

DENMARK - PALESTINE

Strategic Framework 2021-2025

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0. List of abbreviations

AHLC	Ad Hoc Liaison Committee
CEDAW	United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoV	Means of Verification
MoLG	Ministry of Local Governance, PA
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture, PA
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PA	Palestinian Authority
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
VTC	Vocational Training Center

1. Denmark in Palestine: Vision and political framework

The core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is political. A protracted and deepening conflict focused on territory, which requires a comprehensive political solution. Moreover, the Palestinian development potential is constrained by the nature of the conflict. Palestine relies heavily on foreign assistance. The Palestinian economy cannot become self-sustainable under the existing conditions as Israeli restrictions and occupation does not allow Palestinian control of its own resources or economy. These constraints can only be alleviated if there is a political breakthrough between the parties. For the same reason, the Danish engagement in Palestine is based on a joint political and developmental approach and is closely linked with Denmark's engagement with Israel.

Despite the constraints and protracted nature of the conflict, many tangible results have been - and can be - achieved. Results include building up public institutions, strengthening relevant state and civil society actors as well as the private sector, and service delivery to the benefit of the Palestinian population. It is important not to lose sight of the results obtained and to consider where the prospects of a Palestinian state would have been today without political and financial support e.g. for basic services such as primary health care and education by the international community, not least the European Union (EU).

1.1 Strategic vision

The strategic vision of Denmark's engagement in Palestine 2021-2025 is to support a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the realisation of a two-state solution, while also striving to promote stability in the region and improving the lives of Palestinians, who are caught in the conflict.

In support of this vision, focus will be on the following three strategic objectives for the period 2021-2025:

1. Human rights and democratic accountability. A particular focus will be on enhancing state-citizen interaction as well as empowering rights holders to claim their human rights, and duty bearers to fulfil their human rights obligations.

2. Creation of green, sustainable, inclusive economic growth and decent jobs with a particular focus on women and youth.

3. Resilience, peace and stability. Strengthen resilience of the most vulnerable groups in Palestine to contribute to peace and stability and enable them to uphold a life in dignity where their home is and with the hope for a better future. In this context, women and youth are agents of change in increasing resilience and stability.

Across the strategic objectives, Danish key priorities such as gender equality and women's rights, youth, and inclusion of marginalised groups will also be promoted. Further, the vision and strategic objectives are aligned with the Palestinian National Policy Agenda. The National Policy Agenda outlines three pillars giving the strategic direction of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and seeks to put citizens at the center of its efforts, namely a) ending the occupation, b) government reform c) and improvement of public services and sustainable development.

The assumption behind the strategic vision of Denmark's engagement in Palestine is that ending the conflict is in the interest of Denmark and the EU as well as of the parties themselves and the wider region, and that this can be achieved through a comprehensive peace agreement, based on internationally agreed principles. Until a political solution is reached, these efforts - including developmental, humanitarian and political - are crucial for preserving stability and avoiding exacerbating the political crisis and humanitarian disaster.

Box 1. Danish interests

Promoting a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the above three strategic objectives is in Denmark's interest for several reasons described below. The interests are long-term as a solution to the conflict is not likely to materialise in the short- or medium-term.

Safeguarding the rules-based international order and the role of the EU

It is a global priority for Denmark to strengthen the rules-based international order, including to safeguard respect for international law and multilateralism. It is in Denmark's interest to stay engaged in the protection of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the occupied Palestinian territory. Furthermore, the EU remains a fundamental platform for securing Danish interests globally. This is especially true in a time when the rules-based international order is under pressure. In the Middle East Peace Process, the EU has historically played a vital role in standing guard of the fundamental parameters for a solution to the conflict. Continued strong and credible political commitment, and development and humanitarian support, is therefore more crucial than ever.

Minimizing security implications and irregular migration

The protracted conflict and periodic escalations of violence have serious implications in terms of security - for Israel and Palestine as well as the wider region and beyond. The situation in Gaza provides fertile ground for local militant groups' recruitment. Extremist and militant groups in other parts of the Arab world use the conflict to recruit members and justify their actions. Moreover, the situation for the Palestinian people is a source of discontent in many predominantly Muslim countries, and as the unresolved status for Palestinian refugees in neighbouring countries remains and the refugee population grows, the concern rises.

The security situation coupled with the economic situation for many Palestinians have implications in terms of irregular migration. The Danish Government has the declared goal of minimizing the flow of irregular migrants towards Europe by i.e. addressing root causes and supporting preventive measures and early action. In Palestine, especially in Gaza, the lack of opportunities is a cause of irregular migration towards Europe, as young Palestinians increasingly search for a better future.

Until a political solution is reached, Denmark's broad engagement in Palestine will contribute to preparing Palestinians to have a functioning state of their own and improve their livelihood, thus contributing to development and stability. Denmark can engage by a) empowering Palestinians to claim their human rights and by supporting duty bearers in fulfilling their human rights obligations; by b) seeking to promote dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis; by c) helping build the economic foundation for a viable state; by d) helping ensure a level of legitimacy for local authorities

by supporting service delivery; and by e) contributing to alleviating the suffering of millions of Palestinians through humanitarian assistance.

In short, Denmark is not engaged in Palestine for short-term success, but with a persistent long-term focus on the momentous task of Palestinian state building, development, peace and stability. Denmark's broad engagement underpins this political commitment.

1.2 Political framework

Denmark's engagement in Palestine rests on a fixed political framework. For Denmark and the EU, the basic parameters for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution between the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, sovereign and contiguous State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, are based on UN resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1515 (2003) and 2334 (2016).

In addition, the EU has set out its position in various Foreign Affairs Council conclusions, including December 2009, December 2010, May 2012, July 2014 and January 2016. These parameters include a) the need for a solution based on the 1967 borders with Jerusalem as the capital for two states unless the parties decide otherwise in bilateral negotiations, b) Israel's right to peace and security and c) normalisation of relations between Israel and the Arab countries. This policy enjoys broad support in the Danish Parliament as reflected by the adoption of motion V13 in January 2014, motion V53 in May 2016, and motion V30 in January 2018, laying out the overall principles guiding Denmark's policy regarding the Middle East Peace Process.

Box 2. Policy Goals

Within the framework of the UN resolutions and EU council conclusions referred to above, Denmark will work towards the following political objectives, both in multilateral fora, in particular the EU, and bilaterally:

The implementation of all relevant UN and EU obligations, rules, principles and guidelines pertaining to the situation, including the EU Guidelines on International Humanitarian Law. The parties will be expected to engage in the peace process in good faith. This includes exercising restraint and avoiding unilateral action, which may further undermine the peace efforts and the viability of a two-state-solution. The EU has emphasised that it will continue to closely monitor the situation and its broader implications and remains ready to take further action in order to protect the viability of the two-state solution.

Maintaining the viability of a future Palestinian State, based on the pre-1967 borders. This entails working to oppose and reverse the ongoing territorial fragmentation of Palestine. Denmark will continue to oppose Israeli settlement activities and other possible unilateral actions from all sides.

A full and effective implementation of existing EU rules and regulations as well as national arrangements applicable to settlement products.

Improving the human rights situation and daily living conditions of Palestinians. The compliance of Palestine and Israel with international human rights law and humanitarian law is essential. Denmark will work to ensure the respect of both parties for the human rights of the Palestinian population and address grave violations both bilaterally and in relevant multilateral arenas. The

growing democratic deficit in Palestine and the lack of progress on reconciliation represent serious concerns, which must be addressed.

A long-term solution to the unsustainable situation in the Gaza Strip that leads to the lifting of the blockade while ending the threat to Israel posed by Hamas and other militant groups in Gaza. The Gaza Strip constitutes an integral part of a future State of Palestine. A long-term solution for Gaza is inextricably linked to the realisation of a two-state solution. Denmark has expressed its readiness to contribute to international monitoring and verification mechanisms that might be established to facilitate this objective.

Improved Palestinian access to and development of Area C in accordance with the EU Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions of May 2012. Access for humanitarian and development actors to the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is also in focus as this is necessary in order for them to monitor and implement projects.

Implementation of existing agreements between the parties, including the Paris Protocol, aiming to create a more sustainable economic development in Palestine. This includes the issue of financial transfers from Israel to Palestine as well as development of a more transparent and efficient taxation system.

Preserving the viability of Jerusalem's final status as the capital of two states. In accordance with international law, Denmark regards East Jerusalem as occupied territory and has never recognised the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem. Denmark supports attempts to enhance Palestinian presence in East Jerusalem among other things through the reopening of Palestinian institutions in accordance with the Roadmap for Peace. Preserving the status quo of Haram al-Sharif is also a Danish priority.

Denmark will pursue the political objectives through the EU and through Denmark's bilateral relations, including the regular policy dialogues with Palestine and Israel respectively, as well as through relevant multilateral instruments and Denmark's overall development cooperation with Palestine.

Based on this political framework, the following four strategic choices will guide Denmark in its broad engagement in and with Palestine:

1. EU - a cornerstone in the Danish engagement: EU cooperation is a cornerstone of Denmark's broad engagement in Palestine and in the Middle East Peace Process within the political, humanitarian and developmental spheres. Therefore, Denmark will operate within the general framework set out by international law and EU policies and be guided by the EU in terms of how to adapt our engagement in a changing political environment. Furthermore, Denmark is an active participant in the EU Joint Programming in Palestine that includes both a dimension of development cooperation effectiveness as well as a political dimension. Within the current European Joint Strategy for Palestine, Denmark is the sector lead on local governance as well as on youth.

2. Strong linkage between political, developmental and humanitarian tools: Efforts to strengthen accountable national institutions, employability of youth and women and the respect

for fundamental human rights will be important elements in building a viable state and more generally in order to ensure sustainable development, peace and stability. Due to the complex framework conditions, developmental instruments cannot stand alone, but must also be used as political leverage in the dialogue with Palestinian and Israeli decision-makers. Close coordination between political, developmental and humanitarian tools is a necessity, and must be conducted in respect of humanitarian principles.

3. Human rights-based approach: Denmark's broad engagement in Palestine is applying a human rights-based approach based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, transparency and accountability, as well as the distinction between rights holders and duty bearers. This helps fulfil Denmark's and Palestine's global obligation of making the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for everyone and leaving no-one behind. Furthermore, the human rights-based approach ensures a continued Danish focus on rights holders to claim their rights as well as duty bearers to live up to their human rights obligations, which is a strong means to building sustainable societies also in a fragile and changing context.

4. Adaptive approach: The Danish engagement in Palestine 2021-2025 is based on an expected continuation of the relatively stable status quo with gradual deterioration of the economic, humanitarian and political situation while taking into account the risk of considerable deterioration. However, Denmark's engagement in Palestine is subject to difficult and evolving political framework conditions. These include the overall consequences of the occupation, the absence of a functioning Palestinian political environment, the risk of unilateral steps that would harm the prospects for a negotiated solution, and the general uncertainty encompassing the way forward. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected the situation in Palestine in terms of both economy, protection and health, and is expected to have substantive long-term effects.

It is therefore necessary that Denmark's broad engagement is adaptive and flexible, responding strategically and continuously to lessons learned, emerging opportunities and challenges in both the external and internal political framework. This could mean adding, adjusting or reassessing strategies, approaches and implementation modalities within planned development engagements. Regular political dialogue in which Denmark, mainly through the EU, will push for positive change and seek to address and prevent negative developments will be complementary to these efforts.

1.3 Coherence, synergies and actors in Denmark's broad engagement in Palestine

Denmark's broad engagement refers to the joint and overall Danish engagements in Palestine. This includes multiple actors and instruments (box 3). The strategic framework aims to enhance the coherence across the Danish engagements and instruments to support the overall vision of Denmark's engagement in Palestine of a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Denmark will pursue this vision through political and policy dialogues with Israel and Palestine, through close cooperation with the EU and like-minded donors, and via the UN and bilaterally. Policy dialogues will be linked to development instruments to achieve the greatest possible impact. Coordination and close dialogue with Danish civil society organisations (CSOs) providing development- and humanitarian assistance will continue to be important to deliver results in support of this vision. Moreover, Denmark will prioritise an active dialogue with multilateral organisations whose mandate is aligned with Danish priorities in Palestine and to which Denmark is a major contributor of core support, such as the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Furthermore, Denmark will attach multilateral advisors to prioritised

multilateral organisations aligned with the Danish priorities. The aim is to also attract more Danish private sector involvement in Palestine.

Denmark will strengthen the relation between humanitarian initiatives, development cooperation and peace-building - the humanitarian-development-peace nexus - through support to building resilience of vulnerable communities affected by poverty and conflict – not least through the strategic partnerships with Danish civil society organisations and with multilateral organisations. Support will be mutually reinforcing and build bridges between humanitarian interventions and development to foster resilience.

Box 3. Overview of the most important instruments in Denmark's broad engagement in Palestine

- Policy dialogue, including through the EU.
- Strategic partnerships, umbrella organisations managing pooled funds, human rights and democracy partnerships.
- EU, multilateral organisations, funds and programmes active in Palestine.
- International financial institutions.
- Multilateral advisers.
- Humanitarian assistance.
- Bilateral development cooperation.

2. Situation in Palestine: Context, challenges and risks

Box 4. Area A, B and C

Following the 1993 Oslo Accords and the 1995 Interim Agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the West Bank was divided into three zones, A, B and C. While some control was given to the PA in Areas A and B, Israel maintained full security control and control over building and planning in Area C. Area C constitutes over 60 per cent of the West Bank and is the only contiguous territory. It contains the most significant land reserves available for Palestinian development, as well as the bulk of Palestinian agricultural and grazing land. Area A consists of approximately 18 per cent of the West Bank and is under Palestinian security and civil control, while Area B consists of approximately 21 per cent of the West Bank and is under Palestinian civil control and joint Palestinian-Israeli security control.

2.1 Political and security situation

The peace process between Israel and Palestine is at a standstill with no real progress towards a resumption of negotiations for many years. As the more than 70-years old conflict drags on, developments on the ground are making it increasingly difficult to reach a two-state solution, not least because of the continued Israeli settlement expansion in Area C and East Jerusalem. Since the Oslo Accords, the number of Israeli settlers in Area C and East Jerusalem has increased and stands at more than 630,000 in 2020. The EU considers settlements a main obstacle to the two-state solution and the territorial integrity of a future Palestinian state.

In addition, extensive restrictions on Palestinian movement, and the reservation of land in the West Bank for settler roads, training areas for the Israeli security forces, nature reserves, etc., significantly limit the Palestinian access to and influence over Palestinian territory. It is notoriously difficult for Palestinians to obtain building permits and the number of Palestinian families being forced to move, or having their homes and other structures demolished, is increasing. From 1 January 2009 to 30 March 2020, 9,158 Palestinians were displaced in this way.

Internal Palestinian factors also constitute a significant challenge, notably the split between PLO/Fatah in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza. This has led to an increasing democratic deficit reinforced by the absence of parliamentary and presidential elections since 2005/2006 and a non-functioning Palestinian Legislative Council since 2007. Democratic elections are long overdue. In addition, the PA's system of payments to Palestinian prisoners in Israel and their families are in need of reform towards a needs-based system as opposed to being linked to the length of a sentence.

In 2007, when Hamas took de facto control over Gaza, Israel and Egypt imposed wide-ranging restrictions with severe implications for the freedom of movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza. The restrictions have serious consequences for the economy in Gaza, which is almost completely cut off from its traditional export markets in Israel and the West Bank. Many Palestinians in Gaza are left without employment, which has caused a sense of desperation and despair. The economic situation, combined with the radical ideology of Hamas, provide ample ground for recruitment of youth by militant groups, which are based on an ideology of armed struggle against Israel. The risk of a new large-scale conflict between Israel and militant groups in Gaza exists. However, as the 2014 Gaza conflict showed, there are no military solutions to the challenge posed by Hamas and other militant groups in Gaza. A viable, long-term solution must be based on an inclusive Palestinian political process that fully allows the legitimate PA to return to Gaza and on a commitment to the Quartet Principles. As it stands now, Hamas remains on the EU sanctions list.

2.2 Economy

According to the World Bank, Palestine is one of the poorest countries in the Middle East and North Africa, and the economic outlook is cause for great concern. Real GDP reached only 0.9 per cent in 2019, down from 1.2 per cent in 2018. Gaza registered zero per cent growth following the recession in 2018 of a minus 3.5 per cent, while growth in the West Bank in 2019 was 1.2 per cent – the lowest since 2003. Unemployment, food insecurity, poverty and inequality, are all manifestations of the inadequate speed and inclusiveness of economic growth in Palestine. The labour force participation rates remain low, especially among women. In the fourth quarter of 2019, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported that the participation rate was 44.4 per cent with 70.4 per cent for men and just 17.6 per cent for women.

Unemployment in the fourth quarter of 2019 was close to 14 per cent in the West Bank and 43 per cent in Gaza. Unemployment has hit youth and women particularly hard. The unemployment rate among youth graduates who hold an intermediate diploma and above, reached 52 per cent in 2019, with 68 per cent for young women as opposed to 35 per cent for young men. The unem-

ployment among women in the workforce stood at around 41 per cent. Most women find employment in the informal sector, which risks undermining worker protection and labour productivity and the empowerment of women.

The Palestinian economy faces a system of physical, institutional and administrative challenges and bottlenecks that prevent the realisation of its potential. Some of these are external and due to the occupation; others are domestic. According to the World Bank, the main constraints to economic growth and job creation are the Israeli-imposed restrictions on movement, trade, access to land and other natural resources, and repeated cycles of conflict. There is also a perception that the risk of corruption is high, in particular at the structural level rather than related to informal payments or bribes.

However, market opportunities do exist, especially within trade, as exemplified by the EU being the second most important trading partner of Palestine with total trade amounting to EUR 278 million in 2017. Other opportunities include investments in green growth, including investments in water and energy.

2.3 COVID-19 pandemic

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic is damaging the already fragile Palestinian economy. In addition to the public health implications, the negative shock to the Israeli and Palestinian economies will have profound implications for human rights, public welfare, employment, social cohesion, financial and fiscal stability, and institutional survival. With very limited control over its economy, the PA is unable to remedy this crisis with the policy tools that are generally available to countries.

The pandemic also has severe repercussions on the PA's budget due to a significant loss of revenue and a need for higher expenditures on health, basic public services, social assistance to the neediest families and households and support to small- and medium-size enterprises. This situation will have major negative effects on development prospects for Palestine, with immediate demands for funds to address the public health emergency and humanitarian consequences, and thereafter a need for increased focus on socio-economic recovery.

2.3 Fragility

The situation in Palestine is fragile. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation (OECD), Palestine is experiencing severe political and societal fragility, and a high-level of fragility in terms of security. Aspects contributing to fragility in these dimensions include among others, the risk of a regime breakdown, lack of political inclusion, and the high number of refugees and internally displaced persons. Each of these areas may lead to social discontent and violence if not addressed. Other areas contributing to fragility include the high unemployment rate and the low level of economic opportunities, which both contribute to an economic fragility that could fuel frustrations and be a catalyst for violence.

Addressing fragility is crucial and merits great attention in terms of how and where Denmark chooses to prioritise its engagement in Palestine. In each of the abovementioned dimensions of fragility, women and youth are particularly affected. The unemployment rate for instance is disproportionately high for these two groups. A specific focus on women and youth is therefore

required to cope with fragility in Palestine. OECD highlights a number of key areas that could strengthen Palestine's ability to cope with fragility, and where Denmark at the same time has strong expertise. These include strengthening the engagement of the population and accountability in Palestine through for instance increasing communities' capacity to participate in decision-making processes, and the reinforcement of state-citizen trust and legitimacy by improving service delivery. It also includes protection and promotion of fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and association, and free media, as well as addressing the low participation rate of women in the labour force.

2.4 Human rights and democracy

Until a negotiated two-state solution has been reached, Israel bears the primary responsibility for securing the human rights of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories. Palestine under president Abbas has clearly signalled – through the accession to a wide range of international human rights conventions without reservations – that it wants to be measured against the highest standards of international human rights law and humanitarian law in areas, where it exercises control. The duty bearers on all sides must be held accountable. However, continued human rights violations against the Palestinian population by Israel, as well as by the PA and Hamas, are reported by the UN and the EU. Both the EU and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) point out that fundamental human rights, incl. but not limited to freedom of expression, association and assembly, as well as freedom from torture, and the media and civil society are challenged both in the West Bank and in Gaza. According to EU and UN reports, human rights defenders continue to be targeted. This has led to a shrinking civic space, with civil society being restricted from claiming their rights. The Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights reaffirms the negative trend.

Further challenges remain in the field of gender equality, discrimination against LGBT+ persons and domestic violence against women. Gender-based violence is a particular concern. In November 2019, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported that 29 per cent of women across Palestine had experienced some form of violence by their husband at least once. According to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, this tendency together with the continuation of patriarchal attitudes in the Palestinian society also limits the ability of Palestinian women to play active political roles in political life, to engage in economic and social life and ultimately leave women few choices to make their own decisions.

At the same time, there is a vibrant civil society and countless CSOs working with human rights for Palestinians from every angle - women's rights, the fight against torture, labour rights, to the right of freedom of movement etc. Many of these organisations, both Palestinian and Israeli, work to strengthen the respect and promotion of human rights and to document and address human rights violations committed by all duty bearers, and to hold them accountable.

2.5 Vulnerability to climate change

Climate vulnerability is a serious challenge in Palestine. According to the UN, the effects of climate change and environmental threats have taken its toll on Palestine's economic potential and the resilience of the population. The most affected groups are those engaging in climate-dependent livelihoods, e.g. agriculture, fishing and herding. The ability to adapt to the climate changes is

impacted by the restrictions due to the Israeli occupation. For instance, the ability of herder communities in Area C to cope with longer droughts is compounded by restrictions on their movement and by infrastructure development.

Furthermore, a relatively high increase in population growth is expected in Palestine, which will put further pressure on the scarce resources and increase the overall needs. According to the UN 2019 World Population Prospects, the Palestinian population is projected to grow from 5.1 million in 2020 to 6.3 million by 2030. Mitigating the effects of climate change is needed and there is potential, especially in the local government sector, to address these challenges together with other donors and relevant authorities.

Palestine has shown political will to include climate change adaptation in its national policies. It has signed and ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, developed National Adaptation and National Determination Contribution Plans, and included adaptation to climate change as a key priority in its National Policy Agenda.

2.6 Migration

Palestine is experiencing a significant increase in migration, especially from Gaza. No official statistics exist, but approximate figures from the UN indicate a net migration from Gaza of 21,000 individuals from May 2018 to December 2019, which is a quadrupling compared to the same period in 2016-17. Many of those leaving obtain a permit to study or work abroad, and some return to Gaza later on. Furthermore, a good number of Palestinians have citizenship in other countries and travel to visit relatives or to settle abroad. Others leave Gaza and become irregular migrants.

The lack of prospects for a negotiated solution to the conflict in the near future, the gradual deterioration of the situation in Gaza - but also in the West Bank - with high unemployment rates and general lack of life opportunities and any perspective for an improvement of this situation are among the primary reasons why Palestinians decide to migrate. Addressing the issue of irregular migration from Palestine is therefore complex. Assistance to UNRWA and other types of development and humanitarian assistance is crucial, as is a focus on creating jobs and inclusive, sustainable economic growth.

2.7 Women and youth

Palestinian youth (aged 15-29) account for 28 per cent of the population while women account for about half of the population. Paradoxically, while women and youth represent a huge resource and could be valuable democratic agents of change, they remain largely disempowered politically, socially and economically. They continue to face barriers and discrimination in exercising their rights and aspirations to be full and equal members of political, societal and economic life. In turn, they are underrepresented in decision-making processes, disproportionately affected by unemployment, lack economic opportunities and face social pressures and exclusion. For instance, women's participation in the labour force was only 17.6 per cent in 2019 compared to 70.4 per cent for men and only 0.9 per cent of the youth were holding a senior management position or working as a legislator in 2018. Safeguarding the rights of women and youth while empowering action through equal and meaningful participation in society is essential for sustainable develop-

ment in Palestine. Such efforts include, among others, entrepreneurship support, learning of practical skills, and work with both duty bearers and rights holders to create an open Palestinian society.

3. Strategic objectives for Denmark's partnership with Palestine

This section unfolds the strategic objectives and describes how Denmark across policy areas and instruments will pursue these strategic objectives in cooperation with Palestinian and other strategic partners.

3.1 Human rights and democratic accountability

Strategic objective 1: Strengthen human rights and democratic accountability. A particular focus on enhancing state-citizen interaction as well as empowering rights holders to claim their human rights, and duty bearers to fulfil their human rights obligations.

Contribution to SDGs: SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 10 (reduce inequalities) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

Upholding democratic principles, fulfilling the obligations under the international human rights treaties, and working towards a more citizen-centred government are key components of Palestine's state building efforts, highlighted in the National Policy Agenda. The PA recognises that there is more to be done in these areas, including ensuring service-oriented and accountable public institutions and policies that are shaped by the people they serve. Denmark is well placed to contribute to Palestine's priorities in the governance sector and in promoting human rights given the long-term cooperation with the PA, the Independent Commission for Human Rights, the local government sector and civil society in these areas. Experiences and lessons learned from Denmark's broad engagement in Palestine have shown Danish actors' expertise in human rights and democratic accountability. In combination with strong local partnerships this has led to substantial results and established a solid foundation for future strategic interventions. Palestinian partners have valued Danish assistance and this has helped in building up trust for political and policy dialogue. Denmark will seek to capitalise on these experiences and the opportunities resulting from these to strengthen human rights and democratic accountability.

3.1.1 Strengthen democratic governance and accountability for the delivery of better public services to citizens

A more accountable, responsive and citizen-centred government is a key priority for the PA, as outlined in the National Policy Agenda and contributes to SDG 1.4 on access to basic services, SDG 16.6 on effective and accountable institutions at all levels and SDG 16.7 on inclusive decision-making. Experience has shown that Danish CSOs, through their rights-based work with local partners, have enabled communities to engage with local duty bearers. This has proven to be a sensible approach. Denmark will provide support to both the strengthening of public institutions to deliver services through accountable and democratic processes and to the empowerment of citizens and local communities to engage with public authorities and advocate for their needs and rights.

Support to the local government level is a key element in both state building, stabilisation, and in supporting duty bearers and rights holders to fulfil and claim their rights as it is the local govern-

ment level that citizens most frequently interact with and rely on for public service delivery. Denmark will provide the support through strategic partnerships with Danish CSOs and bilateral development engagements. Policy dialogues with the PA will underpin these instruments. In this regard, Denmark enjoys a privileged position as lead development partner in the local government sector and this provides a platform for dialogue regarding the broad Danish engagement in Palestine.

3.1.2 Increase the civic engagement of women and youth

Youth play a key role as agents of change in reaching a more solidary, sustainable and just world. Denmark will place particular importance on increasing civic engagement of women and youth to claim their basic human rights. Women and youth are key agents in building democratic cultures and societies, but they lack representation in decision-making roles and processes in Palestine. Empowerment of women and youth to participate in public life is a priority for the PA, who has made a commitment in the National Policy Agenda to equip youth to participate meaningfully in these processes and remove the barriers that prevent the full participation of women, in line with SDG 5 on gender equality as well as the aim of leaving no-one behind.

Denmark will contribute to these efforts by supporting initiatives focusing on empowering Palestinian women and youth to act as agents of positive change in their local communities and engage in democratic processes, including through digital means, as rights holders claiming their needs and human rights. Denmark will provide support through strategic partnerships with Danish CSO's, umbrella organisations managing pooled funds, bilateral development engagements, through Denmark's role as lead on youth within EU's Joint Strategy for Palestine as well as by raising human rights concerns for women and youth in relevant political fora.

3.1.3 Improve human rights protection and securing a safe civic space

In line with the Palestinian National Policy Agenda's priority to safeguard citizens' rights, promoting respect for pluralism, equality, and freedom from discrimination, Denmark will contribute to efforts aiming at improving human rights protection and securing a safe civic space. Both the protection of human rights and a safe civic space for the civil society to organise, participate in democratic processes, including through social media, and advocate for their rights without hindrance are vital building blocks of an open and democratic society.

Danish support will therefore contribute to SDG 16.10 on protection of fundamental freedoms. Focus will be on strengthening the capacity and empowerment of CSOs and human rights defenders to raise human rights awareness, monitor and document human rights violations and threats to the civic space, both online and offline; and hold duty bearers accountable to their human rights obligations as well as to international humanitarian law. To this end, Denmark will provide support through bilateral development engagements, strategic partnerships with Danish CSOs, and multilateral advisers. Complementary to this support, Denmark will actively seek to engage in policy dialogue on human rights and gender equality with key decision-makers within the PA.

3.1.4 Support to women' and girls' right to decide over their own body

The right to decide over one's own body and sexuality is a fundamental human right. This includes sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as the right not to be subject to gender-based

discrimination, including sexual and gender-based violence. Denmark will support the PA and CSO's in their efforts to address the high prevalence of gender-based violence in the Palestinian society. This is in line with SDG 5.2 on violence against women, and the recommendations and concluding observations to Palestine from the UN Committee on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women respectively. Denmark will apply multiple instruments, including support to multilateral organisations, strategic partnerships with Danish CSOs, umbrella organisations managing pooled funds as well as policy dialogue with the relevant political actors.

3.2 Creation of green, sustainable, inclusive economic growth and decent jobs

Strategic objective 2: Creation of green, sustainable, inclusive economic growth and decent jobs with a particular focus on women and youth.

Contribution to SDGs: SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG 10 (reduce inequalities), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production) and SDG 13 (climate action).

Denmark will support efforts to create green, sustainable, inclusive economic growth and decent jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities for Palestinian women and youth. This will contribute to SDG 8.5 on ensuring decent work for all and SDG 8.6 on reducing the proportion of youth not in employment. A particular focus will be on connecting the youth to jobs by equipping them with market-relevant skills and facilitating young entrepreneurs' access to finance.

3.2.1 Sustainable, inclusive green economic growth and jobs

Given the small size of the Palestinian economy and the restrictions on physical trade, Denmark will prioritise innovative job creation initiatives in for instance tradeable services, particularly the digital technologies, such as information and communication technologies. In line with the priorities in Palestine's National Policy Agenda and the national investment plan, Denmark will also support the creation of decent jobs in the productive sectors, such as community-based tourism and agriculture by strengthening value chains in the local economy.

A key priority for the Danish support will be the creation of decent jobs that contribute to a more equal, inclusive and solidary labour market in Palestine. In doing so, Denmark will place particular emphasis on creation of green jobs and fostering sustainable development. Denmark will support multilateral advisors and bilateral development engagements in this regard. Denmark will also provide the support through strategic partnerships with Danish CSOs who already have gained experiences and showed results from their support to for instance micro-enterprises and innovative economic empowerment initiatives in Palestine that they can build upon in future cooperation. Furthermore, Denmark will consider how Danida's investment and partnership facilities ("business instruments") can be applied to spur sustainable economic growth and employment in Palestine, as well as look into the possibility of providing guarantees to Palestinian banks to make them able to lend to small and medium sized enterprises.

3.3 Resilience, peace and stability

Strategic objective 3: Strengthen resilience of the most vulnerable groups in Palestine to contribute to peace and stability and enable them to uphold a life in dignity where their home is and

with the hope for a better future. In this context, women and youth are agents of change in increasing resilience and stability.

Contribution to SDGs: SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 3 (health), SDG 4 (education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 10 (inequality) and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

Denmark will support the neighbouring region. By providing support locally, we can help more people. Denmark will have a specific focus on strengthening the resilience of Palestine refugees through support to education, vocational training and health care. A particular focus will also be on strengthening the resilience of women and youth in vulnerable areas in the West Bank and Gaza. These groups are among the most affected by the conflict.

The rationale is that by strengthening the resilience of some of the most vulnerable groups in Palestine, Denmark will contribute to reducing inequalities (SDG 10), creating hope for a better future and alternatives to migration or participation in militant activities. If this is not done the risk of instability and violence increases. Building resilience is therefore a key aspect of Denmark's support to securing the stability in the region, just like improving the lives and resilience of Palestinians are important elements in supporting them to have a functioning state as part of a peaceful solution to the conflict. This will require an approach that goes beyond the silo mentality that has been prevalent in humanitarian and development cooperation. Experiences have shown the importance of strengthening the relation between humanitarian, development and peace-building – the humanitarian-development-peace-nexus. In view of this, Denmark will seek to facilitate work across the nexus by allowing for development work, humanitarian assistance and political dialogue to work coherently together as outlined below.

3.3.1 Building resilience through health, education and vocational training

Quality primary education is vital to build the human capital of Palestinians needed for the development of a resilient and flourishing society. By supporting quality and inclusive education in Palestine, Denmark supports Palestinians in developing skills to thrive in an evolving and challenging world. Education helps promoting equal rights and opportunities for all children, greater civic engagement and peaceful communities.

In line with SDG 4 on education, Denmark will continue to support education in Palestine through multilateral interventions targeting Palestine refugees in both the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and in Gaza. UNRWA forms an essential partner for Denmark in ensuring this goal. UNRWA is operating 709 primary schools in its five fields of operation (Gaza, West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria) and provides basic education to over 533,000 Palestine refugee children.

Denmark will also continue to support UNRWAs vocational training centers (VTCs), which provide young Palestine refugees with the skills and knowledge needed for entering the labour market. Empowering young refugees to take part in the economic life is critical to build their resilience, create hope and thereby contribute to reducing the risk of instability. UNRWA is the key provider of vocational training for refugees. They run eight VTCs in its five fields of operation, with approximately 7,700 trainees each year. Each of which provides market relevant courses including at skilled labourer levels. Experience has shown that employment rates among the graduates are high. Most graduates are employed within one year of graduation or in further study.

Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being is equally important for building resilience, prosperous societies and promoting sustainable development in Palestine. It will contribute to SDG 3 on health in its entirety. UNRWA plays a key role in providing primary health care to Palestine refugees by running over 141 health centers across the five fields of operations with more than 8.5 million consultations annually.

Denmark will contribute to these efforts through support to primary health care via UNRWA and several Danish civil society partners, private funding, Danish research organisations and people-to-people cooperation. Due to Denmark's leading role worldwide with regard to preventing and treating diabetes, there is a particular focus on this area in the Danish support to primary health care in Palestine in addition to the support to UNRWA.

3.3.2 Youth and women in vulnerable areas

Denmark will apply a specific focus on the empowerment and protection of women and young people in vulnerable areas in the West Bank and Gaza to claim their basic rights under international human rights law and international humanitarian law. They experience particular challenges and protection concerns in Palestine. Furthermore, women and youth are over-represented in unemployment rates and under-represented in politics and governing bodies. Youth and women are also a focus of the PA and have been given special priority in the National Policy Agenda.

Denmark will support women- and youth-led awareness raising and advocacy initiatives in Gaza and the West Bank to ensure that their voice is heard on issues related to their human rights and protection needs. Denmark will also support women and youth-led development, humanitarian and peace initiatives and organisations in order for them to play a bigger role in creating resilient and stable communities. This will be combined with psychosocial support for women and youth in order to prevent the development of longer-term mental health issues and prevention and treatment of gender-based violence, in line with SDG 3 on health, SDG 5.2 on eliminating violence against all women and girls and SDG 16.1 on reducing all forms of violence. Youth determines the future of Palestine and it is key to address the mental health issues resulting from the crisis. Denmark will provide support through Danish CSOs and bilateral development engagements.

3.4 Strategic monitoring of Denmark's Strategic Framework for Palestine

The Danish Representative Office in Ramallah will lead the monitoring of the strategic framework in close cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Copenhagen. The strategic monitoring of Denmark's broad engagement in Palestine will inform several processes. These include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' internal dialogue on the general developments in Palestine, and Denmark's dialogue with the PA, businesses, multilateral organisations and civil society.

Strategic indicators to support and guide the dialogues have been defined for each of the strategic objectives, as set out in box 5 below. The Palestine Task Force, comprised of staff from MFA Headquarters and led by the Danish Representative Office, will monitor the strategic objectives on an annual basis as well as on a needs basis in case of e.g. significant changes in the context, and a light on-going monitoring and review approach will be applied.

The focus of these exercises will be on learning and on how Denmark's engagement may be affected by changes in the political context or developments on the ground and how it may need to

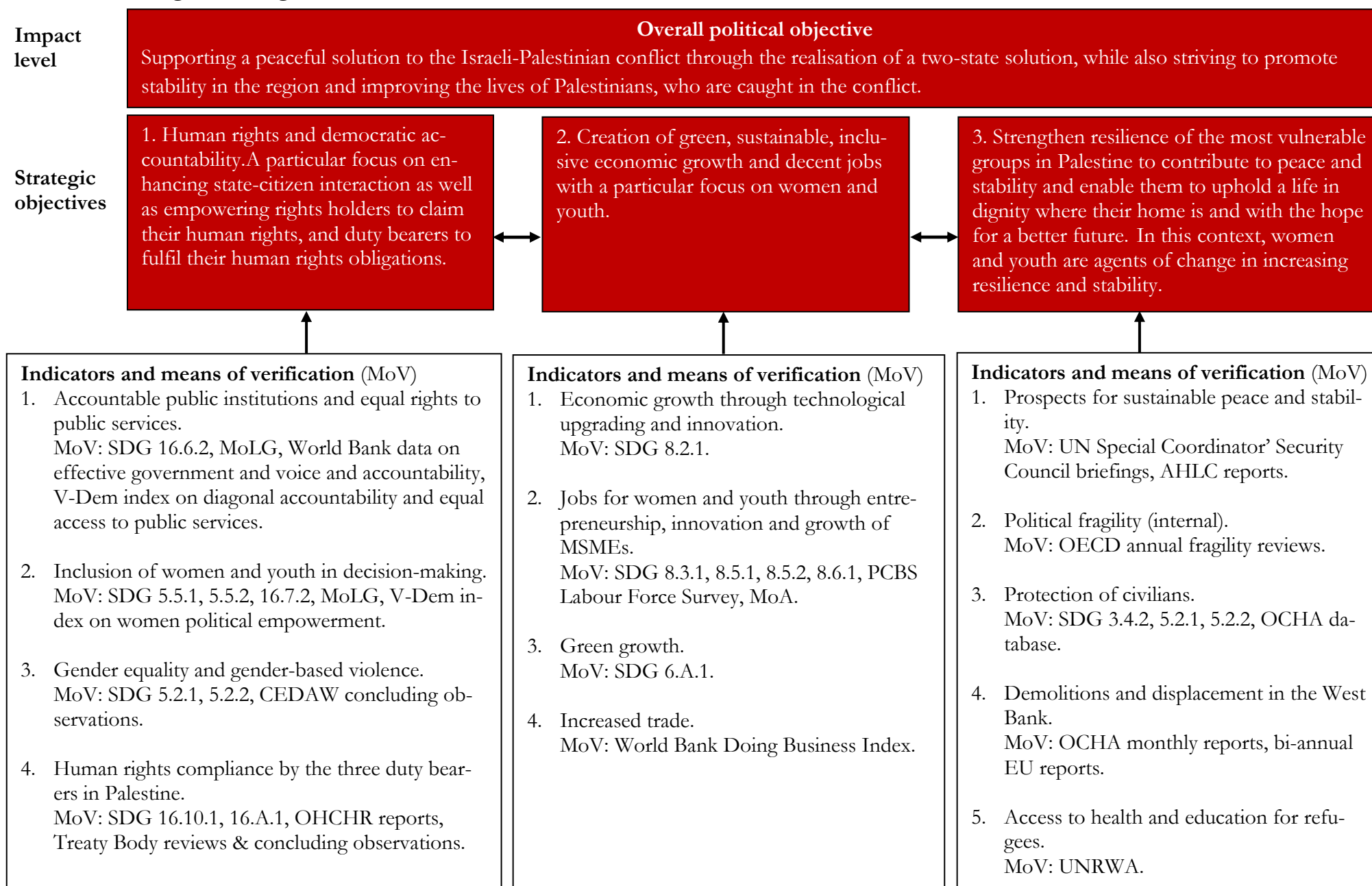
be adapted. While building on monitoring and learning at engagement level, it will add cross-cutting attention to wider context and systemic factors that may affect, positively or negatively, the relevance of the entire broad Danish engagement in Palestine as well as the coherence and synergies between multiple engagements and instruments.

Monitoring of the strategic objectives will be aligned with the Palestinian national monitoring and evaluation systems to the extent possible. As the SDGs are at the core of Denmark's engagement in Palestine, the SDG indicators most relevant for the strategic objectives will be the basis for measuring the results of the strategic framework. Disaggregation of data will be sought with a view to reflect on the pledge of leaving no one behind. In addition, a specific effort has been made to select indicators bridging the development and humanitarian aspects of the strategic objectives.

3.5 Monitoring results, learning and communication

The Danish Representative Office in Ramallah will monitor and collect lessons learned from the implementation of the bilateral programme in line with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' guidelines. The monitoring will guide the continuous assessment of assumptions, theory of change and risks and feed into regular discussions with partners on lessons learned. The objective of the monitoring efforts is to ensure the achievement of tangible results and learning. To this end, the Danish Representative Office will continuously assess if there is a need to adapt the bilateral programme in light of lessons learned or significant changes in the context as also described in section 3.4 and the section on adaptation on page 4.

Box 5: Monitoring the Strategic Framework



4. The bilateral development programme with Palestine 2021-2025

The bilateral development programme and its development engagements will include support to all three objectives of the Denmark-Palestine Strategic Framework 2021-2025. The programme will prioritise particular dimensions of the strategic objectives, taking into account that other Danish instruments will address different dimensions.

4.1 Development engagements in support of human rights and democratic accountability

To strengthen the protection and respect for human rights, democratic accountability and civic space, Palestine will need to ensure an enabling environment for human rights organisations to operate, foster a more sustainable and accountable local government sector and promote equal participation of women and girls in political and public life. Through the bilateral development programme, Denmark will support both public institutions as duty bearers and civil society organisations as rights holders.

4.1.1 More sustainable and accountable local government institutions for citizen focus and delivery of equal public services

Local government institutions play a crucial role in local development, service delivery and involvement of the citizens in Palestine. They form the backbone of public administration, just as the Danish support to local government is key in supporting duty bearers fulfilling their human rights obligations as well as rights holders to claim their rights at a local level.

Denmark will continue to support strengthening the sustainability of local government institutions and the PA's local government sector reform with a view to promoting active non-discriminatory citizen engagement, enhancing social accountability and ensuring adequate service provision jointly with other development partners. In accordance with the Palestinian National Policy Agenda, digitised services aiming at greater transparency with citizens will be emphasised.

Focus of the support will also be on integrating climate change adaptation into the municipal operations and services. Denmark is playing a facilitating and leadership role to kick-start the process as lead development partner in the local government sector. Denmark's lead role will also be expressed through supporting the Ministry of Local Government's strategic planning and coordination role through advisory and technical assistance to facilitate and promote delivery of local government services and reform. Based on lessons learned, Denmark will consider channelling its support through co-funding of larger and joint support programmes, as this modality has proven to provide for a better policy dialogue, which is a key instrument that Denmark will seek to use to leverage development outcomes in the sector.

4.1.2 Promote and protect human rights

Denmark will contribute to strengthening national accountability institutions and CSOs to contribute effectively to the promotion and protection of human rights, including but not limited to the promotion of women's rights, freedom of expression, association, assembly, the freedom of movement and freedom from torture. Experience from previous support has shown that Denmark's assistance has contributed to CSOs becoming more mature in terms of documenting and undertaking advocacy work, although some remain weak. Danish assistance has also contributed to CSOs being able to continue operating in the context of shrinking civic space. The support to

CSOs will follow clear and already established guidelines and is all the more crucial in the context of the continued violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law, the shrinking civic space, and the absence of parliamentary control functions due to the protracted political divide.

Expected outcomes of the bilateral support to human rights and democratic accountability:

- More sustainable and accountable local government institutions for citizen focus and equal delivery of public services.
- Strengthened national accountability institutions and CSOs, and improved protection of Palestinians' human rights and the civic space.

4.2 Development engagements in support of the creation of green, sustainable, inclusive economic growth and jobs

Denmark supports the creation of green, sustainable, inclusive economic growth and jobs as part of its support to state building, peace and stability. A sustainable economy with inclusive and decent jobs are a fundamental basis towards the realisation of an independent state. Through numerous successful partnerships (the PA, multilateral organisations, CSOs, and the private sector), Denmark continues to align with the national priorities and objectives as outlined in the National Policy Agenda 2017-2022 and the National Investment Plan 2020-2022.

Job creation and stimulating a stronger enabling environment for the sustainable growth of the private sector and economic empowerment of youth and women are on top of Palestine's National Policy Agenda. With Denmark promoting sustainable growth, use of natural resources in a sustainable manner through supporting Palestine's most productive sector - agribusiness – will boost income, create sustainable job opportunities and contribute to increasing food security and poverty reduction.

In support of strategic objective 2, the development programme will focus on the promotion of climate based sustainable economic growth through regular policy dialogue, supporting small and medium sized enterprises and agribusinesses, creating decent jobs, increasing food security and supporting an enabling environment for sustainable private sector development.

4.2.1 Promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth through inclusive and smart agribusiness value chains development

Agribusiness is the main contributor to Palestinian GDP, accounting for more than a quarter of all Palestinian exports. Denmark is one of the main donors in the sector and has gained significant experience over the years in supporting agribusinesses. A key lesson from Denmark's long-standing cooperation is that support to agricultural practices has created growth and employment despite the difficult framework conditions. Agriculture employs almost 11 per cent of the Palestinian labour force, 30 per cent of whom are women, and a similar number is employed in processing, distribution and trade. Agribusiness therefore remains an essential sector in order to preserve and promote sustainable, inclusive and decent employment, income and resilience of the Palestinian society as well as to protect its natural resources.

While access to critical natural resources for sustainable agricultural practices is restricted by the Israeli occupation, the priority is to increase the availability of and maximise efficiency in the use of resources with due consideration to climate change adaptation. Denmark will support maximising green, sustainable growth of incomes and productivity in agribusinesses with a focus on youth and women. By reinforcing the capacity of agri-food production, processing and trade through innovation, smart technologies and climate-based interventions, sustainable economic growth will be realised and decent job opportunities will be created particularly to women and youth, thus reducing food insecurity and enhancing social stability.

4.2.2 Green jobs and sustainable income opportunities for Palestinian youth

The unemployment rates in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have soared and remained high in the past 17 years, reaching 14 per cent in the West Bank and 43 per cent in the Gaza Strip with youth and women being the most affected groups. Prevalence of unemployment and poverty especially among youth leads to the decline in purchasing power and reduced food accessibility in addition to the negative social factors often related to poverty.

Creating decent jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities for women and youth will increase livelihood and food security. A particular focus of Denmark's support will be on skilled labour. Through strategic partnerships with local universities, colleges, technical and vocational training centers and apprenticeships, youth graduates and young entrepreneurs will be equipped with the required skills and competencies to enter the labour market, while linking those with decent job opportunities in the market.

<p>Expected outcomes of the bilateral support to creation of green, sustainable, inclusive economic growth and jobs:</p>

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased sustainable and inclusive economic growth through smart agribusiness value chains development, which generates decent jobs. - Increased green jobs- and sustainable income opportunities in the agribusiness sector for Palestinian youth. |
|---|

4.3 Development engagements in support of resilience, peace and stability

As part of Denmark's overall aim to support a peaceful solution to the conflict and to improve the lives of Palestinians, it is a priority to address the ongoing territorial fragmentation of Palestine in accordance with EU Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions.

4.3.1 Strengthen resilience of communities in vulnerable areas

Denmark will seek to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable Palestinian communities including women and youth. This is in line with the PA's priority of providing government wide services and support to the Palestinian communities in these areas, as highlighted in the National Policy Agenda.

Given the political-geographical conditions for providing support to vulnerable communities, Denmark will work towards sustaining development outcomes by strengthening the complementarity of interventions across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. An example is Denmark's support to Area C which both has a developmental, humanitarian and political aim by

safeguarding the rights of marginalised communities, promoting economic development and job creation, and delivery of key services to the population. Denmark will channel support through multilateral organisations and multi-donor interventions, as experiences and lessons learned have shown that Denmark is in a better position to support these communities when it is done jointly with other like-minded donors. In addition, Denmark will support Palestinian communities through support to the creation of sustainable and decent jobs within agribusiness as also described in section 4.2.

Expected outcomes of the bilateral support to resilience, peace and stability:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strengthened resilience of vulnerable Palestinian communities, through support to improve their lives and protect their rights under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

4.4 Expected budget

Expected budget for the bilateral development program as per strategic objective (subject to parliamentary approval):

Strategic objective	Million DKK
1: Human rights and democratic accountability	189
2: Creation of green, sustainable, inclusive economic growth and decent jobs	161
3: Resilience, peace and stability (*)	100
Total	450

(*) In addition hereto is foreseen an annual core contribution to UNRWA of DKK 105 million under § 06.39.01.11 of the Finance Act. This humanitarian contribution is part of the funding channelled in support of the implementation of strategic objective 3.