

Regeringen

# Africa's century

Strategy for strengthened Danish engagement  
with African countries



Aug. 2024

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Source: European Commission

Western Sahara is on the United Nations list of non-self-governing territories.

# Preface

Many of us grew up with the narrative of a destitute, barren, and impoverished Africa, where misery prevailed. This narrative is outdated and has been for a long time.

Poverty and instability continue to shape large parts of the continent. Climate change is also hitting hard – there are many crises to deal with. But many countries are also making great progress. With growing middle classes and assertive governments.

African countries are not looking for handouts. They expect a mutually respectful handshake. And we as politicians must realise that we have not managed to keep up with developments.

Africa's geopolitical relevance has never been greater; the populations are growing, the economies are growing, the assertiveness of the continent is growing. In 2050, one in every four people – and one in every three young people – in the world will be African. In the UN, African countries hold just over one-fourth of the votes. The continent has the potential to produce the energy sources of the future with wind, water, and sun, and a wealth of minerals that are critical for the green transition. It is a continent with young, driven, and energetic entrepreneurs.

We are living in Africa's century. One of this century's most important foreign policy question is whether African countries will orient themselves more towards the East or the West.

We are not the only ones aware of Africa's potential. In their own way, China and Russia are investing great sums in the African continent – with an expectation of greater support globally in return. The Chinese are financing modern bridges and motorways, and mining operations. The Russians are supplying weapons and mercenaries, and are conducting anti-Western campaigns.

Should African countries move more in a Western-oriented direction? We believe that they should, but none of us can control the future engagement of China, Russia, or other countries on the African continent. Nor can we expect African countries to choose sides. But we can control how we position ourselves.

Europe must be the preferred partner for Africa. As neighbours, Europe and Africa need each other to solve shared challenges, from terrorist threats, pressure from migration, and the climate crisis.

We do not always see the world in the same way, but we must become better at listening to each other and understanding each other's points of view. With a new and strengthened Danish engagement in Africa, this is what we are attempting to do. In this Government, we have allowed ourselves to grow wiser together with our African and European partners.

We will bring better offers, less moralism, and more equality to the table. We will make it easier for Danish companies to invest in Africa. We will increase the number of cultural exchanges between African and Danish young people. Fortunately, we can build on a solid foundation, after 60 years of development cooperation with African countries.

Our approach must be suited to a new era, where old balances of power are shifting in the midst of wars and crises. An era with a reason to be deeply concerned but also with new opportunities, new hope, and fertile ground for new partnerships.

**Lars Løkke Rasmussen**  
Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Dan Jørgensen**  
Minister for Development Cooperation and  
Global Climate Policy



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Increasing our engagement is in our own interest. It is not a matter of forcing other countries to choose between one or the other partner, but rather of creating solutions that can make Denmark and Europe an attractive partner for African countries.



# A new approach to Africa

Fundamentally, we must engage more in Africa. Building on our longstanding development cooperation, we must now ramp up our efforts. In 2050, one in four people in the world will live in Africa, and one in three will be a young person between the ages of 15 and 25. 11 of the world's 20 fastest growing economies are located on the African continent. With the African Continental Free Trade Area, Africa has the potential to become the world's largest free trade bloc. As a whole, the continent represents just over one-fourth of the votes in the UN. The solutions to global climate challenges can only be found together with the African countries. And we must not forget that Africa is Europe's closest neighbour.

It is no surprise that other countries are also increasing their engagement and influence in African countries. This especially applies to China and Russia, but India, Türkiye, and the Gulf States also acknowledge Africa's potential. It is to be expected that other powers too will take an active interest in forging strategic alliances. This means that we must make a greater effort and strengthen our engagement to face the competition.

Increasing our engagement is in our own interest. It is not a matter of forcing other countries to choose between one or the other partner, but rather of creating solutions that can make Denmark and Europe an attractive partner for African countries.

The African continent is complex. 54 countries. Hundreds of languages. More than 1 billion people. The diversity is enormous. Many countries are working for democracy, human rights, growth, and constructive dialogue. Everywhere on the continent you find dynamic, entrepreneurial, and innovative young people who generally share the same desires as young people in Denmark. Education, jobs, and the opportunity to live in free and well-functioning societies where their voices are heard.

Many areas are still characterised by poverty, and in the growing economies, prosperity is often

unevenly distributed. Unfortunately, many countries in Africa are experiencing armed conflict, military coups, authoritarian governments, and fragile institutions. Five of the world's 10 countries most affected by terrorism are in Africa. The number of displaced people and refugees in Africa is enormous. Many hope to migrate to Europe in search of a life with more opportunities.

It is neither Denmark's nor Europe's job to dictate Africa's future. The starting point for our engagement must be the African countries' own visions for the future. The African Union's "Agenda 2063" is central. The ambition is to ensure strong African influence in the international arena through an integrated, more prosperous, and peaceful Africa.

We must recognise that for many years, we in Denmark and Europe have primarily focused on engagement with African countries in the form of development cooperation and humanitarian support. We have not seriously recognised Africa's role in international politics.

The development agenda remains central, and we must maintain the strong partnerships we have built with public authorities and civil society based on changing strategies for development cooperation and the internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals. But we must also view the cooperation from new perspectives. With a strengthened focus on foreign and security policy. Where we explore the opportunities to invest and trade more with each other. And where we strengthen the people-to-people engagement. An ambition that the coming strategy for development cooperation must also address and follow up on.

We must offer our expertise where it is in demand. Use our strengths as a green frontrunner. We must be open and honest about our own interests – whether it pertains to values or to central issues such as trade, climate, health, migration, and security. We must engage with new green strategic partnerships.

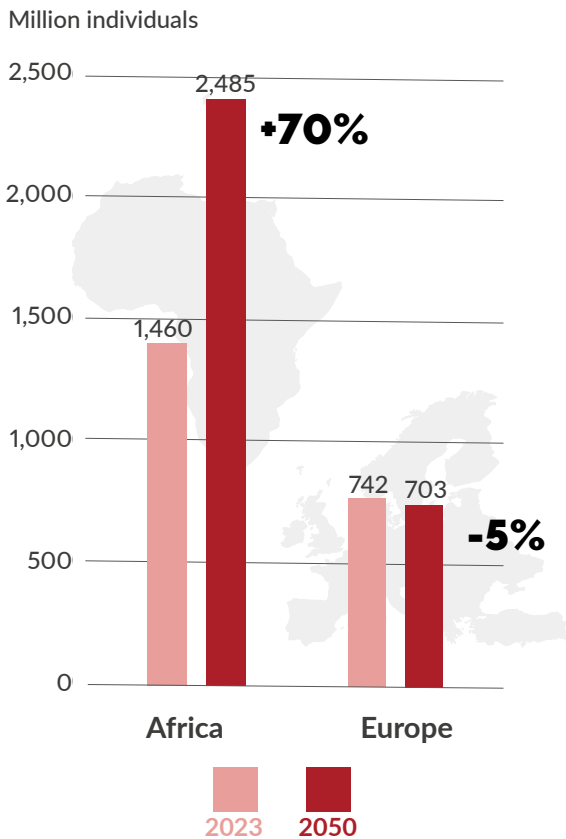
Danish engagement with African countries must continue to build on strong values and the wish for well-functioning international cooperation and respect for international law. Democracy and human rights. Rights for women and girls, workers and minorities. The freedom to express oneself,

think, believe, and assemble freely. And the right to a life free of torture. At the same time, we must also base our efforts on a realistic assessment of the context in which we are operating. We must work to better understand the perspectives, needs, and interests of African countries.

## Africa's "Youthquake"

Africa's population will increase significantly in the coming years. Today six out of 10 Africans are under the age of 25, and the number of children and youth is expected to increase significantly by 2050, when there will be 830 million young people in Africa. In 2100, 40% of the world's workforce will be in Africa.

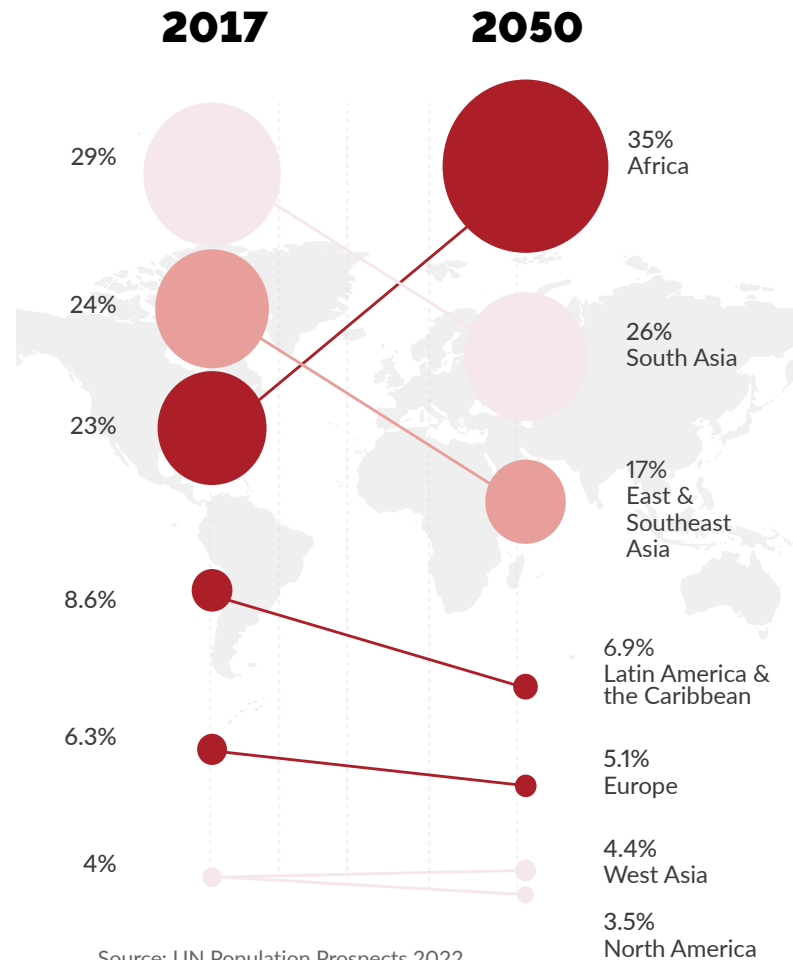
Population development in Africa and Europe, 2023-2050



Source: UN Population Prospects 2022

Proportion of the world's population between 15 and 24 years old

More than a third of the world's youth (15-24 years old) will be African by 2050



Source: UN Population Prospects 2022

Only with a joint approach and local ownership can we achieve the goals of strengthened rights.

The EU should play a leading role. The ambition of representing an alternative to other strong actors cannot be achieved without an EU that is stronger and more visibly present in Africa.

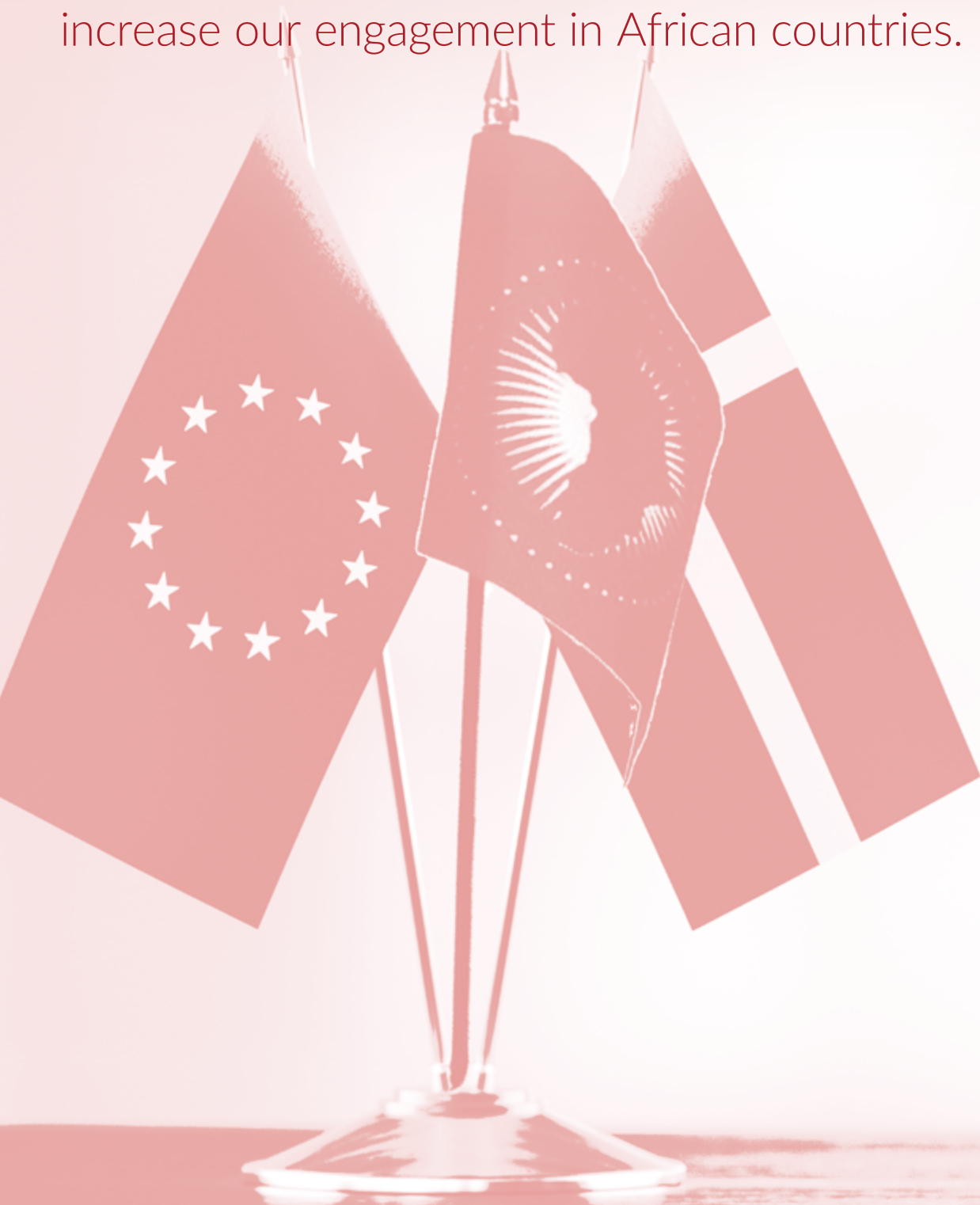
Denmark must work to ensure that EU partnerships are strengthened on the African continent. There is still a way to go. The EU must do more to build trust and speak with one common voice. We must also do a better job of utilising the opportunities within the Nordic cooperation.

## Denmark will

- Strengthen our diplomatic presence in Africa – in scope and in depth – and be present where we see opportunities for an engagement that yield results.
- Strengthen our political, economic, and security policy dialogue with Africa at all levels – through the EU, the Nordics, and bilaterally.
- Contribute to making the EU a stronger and more effective actor in Africa and invest in concrete EU Global Gateway initiatives in a number of countries.
- Improve the opportunities for trade and Danish investments with strengthened advisory services, risk capital, and the establishment of a regional innovation centre in Africa.
- Launch new green strategic partnerships across the continent.
- Increase efforts for climate adaptation, with a particular focus on water, forests, and biodiversity, and support a just, green transition in Africa.
- Address challenges with irregular migration and mitigate refugee flows through sustainable economic development in Africa.
- Increase study exchange programmes so that more African young people come to study in Denmark for shorter or longer durations.
- Support African leadership and capacity to address security challenges on the continent and strengthen Denmark's civilian and military contribution to peace and stabilisation efforts in Africa. We are doubling the Africa programme for peace and sustainability, and launching a new peace and stabilisation programme in West Africa.
- Contribute to efforts to remedy historical African under-representation in international forums.
- Increase the mutual understanding of cultures with the establishment of a new cultural initiative.

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Through our diplomacy, and in close collaboration with actors from public authorities with Danish core competencies, civil society, the business community, knowledge institutions, and private foundations, as well as through the EU, we must increase our engagement in African countries.



# Denmark and the EU in Africa

– a more significant imprint

To achieve greater equality, we must engage more. Hence, we must strengthen our diplomacy, both in depth and in scope. In light of the geopolitical changes, we must be present where there is a potential for strengthened dialogue and cooperation, and where we can yield the best results. Where we can make a real difference, have evident Danish interests, and have opportunities for trade and investments. In locations where the countries play a prominent geopolitical role. We must be agile in seizing the opportunities to support countries in a positive development. And, similarly, we must recognise when the potential for dialogue becomes too narrow and the results are no longer commensurate with the efforts.

But increased engagement in Africa must not only take place at the diplomatic level. Promoting contacts between companies, civil society actors, researchers and students is just as important.

Africa includes countries whose fundamental values are similar to ours in many respects – but also countries moving quickly in a worrying direction. Different countries therefore require different approaches. We must not think of Africa as a singular entity.

Pragmatism and idealism must go hand in hand. Danish foreign policy builds on our fundamental values – freedom, democracy, and equal rights. It is a key issue for Denmark to support countries working for international cooperation based on international law. We must maintain a dialogue with those in power in countries where we do not see eye to eye on all matters, but where we do see potential for movement. At the same time, we must not leave people in the lurch who suffer under poor governance in countries that are moving in the wrong direction.



Our long-standing development cooperation has resulted in close, long-term partnerships. One could even say that Denmark and the other Nordic countries are a strong “brand” in several parts of Africa, where many people know of Denmark as a reliable and pragmatic partner despite our modest size.

We must maintain and expand this position – with an ambition to strengthen the bilateral efforts in our partner countries. In a rapidly changing world, we must also use development cooperation to support new strategic initiatives. Many of Denmark’s long-standing partner countries in Africa want more than traditional development projects. They desire more political dialogue on difficult global issues, more trade, more investments, and more cultural exchanges. We must enter into more green, strategic partnerships with African countries that can bring political, commercial, and sector-specific interests together.

Through our diplomacy, and in close collaboration with actors from public authorities with Danish core competencies, civil society, the business community, knowledge institutions, and private foundations, as well as through the EU, we must increase our engagement in African countries. Together, we can make a greater impact – for the benefit of Denmark, the EU, and Africa.

Generally, Denmark must engage more in the EU’s work on the continent. Our ambition is to promote the EU as an effective and impactful global actor that forges closer and more equal ties with African countries. From diplomatic dialogue, trade and investments to humanitarian aid and peace-building. The Team Europe approach together with the Global Gateway, where the EU and the member states join together on significant efforts, have a greater potential. Denmark’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the EU-AU summit meetings must be utilised to promote better dialogue and common political priorities.

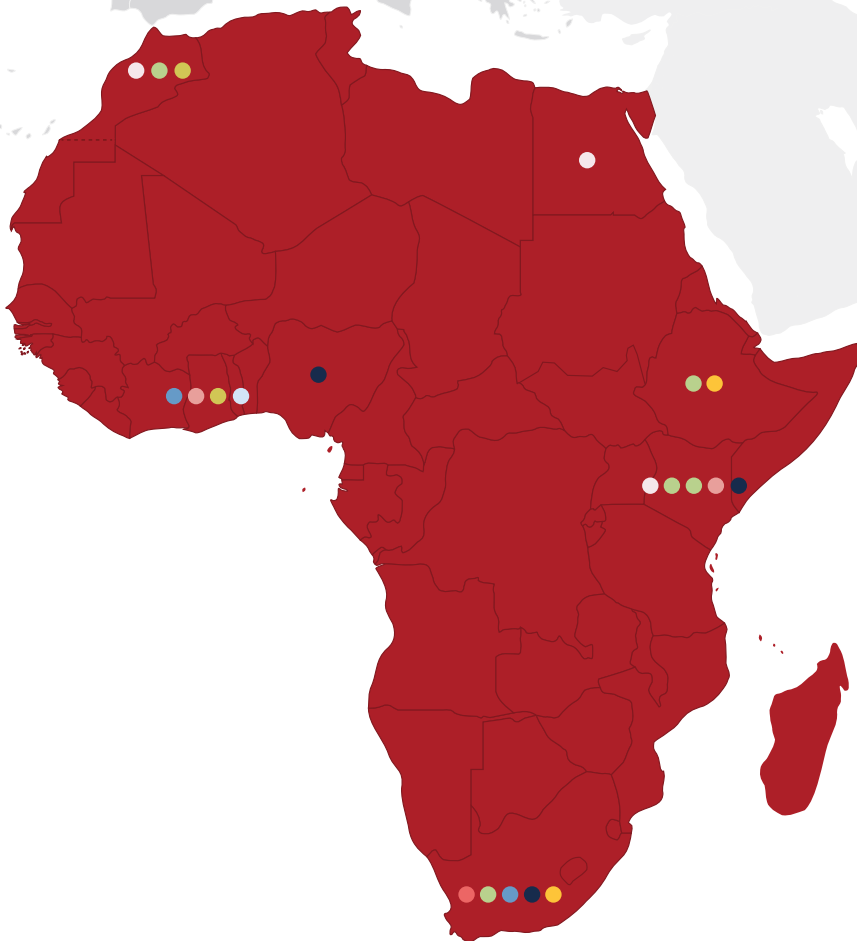
Through our partnerships, we can support human rights, democratic values, and local ownership. On the one hand, this requires investments in close political dialogue and the involvement of civil society, and on the other hand, that we become significantly better – in words and actions – at demonstrating what Denmark, the EU, and the Nordics can offer African countries.

# Strategic Sector Cooperation

– a good example of equal partnerships

When employees of Danish ministries and municipalities work together with sister organisations in African countries on specific projects, doors are opened for relations between the countries that extend far beyond the individual project. These types of partnerships are in high demand, as they are equal, involve a high level of expertise, and are solution-oriented. They foster extraordinary relations, helping to improve the political dialogue with our African partners – including in relation to international agendas. And they also pave the way for commercial opportunities. Denmark has strong expertise in energy, water, environment, food, taxes, health, climate warning, urban development, and digitalisation.

A number of Danish authorities are already actively engaged in such partnerships, and more are on the way. For example, the Danish Meteorological Institute is working with the Ghanaian authorities to examine the impact of climate change on agriculture, river systems, and cities, providing a basis for investment planning in the light of the risk of flooding and prolonged drought. The Africa strategy will lead to more of these collaborations. The focus areas could include health and management of non-communicable diseases, fighting antimicrobial resistance, or stronger medicines regulation. The area of taxes will also be prioritised to increase the countries' economic scope.



**Danish-African Strategic Sector Cooperation as of August 2024**

- Danish Energy Agency
- Danish Maritime Authority
- Copenhagen Municipality
- Statistics Denmark
- Environmental Protection Agency/Water or Circular Economy
- Danish Meteorological Institute
- Aarhus Municipality
- Danish Veterinary and Food Administration
- DEPP



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We must support and realise the trade and investment potential. And we must follow up on the great interest of many African countries in attracting investments and strengthening trade between Europe and Africa.



# Investments and strengthened trade cooperation

Africa holds great potential. Many of the world's fastest growing economies are located on the African continent. This means significant potential for increased purchasing power. The African continent holds many similar opportunities that were associated with Southeast Asia 20 years ago.

However, the starting point for investment in and trade with Africa is low. Between 2021 and 2023, only 1.5% of Denmark's exports of goods went to African countries, while imports from the African continent were at a modest 0.8%. We can and must do better in these respects. Danish companies have much to offer the African markets, just as they already do in other parts of the world.

We must support and realise the trade and investment potential. And we must follow up on the great interest of many African countries in attracting investments and strengthening trade between Europe and Africa. This requires that more Danish companies orient themselves toward the African markets than what we see today. For the benefit of

regional and local growth, employment, and development on both continents in parallel with ever closer economic integration between Europe and Africa.

We must also acknowledge that the African markets are very different and can be difficult to gain access to. There is a need to strengthen public-private cooperation and give Danish companies – big and small – access to more advisory support regarding the markets in Africa. This will be achieved by introducing a geographical price differentiation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark's business advisory services, so that the hourly rate for advising on the African markets will be lower. We must also bring more tools into play that can help Danish businesses gain better access and a foothold in African markets. This requires us to identify local needs and opportunities in sectors where Denmark can offer competitive solutions. And that we can manage the risks that can arise in the light of global, strategic competition, increased protectionism, and trade barriers.

We must develop instruments and raise risk capital that can support Danish companies that want to trade with and invest in Africa; that want to import from African countries. The Investment Fund for Developing Countries, IFU, and the Export and Investment Fund, EIFO, must increasingly support Danish companies' engagement in African markets.

The EU must also play a greater role in trade and investment cooperation, and serve as an attractive and responsible partner. With Global Gateway, the joint European initiative to strengthen investments – not least in Africa – the EU must support the growth potential and sustainable quality infrastructure, including transport and port facilities. The establishment of green corridors along shipping routes around the African continent holds great potential. Denmark must become more involved through the EU, especially at country level, so that the investments can be seen and felt in the economies of African countries – and to ensure that Danish companies are involved.

But these efforts must also be tangible for young Africans who are seeking employment. The need to strengthen trade with and investment in African countries is also very much about job creation. By 2050, the UN estimates that Africa will comprise 24% of the world's working-age population. Up to 12 million young people enter the labour market each year, while only around three million jobs are created. Increased trade and investment must be accompanied by jobs and the upskilling of local skilled labour. The need is already great and will only increase in the coming decades. Strengthening vocational training programmes that can attract young people is an important priority in this regard. By supporting local production in Africa, Danish companies will also gain access to talent and labour.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which covers an area with 1.3 billion people, can create up to 16 million new jobs. Denmark must support this ambition. We have good experience in linking schools with industries and creating jobs under orderly conditions. This is in demand, and we must invest in it.

We must also support sustainable exports from Africa to Europe. The processing of raw materials – and thus the addition of value – must increasingly take place on the African continent. Increased production in African countries can help make Danish companies' value chains more robust and bring foreign production closer to the European market. This provides African companies a fair share of the value added from their work in the supply and production chains. At the same time, these efforts

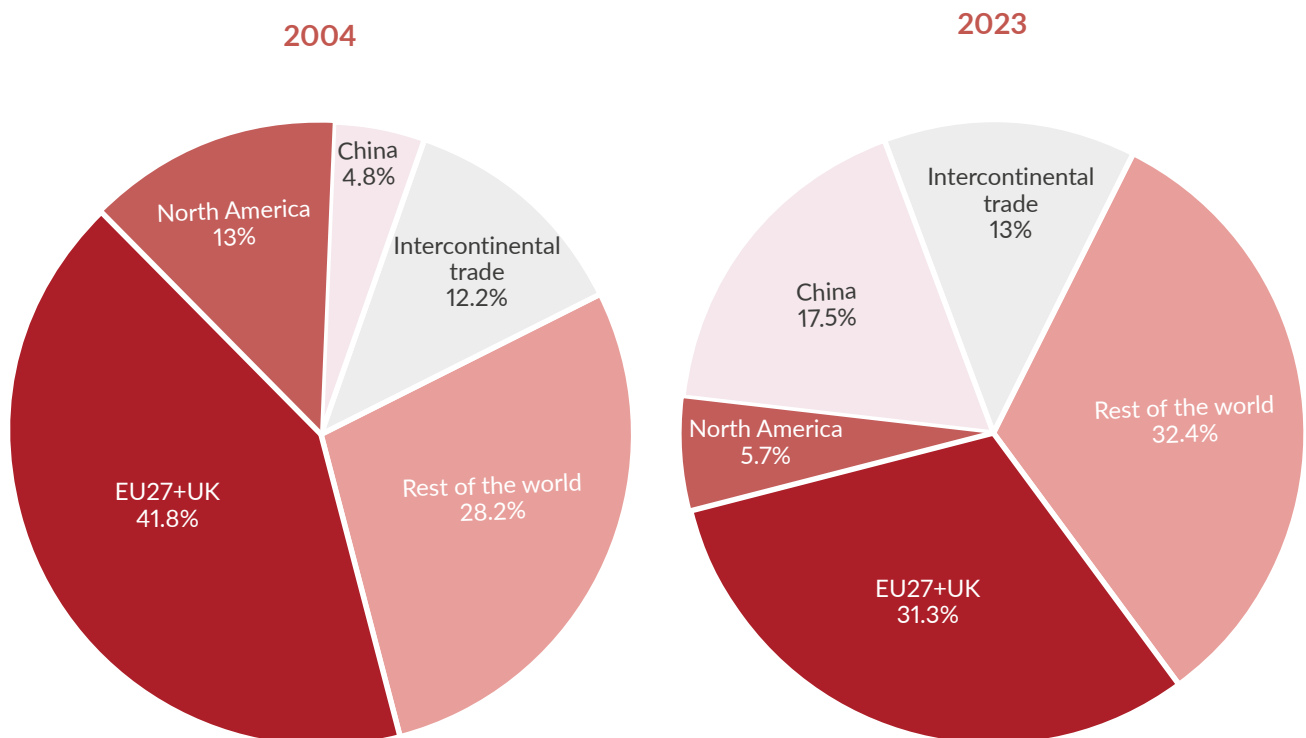
will also strengthen access to important resources and raw materials, as 30% of the world's global mineral reserves are found in Africa. Decent working conditions and the involvement of local communities in the extraction of natural resources are important prerequisites for supporting the potential of resource extraction. Danish companies' sourcing from and investment in Africa can increasingly contribute to the development of the private sector in African countries. This creates local jobs for the African youth as well as economic growth.

On paper, African companies have good access to the EU market. But the potential often goes unrealised due to a lack of capacity to comply with the EU's sustainability requirements. Sustainable value chains must be better supported. In this regard, it is essential that the economic partnership agreements between the EU and countries in Africa are actually implemented in close cooperation with African producers and farmers, so that they can strengthen climate-smart and socially responsible production for export. And we must contribute to helping African countries meet the standards in new EU legislation.

## Danish and European trade and investment in Africa must be increased

Over the past decades, Africa's trade patterns have changed significantly. The EU remains the largest trading partner for the African countries, but has over the last 20 years seen a significant drop in the share of total trade with Africa. China is the country that individually trades the most with the African continent, and the Chinese share of African trade has increased fourfold in the same period.

African trade in goods with the world



Source: ITC Trade Map (<https://www.trademap.org/Index.aspx>)

Note: Trade is exports plus imports. The regional breakdown follows UNCTAD. The group 'inter-continental trade' is trade between African countries.

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Europe and Africa share the ambition to strengthen efforts for climate adaptation and a just, green transition. We must leverage this in climate negotiations.



# Climate adaptation and green growth

African countries are among the regions of the world that are hardest hit by climate change, even though they have generally contributed the least to the extent of the crisis. These are often countries with the least capacity to withstand extreme weather, drought, or flooding. This impacts the economies and living conditions. The climate crisis puts ecosystems under pressure and increases competition for resources such as food and water. One in every two climate-displaced persons in 2050 are expected to be from Africa. Solutions are needed to alleviate poverty and increase the resilience of populations, particularly in the context of climate adaptation and water.

Climate change is accelerating and exacerbating the development challenges that countries in Africa already face. Climate and development are inextricably linked in the future. If we are to achieve long-term and cost-effective sustainable development, we must integrate our climate and development efforts in our engagement in African countries.

We must therefore increase the support for climate adaptation in African countries. With a focus on climate-adapted agriculture and food production, water resources, protection and restoration of forests, biodiversity, clean energy for cooking and cooling, as well as preparedness and monitoring systems for early warning of dangerous weather. All with an eye for economic and social development, and in close cooperation with local populations and indigenous peoples. In order for African countries to withstand the climate crisis, it is crucial to be prepared to handle climate risks. In this respect, we must support the local capacity. We have a shared interest in this.

At the same time, we must strengthen our cooperation with African countries on climate diplomacy. They represent an increasingly important and more substantial and assertive voice in the global climate negotiations. We must listen to them more. Europe and Africa share the ambition to strengthen efforts for climate adaptation and a just, green transition.



We must leverage this in climate negotiations. But we must also establish a much broader collaboration. African leaders have clearly expressed that Africa holds both the potential and the ambition to become a vital part of the global response to climate change. The continent holds many of the climate solutions the world needs. Africa is estimated to have over 40% of the world's renewable energy resources. In addition, critical minerals such as aluminium, cobalt, and lithium are strategically important for the global green transition, and which African countries can benefit from to the advantage of their own development. Add to this that the continent has some of the world's largest natural CO<sub>2</sub> stores. Through partnerships focusing on the implementation of the countries' climate plans, as well as through initiatives such as the Danish-led Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance (BOGA) for a global phase-out of oil and gas, and the African-led Accelerated Partnership for Renewables in Africa (APRA), we must deliver tangible results. At the same time, we must create partnerships and share experiences regarding the use of carbon pricing mechanisms to reduce greenhouse gases.

African countries are increasingly seeking opportunities for more green energy supplies, supporting both climate-positive growth and job creation in the process. With our positions of strength, Denmark and Danish businesses must utilise these opportunities far better.

African countries are looking for Danish solutions. The already successful strategic sector cooperation between public authorities must be expanded and used more strategically. We need to get more African countries involved, as well as more Danish ministries and municipalities. And we must increasingly use these partnerships to promote stronger Danish trade cooperation with African countries, in conjunction with our trade promotion efforts. Denmark's role as a frontrunner must be emphasised even more in Africa.

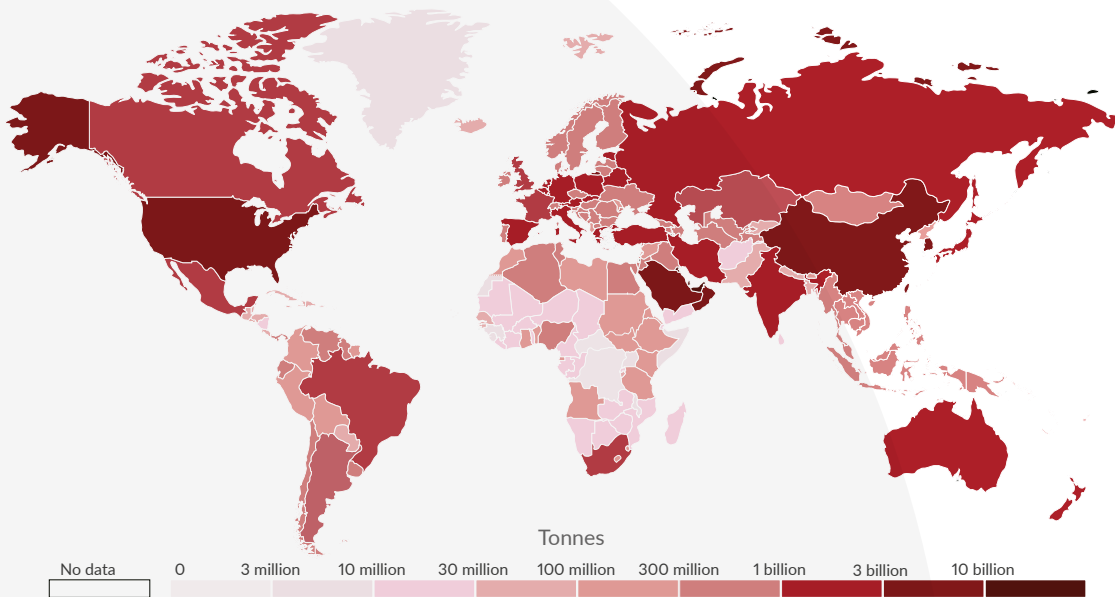
Through the EU, we will ensure more investments in green technologies. We need to create concrete solutions and ensure more innovative financing that can reduce the risk for Danish businesses and investors, to help develop new critical infrastructure that meets the African partners' demand.

# The climate crisis has hit the African continent hardest

Africa has historically contributed very little to emissions, but faces enormous adaptation needs that require international support.

## Annual CO2 emissions

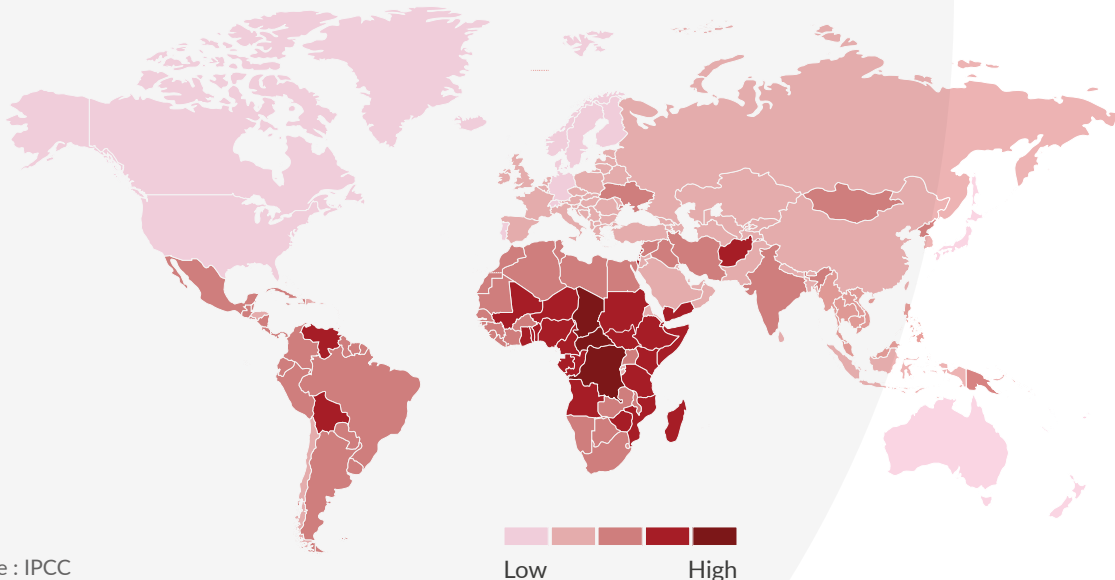
Map of carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions from fossil fuels and industry.



Source: Our World in Data (2023)

## Exposure to climate change, 2023

Map showing countries' vulnerability in terms of exposure, sensitivity and ability to adapt to negative impacts of climate change.



Source : IPCC



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There is widespread hope that digital development can accelerate economic growth, innovation, job creation, and access to services for a large number of African youth that would have been inconceivable just 10 years ago.



# Efforts for technology and innovation in Africa

The African continent plays an increasingly important role in the global conversation on technology.

While we in the EU have a strong focus on the importance of responsible and fair technological development, including artificial intelligence, many countries in Africa are experiencing a different optimism. There is widespread hope that digital development can accelerate economic growth, innovation, job creation, and access to services for a large number of African youth that would have been inconceivable just 10 years ago.

We support this optimism. We must support emerging initiatives and start-ups across the continents. Together with Danish start-ups, knowledge institutions, and investors, we will develop innovative solutions using new technologies in response to local and global challenges. This could be, for example, within the health or agriculture sectors.

Denmark already has a lot of good experience regarding digitalisation in specific sectors such as public digitalisation, health, energy, water supply, and agriculture. We need to share these experiences.

Many African countries desire more strategic dialogue and the exchange of experiences that can contribute to a strong digital infrastructure, entrepreneurship, and cybersecurity. We must use the digital tools, including artificial intelligence, for purposes such as understanding migration patterns and reaching as many people as possible with humanitarian aid.

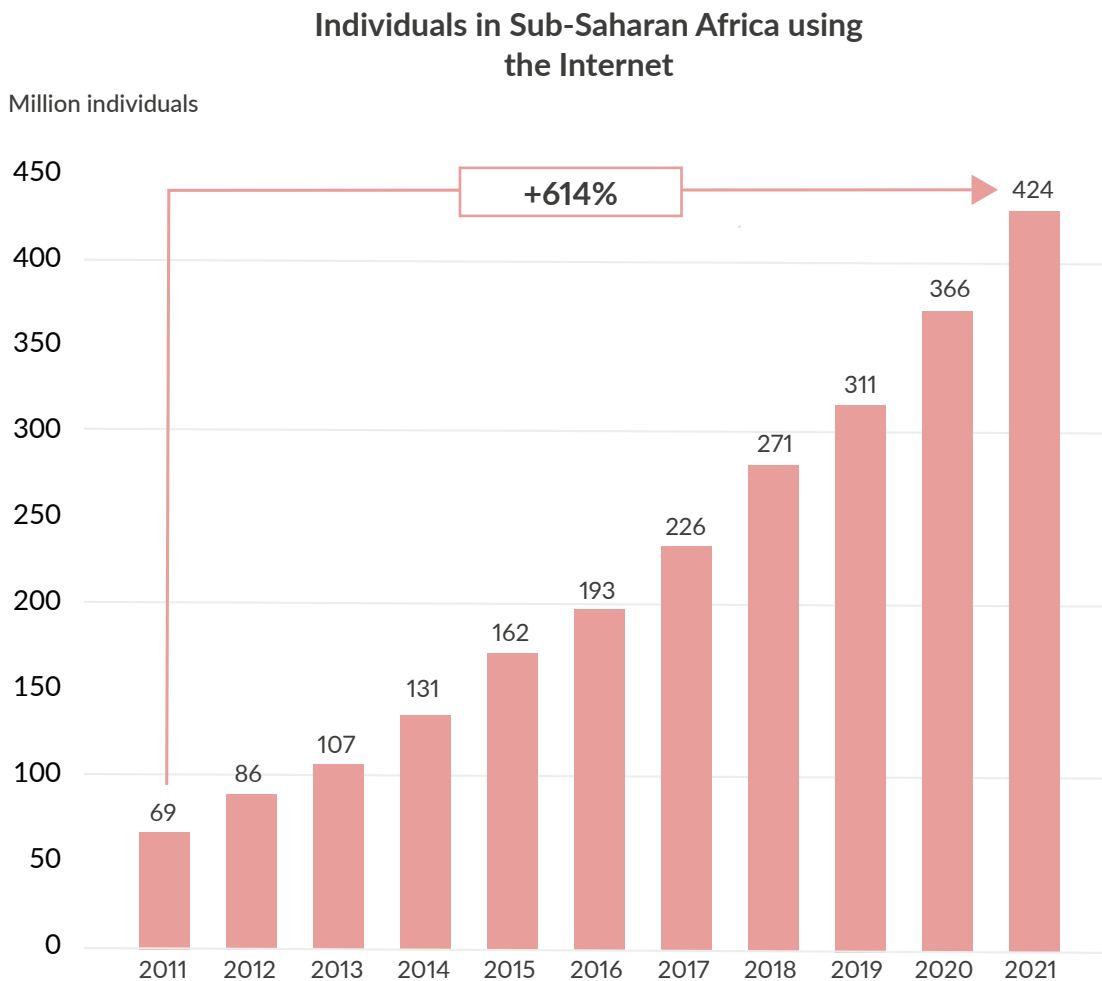
In this regard, the EU must also help create closer ties with African countries. Through the EU, we must expand our digital partnerships and increase global digital integration via Global Gateway.

Access to social media has exploded in many African countries over the past decade. Anti-democratic actors have exploited this to spread false information for political purposes. In particular, Russia and militant Islamists have started to aggressively use disinformation campaigns in countries where they seek to exert influence, but there is also a growing trend of domestic political actors using similar tactics.

Disinformation is a direct threat to peace and stability on the African continent. It is in our common interest to ensure reliable information channels. As part of and together with the EU, Denmark will work to continue the fight against disinformation and to support knowledge-based communication.

## Technology for better and worse

In just 10 years, the number of active social media users in Africa increased fourfold from 69 million to over 420 million individuals. Technology holds enormous potential. At the same time different actors are misusing the technology to spread misinformation.



Source: World Bank



At least

# 39 African countries

have been subject to targeted disinformation campaigns, mainly from Russia.

Source: US Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2024)

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New solutions are needed. This is recognised by many countries in Africa, who are clearly calling for cooperation to create alternatives to illegal migration.





# Migration

– a common interest that requires new solutions

Africa's total population is expected to increase significantly over the coming decades. This presents a great potential, and African countries rightly view their large youth population as an enrichment.

However, such a significant demographic development also presents major challenges for both Africa and Europe – especially in light of climate change, instability, and the lack of opportunities for young people. While many make the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean Sea from Africa, the vast majority of the world's refugees – including in Africa – stay in areas close to crises and conflicts.

As it stands, circumstances favour the strongest and the risk-takers who have the resources to make the dangerous journey to Europe. A new migration crisis can put pressure on the cohesion in Europe. Smugglers are not hesitant to cynically exploit migrants for their own financial gain. The current asylum system is not working. Without action, a situation similar to the crisis in 2015 could rise again. New solutions are needed. This is recognised by many countries in Africa, who are clearly calling for cooperation to create alternatives to illegal migration.

Denmark must fundamentally contribute to reducing irregular migration. We must be at the forefront when the EU works for new and innovative solutions within international conventions and EU legal obligations. We stand firm and work for states to accept repatriation of their own citizens who are not legally resident in Europe. There are no easy solutions, but both Europe and Africa have an interest in tackling the irregular influx.

The EU must engage and build partnerships with key countries on migration routes to prevent irregular migration. Economic growth, the fight against climate change, and conflict resolution are also at the centre of this effort. An acceptable future must be created, not least for the young people who want jobs, security, and access to basic social services. The African countries themselves handle the vast majority of the continent's internally displaced persons and refugees. We support this effort with, among other things, our humanitarian aid. Through prevention efforts, we must contribute to countering new refugee flows and continue our support for internally displaced persons and refugees in African countries.

At the same time, we must work towards a more orderly framework for migration. This is also in our common interest.

In the coming decades, African countries will experience a strong level of growth in the number of working-age people in Africa. On the other hand, the UN population projection estimates that we in the EU will have 46 million fewer people of working age by 2050.

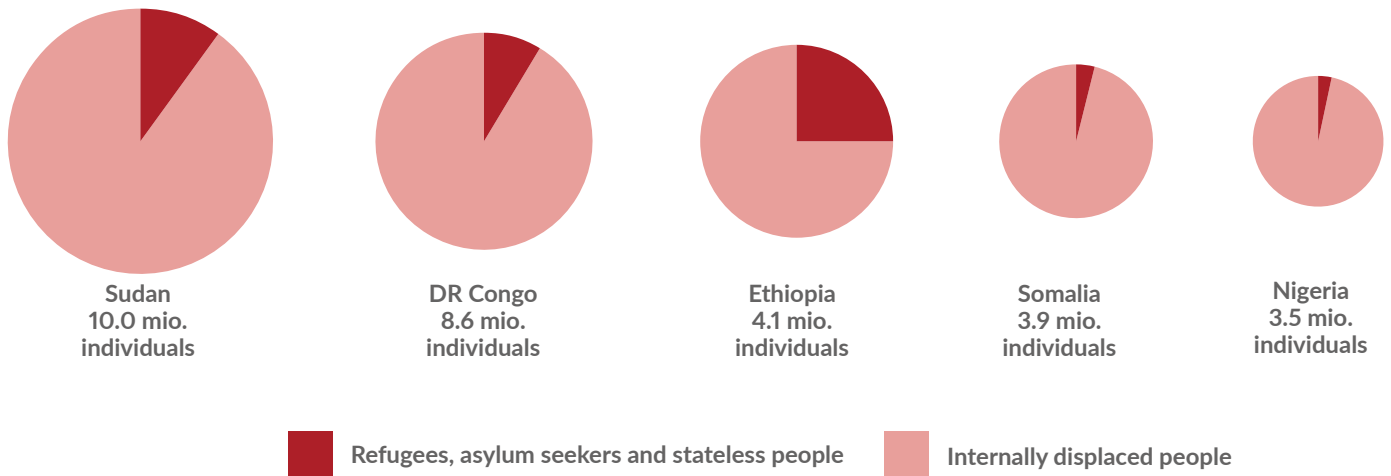
Education and the upgrading of skills through vocational education programmes in African countries must be strengthened. Building competencies in African countries and local growth will contribute to job creation and a future in Africa for the continent's youth. It will also give the African youth better opportunities to migrate legally within the current legal frameworks and rules.

# Refugees and displaced people in Africa in 2023

# 42.1 mio.

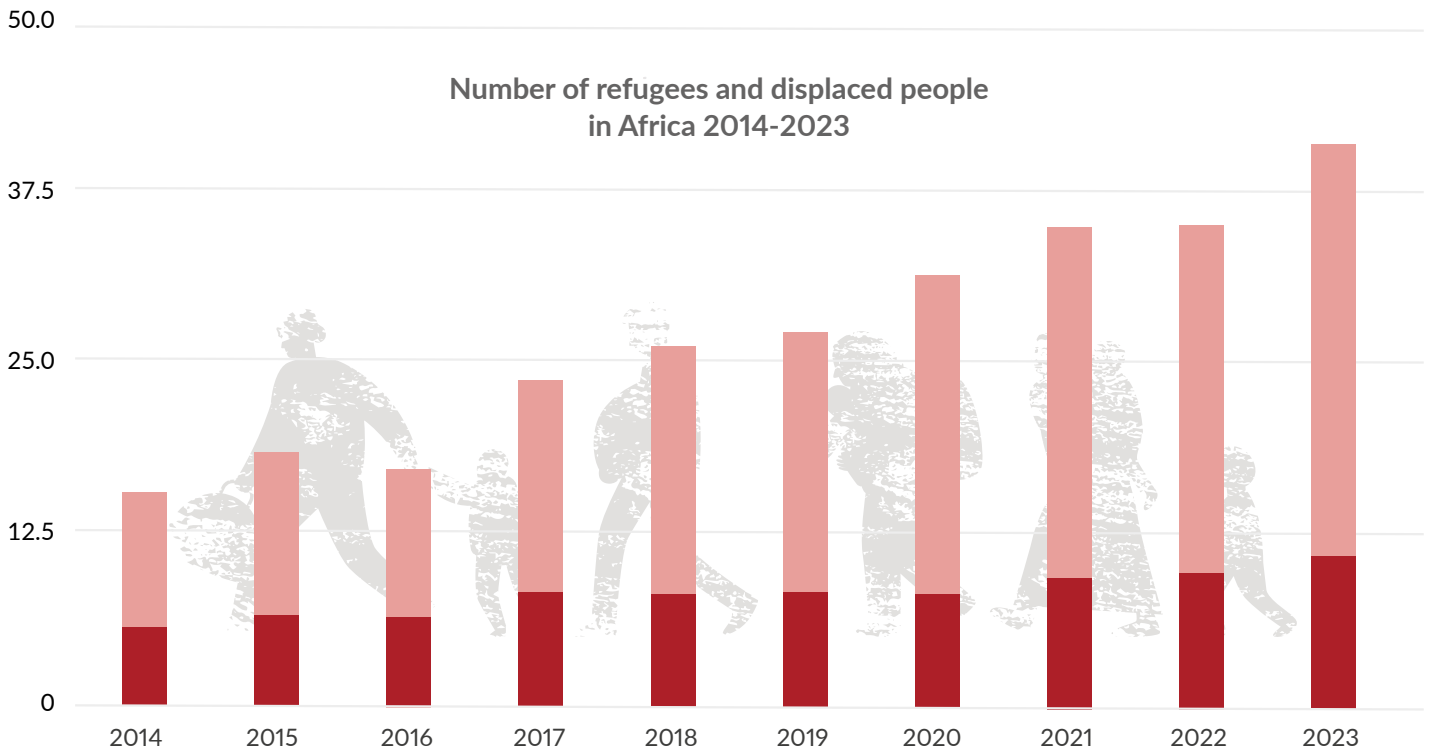
## Top five countries

with the highest number of refugees and displaced people in Africa



Million individuals

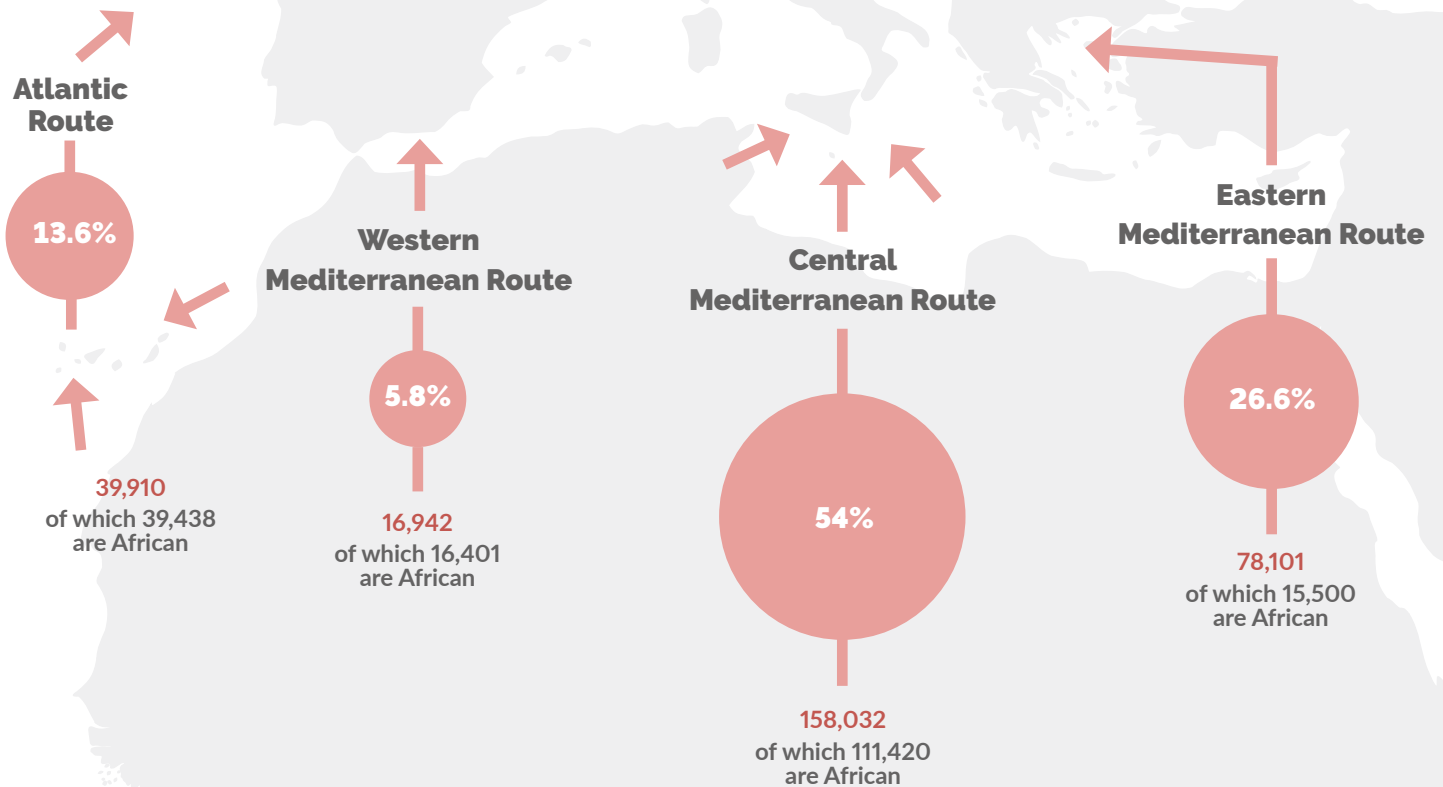
## Number of refugees and displaced people in Africa 2014-2023



# Irregular arrivals from Africa to Europe in 2023

# 292,985

Proportion of irregular arrivals to Europe from Africa; categorised by route



Source: Frontex, Mixed Migration Centre based on data from IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix - Flows to Europe 2023.



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African countries increasingly want to take responsibility for their own security under the mantra of “African solutions to African problems.” We must support this. African leadership and ownership are crucial for success.



# African solutions to peace and conflict

Authoritarianism, armed conflict, and violent extremism are increasingly fuelling regional instability. Military coups in several countries across Africa are a setback for democratic progress and regional cooperation on the continent. The security situation is serious in many places. Particularly in the Sahel, terrorist organisations, rebel groups, and anti-democratic forces have taken advantage of weak institutions and the widespread poverty that exists in the countries. As the number of attacks and civilian casualties increase, these countries are terminating their cooperation with the EU, the UN, and regional organisations.

Instability, terrorism and authoritarian regimes are a common challenge for Africa and Europe. Many African countries are concerned, not least regarding Russian actions in unstable areas that contribute to poverty and the risk of increased migration

flows. Often at the expense of missions from the UN, the EU, or the African continent itself. This is worrying in a time of great need for dialogue and peace operations.

Disinformation on social media platforms adds fuel to the fire. It shifts focus away from the responsibility of those in power to solve the challenges of poverty and insecurity. And it undermines public and democratic dialogue in these countries.

The risk of violent extremism spreading from the Sahel to the West African coastal states is causing concern. There is a demand for Western support to manage the risk. The same goes for other countries on the continent that are also affected by internal conflict and terrorist threats. We must engage more where there is a demand and where there is an opportunity to support national and

regional solutions that anchor ownership. This requires close cooperation between the UN, the EU and the African Union, as well as other regional organisations.

African countries increasingly want to take responsibility for their own security under the mantra of “African solutions to African problems.” We must support this. African leadership and ownership are crucial for success.

Many African countries have an increasing need for aid going directly to the population as a result of anti-democratic movements, conflicts, crises, and poor governance. We will insist on not turning our backs on civilian populations but continue to support vulnerable populations – even when circumstances are difficult.

We must have the courage to strengthen mediation and peacekeeping efforts. The African Union and the regional organisations must stand at the forefront and offer African solutions to crisis management. Financing African-led peacekeeping missions via the UN’s regular budget is a high priority for the African Union, which Denmark will support.

With Denmark’s seat on the UN Security Council in 2025-2026, we have a unique opportunity to work to strengthen the capacity for crisis management and conflict prevention. This needs to be done in close cooperation with the African members of the Council and by building alliances with African institutions such as the African Union and the regional organisations and the platforms for collaboration in Africa.

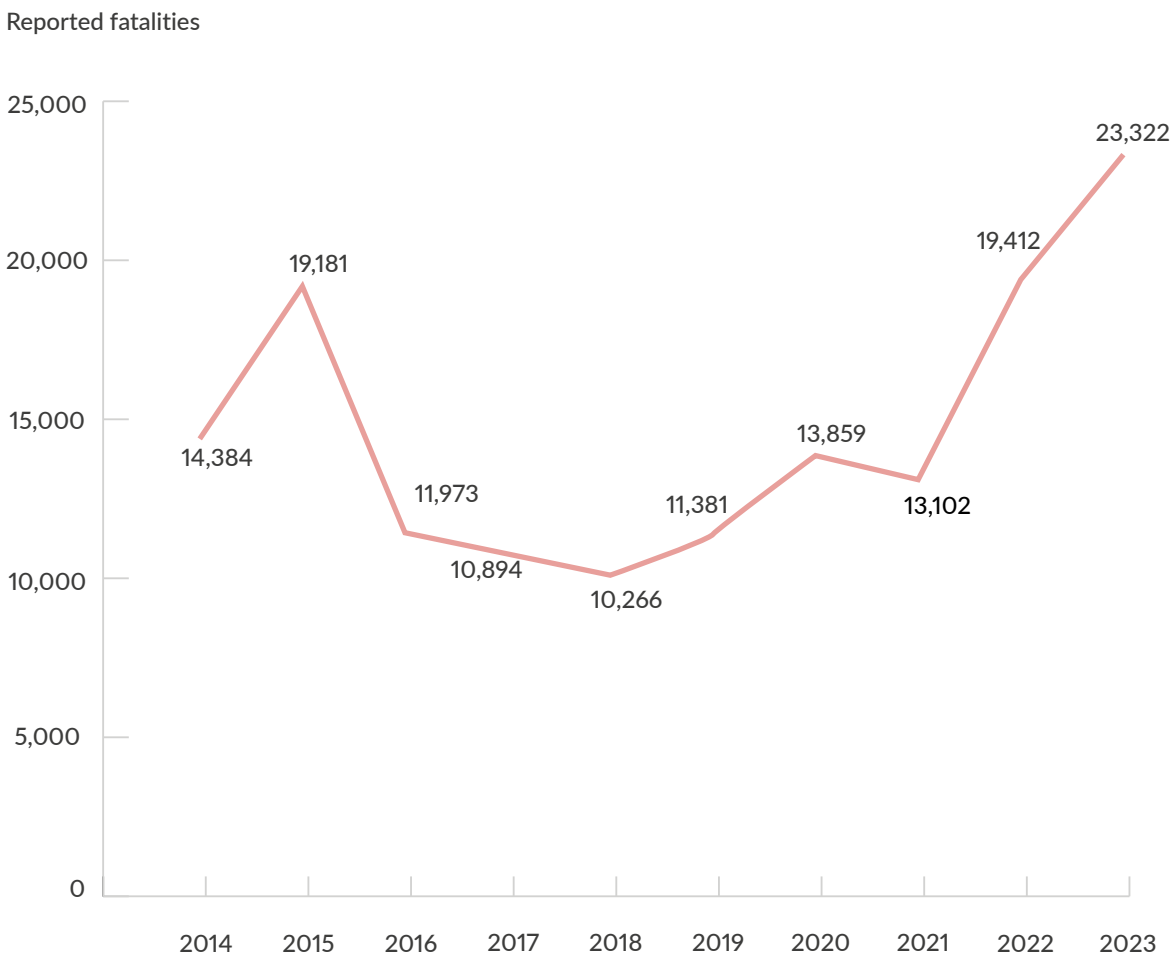
Denmark must increase its support for peace and stabilisation efforts in Africa, where we work both militarily and through our development cooperation. We must draw on our good experience in capacity building.

The EU cooperation is also an important platform in this respect, and Denmark must contribute more to the EU’s military and civilian efforts in Africa. Denmark will work to ensure that the EU becomes the natural ally of the African Union and the regional organisations when it comes to establishing support for African-led peace missions. The European Peace Facility is an important instrument for achieving concrete support for the management of acute security crises.

# Fragility – a threat for Africa and Europe

The rise of militant Islamist groups in Africa contributes to local fragility and insecurity. The security situation is a major challenge that threatens regional stability. These challenges can only be solved multilaterally through alliances with those countries in Africa that support peace and international cooperation.

Fatalities linked to militant Islamist groups in Africa



Source: ACLED data based on data from Africa Center for Strategic Studies



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We must engage more actively to give Africa a stronger voice in a more representative international system for the world of today.

# An international architecture for the world of today

African countries have a legitimate right to greater influence in international cooperation. Reforming the architecture of multilateral cooperation to reflect the world of today is crucial. It is fundamentally a question of trust in international cooperation. But trust is weakened if countries and their people cannot see themselves and their perspective on the world reflected in the global conversation.

This applies to both the UN Security Council and the international financial architecture. African

countries are calling for more influence through increased representation and better access to financing.

The inclusion of the African Union in the G20 was an important step in this direction, but across the continent there is still a need to address the historical under-representation. This requires a rethinking of the way we work internationally.

For Denmark, it is natural that African countries want greater influence in the international

community. We must engage more actively to give Africa a stronger voice in a more representative international system for the world of today. This applies to both the international financial architecture and the UN. We must be prepared to accept that this may come at the expense of other countries' influence. It is also in our own interest to ensure continued support for the multilateral system. We can only manage global challenges if African countries are involved on an equal footing.

Reforming the international financial architecture is essential if the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement are to be realised. Denmark will work for an architecture that can more effectively support sustainable economic growth on the African continent, and we must ensure that international financial mechanisms can support the poorest countries when crises hit.

This means finding sustainable solutions to the debt challenges faced by many African countries. Solutions that involve the largest bilateral creditors. We must also work to ensure that significantly more financing is mobilised for climate and development. This will be achieved through the reform of the multilateral development banks, increased mobilisation of private capital, and more robust tax cooperation.



## **Need for a more effective and representative international architecture**

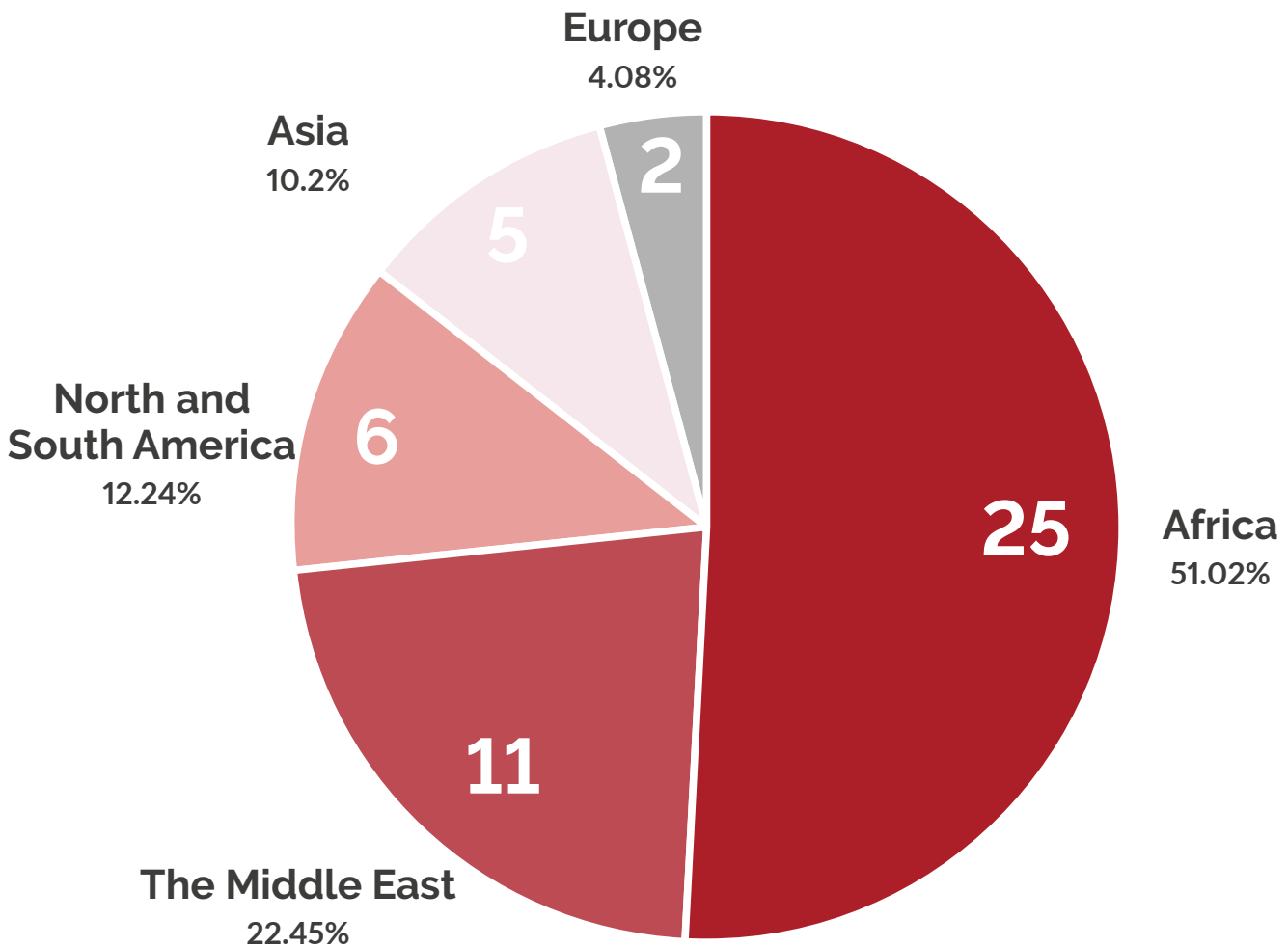
African countries are not among the permanent members of the UN Security Council and have a legitimate right to increased influence in international cooperation. If you look at the Western group, of which Denmark is a part, it has one seat for every six countries, while African countries have one seat for every 18 countries.



# Security Council decisions

More than half of the decisions made in the UN Security Council are about conflicts in Africa, yet no African nation hold permanent membership of the Council.

Share of region-specific decisions in the Security Council in 2023



Source: The UN, 2023



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The relations formed through common activities and exchanges across continents cannot be underestimated. We must do more of this.



# Active people-to-people engagement, exchange, and cultural coopera- tion

In a time of increasing polarisation and new opportunities for the spread of misinformation, there is a need to strengthen the mutual understanding of cultures and values. The African continent has art and culture – music, food, etc. – that we are all too rarely exposed to. Similarly, there is an important potential to expand the awareness of the unique strengths of Danish culture in African countries.

It is hard to capture the value of human relations and understanding cultures. It cannot be put into a formula. Nevertheless, they are important if we are to create space for new solutions, including through “cultural diplomacy.” This is where we can exchange views on the world – also in politically sensitive areas.

African countries are extremely rich in culture – from millennia-old civilisations to traditional

storytelling and up to today’s art and music culture that are found in museums and on stages around the world. At the same time, culture holds a great potential and opportunities for job creation. Just as in Denmark, there is a growing awareness of the importance and value of local communities. Especially among young, urban Africans. Local music and the use of climate-friendly local ingredients in food culture are gaining ground because they create identity, awareness of local cultures, and job opportunities.

Through art and culture, we can meet at eye level. Tell our shared story and open up new horizons. Shape the future. Stimulate the development of the art- and culture scenes, and promote the export of creative business.

Denmark has a strong tradition of people-to-people engagement, including through a very active civil society. The relations formed through common activities and exchanges across continents cannot be underestimated. We must do more of this. Denmark will work for a more ambitious approach to exchanges between the EU and African countries that can benefit both parties under well-structured conditions. With specific programmes, Denmark and the EU must give higher priority to exchange programmes, so that more African students can study in Denmark and Europe. This can have a great impact on strengthening ties between the countries. Exchange and education programmes create mutual understanding and strengthen human relations.

We must build on the special tradition Denmark has for a strong and vibrant youth culture, with young people as the driving force. From youth centres to active participation in political life. In this way, Danish and African youth can undoubtedly inspire each other.

Volunteer associations, sports, and exchange programmes also constitute important assets for fostering dialogue and openness, including when it comes to global challenges. This is everyday diplomacy.

Denmark will prioritise “public diplomacy” higher in African countries and invest in initiatives that can contribute to values debate. We must preserve our shared cultural heritage. At the same time, we must prioritise building new relations between young people and building bridges across generations and continents. Dialogue and mutual understanding are crucial for our shared future.



