic tendencies.

Members of the Council expressed their support for the decision to fund the Special Trust Fund for Afghanistan (STFA). Teaming up with like-minded donors in order to respond to the crisis at hand was the right way forward. In light of the difficult circumstances, Members of the Council asked about the monitoring of the Transition Programme, particularly the use of third party monitoring.

As a small light in the darkness, Members of the Council commended that the UN and NGOs were now able to reach virtually all parts of Afghanistan due to the improved security situation. Even though it was a result of the Taliban take-over, this was an interesting aspect.

Members of the Council highlighted the response from DACAAR to the public hearing and asked about the potential consequences of not engaging with the *de facto* Taliban authorities. Drawing a parallel to Syria, Members of the Council mentioned that the Council had recently met with NGOs in Syria's neighbouring countries that had adopted a pragmatic approach to engaging with the Assad regime, in order to be able to help the people inside Syria. Was the situation any different in Afghanistan?

The Ambassador thanked the Council for its support and the questions. She reiterated that the work with Afghanistan was filled with dilemmas. Overall, the prospect for Afghanistan was indeed very bleak and disheartening. The numbers spoke for themselves as the population was hit by multiple crises in the humanitarian, economic and political spheres. The Taliban increasingly sought to exert their control over the Afghan people, not the least over women and girls. There were considerable regional differences in how the restrictions were enforced. There was still considerable uncertainty about developments in Afghanistan in the medium- to longer-term, but it was not looking good.

It was true that according to the UN, it was now possible to reach almost all districts in Afghanistan with support, which was positive. At the same time, there were indications that the Taliban sought to limit the room for manoeuvre of NGOs. The improved access should also facilitate monitoring by UN and NGOs present in the country. In coordination with the UN and like-minded donor countries, every effort would be made to ensure that funds reached their intended targets. Nonetheless, there would always be risks associated with working in a context as complex and difficult as the current one.

The Ambassador commented on the question of safeguarding long-term educational gains and concluded that there was a risk of losing some of the progress made during the past two decades, but that it was important to continue to support education. During the coming year, with the implementation of the Transition Programme, there would be an internal stocktaking of the approach and an assessment of the best practice going forward.

On the question of engaging with the Taliban, the position of the Danish Government was very clear. There could be no direct cooperation with the Taliban, but efforts would be made to ensure progress on certain agendas through partners such as the EU, UN and NGOs.

The Chair of the Council for Development Policy concluded that the Council could recommend the Afghanistan Transition Programme 2022 for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation.

Agenda Item No. 9: Kosovo – Denmark Partnership for Green and Just Energy Transition

For discussion and recommendation to the Minister

DKK 207 million

Department for European Neighbourhood, EUN

Summary:

The objective of the “Kosovo – Denmark Partnership for Green and Just Energy Transition Programme” is to assist Kosovo in developing a social and just transition path towards climate neutral energy in accordance with its new National Energy Strategy. The programme will focus on: (i) increased energy and resource efficiency, (ii) transformational use of renewable energy sources and an improved legal and regulatory framework and (iii) government-to-government cooperation, including capacity development of Kosovan institutions.

The Council for Development Policy did not recommend the Kosovo-Denmark Partnership for Green and Just Energy Transition for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation.

The Council found the programme document to be well-written with a good context analysis and the proposed programme well in line with Kosovo’s national energy plan.

However, the Council did not find adequate strategic explanations for re-engaging with development assistance to Kosovo, an upper-middle-income country by categorisation of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). With limited Danish funding available, the Council found it important to take into account where the Danish engagements could make the biggest difference, especially in a context where Denmark had reduced its development support to countries with a much lower Gross National Product per capita (GNP) than Kosovo. Rather the Council found that Danish development assistance should be spent in developing countries, where Denmark could make the biggest difference, such as Bangladesh and Tanzania that had much higher poverty levels and were harder hit by climate change.

While acknowledging that Kosovo had one of the highest levels of poverty in Europe, Members of the Council found that programmes in the European Eastern Neighbourhood, including Kosovo, could be financed by other means than the regular development cooperation frame, as had been the case when Denmark had a specific Fund for Peace and Stability (FRESTA).

Members of the Council recalled the decision in 2015 to stop giving Danish development assistance to Kosovo (and to the Balkans in general) and expressed reservations regarding the intention to resume development cooperation with Kosovo, on the grounds that such a “stop-and-go” approach tended to produce poorer results.

Members of the Council highlighted the many other donors present in the climate and energy sector, 13 according to the programme document, and questioned the added value of the planned Danish engagement. Members of the Council recalled that the large number of donors present in the country had contributed to the earlier Danish decision to withdraw its donor support to Kosovo.

Members of the Council acknowledged the need for climate and energy interventions funded by development assistance. However, given the widespread energy poverty and need for climate assistance in many poorer countries, such as Bangladesh, Members of the Council did not find the intervention in Kosovo justified from this perspective either. Moreover, Members of the Council questioned whether renewable energy always contributed to poverty reduction.

Members of the Council also asked why the majority of the Danish support (i.e. DKK 187.50 million) would go to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and asked for explanation of the gearing of grant money with loan capital.

Furthermore, Members of the Council noted that part of the project preparation had been transferred to an inception phase which might indicate a quick and possibly not through project preparation.

Finally, Members of the Council questioned whether the relatively weak state institutions in Kosovo would be able to engage in the anticipated policy dialogue with Denmark.

The Deputy Head of the Department for European Neighbourhood (EUN) acknowledged the questions raised by the Council. He clarified that the decision taken in 2015 to terminate the cooperation with Kosovo was founded, first and foremost, in the political decision to reduce the overall level of Danish development assistance. More recent developments in Kosovo and the region now called for an active Danish presence. With the planned programme, Denmark would be able to support critical reforms by the new Kosovan Government, who wished to promote a more just and green energy transition in a country which depended on coal for $\frac{3}{4}$ of its energy usage. An energy transition would have a big impact for the poorest parts of the population in Kosovo. Denmark had a strategic interest in supporting the positive initiatives and reforms of the new Government.

As for the Council’s concern about donor crowdedness, the Deputy Head clarified that the areas of democracy and human rights were indeed donor crowded. However, information from local partners indicated that the Kosovan energy sector clearly lacked actors who could adequately cover specific areas, including the promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency, which were priority areas for the Kosovan Government and areas where Denmark could provide technical assistance and share experience. The Government of Kosovo was looking for partners

and technical assistance to help implement their newly formulated Energy Strategy for 2022-2031.

Regarding the cooperation with the EBRD, the Chief Advisor of EUN clarified that the expected investments from EBRD in the green energy projects was dependent on the Danish grant as 1 USD given as grant could raise 5 USD as loan capital. The Deputy Head of EUN informed the Council that a Steering Committee would be established where both the Danish MFA, Kosovan authorities and the EBRD would take part. This would ensure local ownership and give Denmark a possibility to follow the programme closely and influence it. It would also give Denmark a useful presence in Kosovo, where we had no embassy.

The State Secretary for Development Policy commented on the broader political perspective. The Nordic countries and other likeminded donors were present in the Balkans and had noted Denmark's absence. The decision in 2015 to withdraw from Kosovo was part of a substantial and abrupt reduction of Danish development assistance. Today, there was a new reform-friendly government in Kosovo and the overall geopolitical situation was different, which had led to a Danish political wish to resume the bilateral cooperation with Kosovo. The fragile security situation also clearly showed the country's need for allies and support as the country was unable to access UN funds. The funds allocated for the programme were relatively limited but the energy partnership was seen as a platform for support to and cooperation with Kosovo, which could be scaled up. The cooperation with West Balkan was highlighted in the Danish strategy for development cooperation and resuming the Danish development cooperation with Kosovo was a reflection of Denmark's overall management of interests.

The Chair of the Council for Development Policy noted the concerns raised by the Council concerning Kosovo's status as an upper-middle income country and the need to allocate limited Danish development funds to where they were most needed based on the criteria of climate and poverty, the unjustified stop-go approach, and the donor-crowding in the sector and concluded that the Council could not recommend the Kosovo – Denmark Partnership for Green and Just Energy Transition Programme for approval by the Minister for Development Cooperation.

Agenda Item No. 10: Any Other Business

No issues were raised under this agenda item.